

Elstree Land Limited

**Old Forest Road
Winnersh**

Ecological Impact Assessment

**Job No: 253026
June 2025**



Environmental Consultants

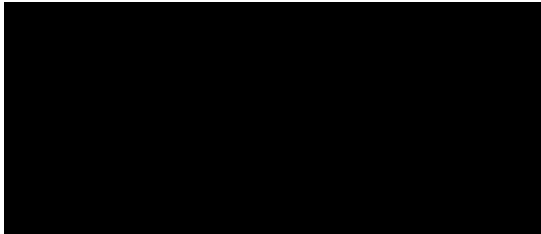
AAe

AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8 Cholswell Court
Shippon
Abingdon
OX13 6HX
T 01235 536042
F 01235 523849
www.aae-ltd.co.uk

Report for:
Elstree Land Limited
7 Grena Gardens
Richmond
London
TW9 1XP

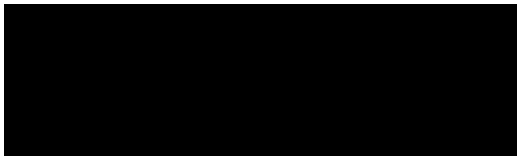
**Old Forest Road
Winnersh**

Issued by



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Harry Simpson MSc BSc (Hons)

Approved by



.....
A R Beaumont MSc BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

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AA Environmental Limited (Registered Office)

Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon
Abingdon
Oxon
OX13 6HX
T 01235 536042
F 01235 523849
E info@aae-ltd.co.uk
W www.aae-ltd.co.uk

Company No. 8474322

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Overview

- 1.1 AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Elstree Land Limited to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the site known as Land at Old Forest Road, Winnersh. This report assesses the potential impacts and likely effects of the proposed development on ecology and nature conservation; the methods used to assess potential impacts; as well as the baseline conditions at and adjacent to the site.
- 1.2 The ecological baseline at and surrounding the site has been characterised by AAe by completing a desk study and an initial walk-over survey in January 2025, with follow-up habitat condition assessments completed in May 2025. The site's importance in relation to ecology and nature conservation has been assessed using standard guidelines provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) '*Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*' (2024) and by application of professional judgement.
- 1.3 Potential impacts have been identified for the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. A mitigation strategy has been devised to follow the hierarchy of avoiding, reducing and/or offsetting potential impacts, and has been incorporated within the development proposals. The significance of residual effects following implementation of these measures has then been assessed.
- 1.4 The proposals are to construct 53 new dwellings, with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the clearance of some vegetation. Areas of the site, including the established boundary vegetation, ditches and majority of the existing trees, will be retained, protected and enhanced for the benefit of wildlife. A range of mitigation and enhancement measures will be implemented to minimise the impact on wildlife utilising the site.

Site Description

- 1.5 The site is located off Old Forest Road in Emmbrook, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 794702 and covers approximately 1.6 hectares. The site was dominated by grass fields, with boundary vegetation, ditches, hedgerows and individual trees. The site is bordered by Toutley Road to the north, a grass field to the east, residential properties and associated gardens to the south, with the Millennium Arboretum to the west (Figure 1).

2.0 PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 The national planning policy relating to ecology and nature conservation is provided in *Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024*. '*Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*' is of particular relevance to this assessment. Here the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things:
 - "*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services; and*
 - *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity*".
- 2.2 The NPPF goes on to stress that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- 2.3 It also states that, to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
 - promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 2.4 The NPPF also notes that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be a key consideration when local planning authorities are determining planning applications.
- 2.5 Since the publication of the NPPF, Planning Policy Guidance has been produced. This is intended to provide further clarification to certain issues that have arisen out of NPPF and some additional guidance on particular issues to assist in the decision-making process.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended

- 2.6 The *Wildlife and Countryside Act*¹ originally came into force in 1981 and set out the basis for statutory wildlife protection in the UK. Part I deals with the protection of species and Part II deals with the designation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- 2.7 The Act covers the following broad areas:
- Wildlife - listing endangered or rare species and creating offences for killing, disturbing or injuring such species. In addition, the disturbance of any active bird nest is also noted as an offence;
 - Nature Conservation - protecting those sites which are National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and SSSIs;
 - Public Rights of Way - placing a duty on the local authority to maintain a definitive map of footpaths and rights of way. It also requires that landowners ensure footpaths and rights of way are continually accessible; and
 - Miscellaneous General Provisions.
- 2.8 The Act also makes it an offence to cause certain plant species to grow in the wild or release certain animals into the wild.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- 2.9 *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*² provides a statutory right of access to the countryside and modernises the rights of way system, bringing into force stronger protection for both wildlife and countryside. The Act is divided into five distinct sections. Part III is of relevance to ecology, nature conservation and wildlife protection.
- 2.10 The Act details a number of measures to promote and enhance wildlife conservation. These measures include improving protection for SSSIs and species and increasing penalties for deliberate damage to SSSIs. Furthermore, the Act affords statutory protection to Ramsar Sites which are wetlands designated under the International Convention on Wetlands.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended

- 2.11 *The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)*³ came into force in 1992 and provides for the creation of a network of protected wildlife areas across the European Union, known as 'Natura 2000'. The Natura 2000 network consists of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under

¹ Secretary of State, 1981. *Wildlife and Countryside Act*. HMSO

² Secretary of State, 2000. *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act*. HMSO

³ European Commission, 1992. Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Brussels. European Commission.

the *Birds Directive* (Council Directive 79/409/EEC). These sites are part of a range of measures aimed at conserving important or threatened habitats and species.

- 2.12 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*⁴ commonly known as *The Habitats Regulations* transpose the Habitats Directive into national law and set out the provisions for the protection and management of species and habitats of European importance, including Natura 2000 sites. The Regulations have been amended in England in relation to the process for the designation SACs. These are sites submitted by the Government for consideration as potential Natura 2000 sites and are also included within the definition of European Sites. All European Sites in England and Wales are of national importance and are designated as SSSIs. The Regulations also provide strict protection for species listed in Annex IV of the Act.
- 2.13 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012*⁵ came into force in August 2012. *Article 2 of the Wild Birds Directive* requires Member States to take requisite measures to maintain wild bird populations at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements, or to adapt the population of these species to that level.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006

- 2.14 *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act*⁶ came into force on 1 October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act.
- 2.15 A total of 56 habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats in England that were identified as requiring action in the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* (UK BAP) and continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*. They include terrestrial habitats, such as upland hay meadows to lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and freshwater and marine habitats such as ponds and sub-tidal sands and gravels.
- 2.16 There are a total of 943 species of principal importance included on the S41 list. These are the species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK BAP and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*.
- 2.17 In accordance with Section 41(4) of the Act, the Secretary of State will, in consultation with Natural England, keep this list under review and will publish a revised list if necessary.

Action Plans

- 2.18 The '*UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*' (July 2012) now succeeds the *UK BAP* and '*Conserving Biodiversity – the UK Approach*' and is the result of a change in strategic thinking following the publication of the *Convention on Biological Diversity's 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020'* and its 20 '*Aichi targets*', at Nagoya, Japan in October 2010, and the launch of the new *EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS)* in May 2011.
- 2.19 Although the *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework* does not confer any statutory legal protection, in practice many of the species listed already receive statutory legal protection under UK and/or European legislation. In addition, the majority of Priority Species and Habitats in the now superseded UK BAP are also Species and Habitats of Principal Importance.
- 2.20 Local Planning Authorities have a legal obligation or 'biodiversity duty' under *Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006* to conserve biodiversity by having particular regard to those species and habitats listed under Section 41.

⁴ Secretary of State, 2017. *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*. HMSO.

⁵ Secretary of State, 2012. *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations*. HMSO.

⁶ Secretary of State, 2006. *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act*. HMSO.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Study Area

- 3.1 The study area (Zone of Influence), for the purposes of the baseline desk-top data, included the site and a 2 km radius. The study area is shown on Figure 1.
- 3.2 Field surveys were undertaken covering the site and, where access allowed, the surrounding habitats to provide contextual information to further inform the assessment.

Baseline Data

- 3.3 A review of the previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report (dated February 2025) produced by AAe and baseline data provided by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) (obtained by AAe) was carried out. In addition, as certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated. A review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was also completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Field Surveys

- 3.4 The site was visited by AAe on two occasions in 2025, including an initial ecological walkover survey in January and follow-up habitat condition assessments completed in May.
- 3.5 The dominant plant species were recorded, and habitats classified according to their vegetation types and presented in the standard UK Habitat Classification System (*UK Hab Ltd, 2023*).

Habitat Evaluation

- 3.6 By applying recognised criteria produced by Ratcliffe (1977)⁷, the following seven-point scale was used to rank the importance of the habitat types and species they support. The value of each habitat was ranked according to its importance in a local context (a summary of the Ratcliffe criteria is attached at Appendix A):
- low value;
 - low to intermediate value;
 - intermediate value;
 - intermediate to high value;
 - high value (Local/District importance);
 - very high value (County importance e.g. Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), County Wildlife Site); and
 - exceptional value (National importance e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)).

Fauna

- 3.7 During the ecological walkover surveys, particular attention was paid to record the presence of/or suitable habitat for badgers, bats and herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) that may be present on the site or within adjacent habitats, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

Badgers

- 3.8 Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected by *The Protection of Badgers Act 1992*, under which it is an offence to harm badgers or their setts. A sett is defined as “any structure

⁷ Ratcliffe, D.A. (ed.), *A Nature Conservation Review*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger". Natural England has provided the following guidance on the interpretation of current use:

A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of 'current use' are present. Thus, a sett remains protected by the Act until such times as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they indicate that the sett is no longer in 'current use'.

3.9 A thorough survey of the whole site and adjacent habitats, where access was available, was carried out. Particular attention was paid to dense areas of vegetation to check for any evidence of badger activity, which is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- presence of holes with evidence of badger such as footprints, discarded hair, etc.;
- presence of dung pits and latrines;
- presence of well used runs with subsidiary evidence of badger activity; and
- presence of other indications of badger activity, such as signs of foraging and footprints.

Bats

3.10 Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention* (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe) the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

3.11 A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust⁸ and by an experienced and licensed ecologist⁹.

3.12 A careful inspection of each tree within the vicinity of the works was carried out to identify those features that are important for roosting bats. Surveying trees presents particular problems at any time of the year as bats will use a wide variety of roost sites in cavities, splits, cracks, knotholes and under loose bark, many of which are not easily detected from the ground. Each tree was assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **NONE** – Either no PRF's in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
- **FAR** – Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
- **PRF** – A tree with at least one PRF present.

3.13 Where possible, any tree categorised as **FAR** or **PRF** was then subject to a more detailed assessment to either confirm PRFs are present and/or fully inspect any PRFs to accurately subcategorise each tree into:

- **PRF-I** – is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitat.
- **PRF-M** – PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

3.14 The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

3.15 Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;

⁸ Collins, J. (ed) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

⁹ Lead surveyor was Harry Simpson BSc (Hons) MSc. EPSL licenses: 2023-11139-CL18-BAT and 2019-43532-CLS-CLS.

- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
 - areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
 - the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.
- 3.16 The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope.

Herpetofauna

Amphibians

- 3.17 All amphibian species have some level of protection under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection', is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles

- 3.18 All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.
- 3.19 An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for herpetofauna by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present on the site was lifted to check for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as sloughs (shed skins).

Other Species

- 3.20 In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

Assessment Evaluation Methodology

- 3.21 The ecological evaluation of the scheme follows the geographical scale as set out in the *Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (2024)*. To characterise the likely impacts of predicted changes on any ecological resources as far as possible, impact characteristics such as: impact, magnitude, extent, duration, reversibility, timing and frequency will be assessed. Following the characterisation of the impacts, assessments would be primarily based on professional judgement as to whether the integrity of a site or the conservation status of habitats and or species is likely to be affected (i.e. if there are any significant ecological impacts).

Geographical Scope

- 3.22 Designated sites, habitats and species (i.e. Valued Ecological Receptors (VERs)/ecological receptors) identified within the study area have been assigned ecological values using the standard CIEEM scale that classifies ecological receptors within a defined geographic context. The classification uses recognised and published criteria (i.e. Ratcliffe 1977) where the habitats and site are assessed in relation to their size, diversity, naturalness, rarity, fragility, typicalness, connectivity with surroundings, intrinsic value, recorded history and potential value. The following terms of reference was used:

- International importance;
- National importance (England);
- Regional importance;
- Country (or Metropolitan) importance;
- District (or Unitary Authority, City or Borough) importance;
- Local or Parish importance;
- Site-level importance (limited to the Site boundary); and
- Negligible importance.

3.23 The Geographic Conservation Values detailed in Table 1 provide examples on how the valuation of ecological receptors will be applied within this assessment at different geographical scales and to different populations of species. In the case of designated sites or features, the nature conservation value accorded to that description was recognised. For example, sites designated as SACs are recognised as being of value in an international context.

Table 1: Geographic Conservation Values

Value	Examples
International	• Internationally designated sites including SPA, SAC, Ramsar site, Biogenetic Reserve, World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve, candidate SACs, potential SPAs and potential Ramsar sites. • Discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for international designation but which are not themselves designated as such. • A viable area of a habitat type listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive, or smaller areas which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. • Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an International/European level 1, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species at an International/European level; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
National	• Nationally designated sites including SSSIs, National Nature Reserve (NNR), Marine Nature Reserve; discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for national designation (e.g. SSSI selection guidelines) but which are not themselves designated as such; or areas of a key habitat type identified in the UK BAP. • Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at the International/European level, or at the UK or National level 2, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across Britain or the Country; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
Regional	• Areas of a key habitat type identified in the Regional BAP. • Viable areas of key habitat identified as being of Regional value in the appropriate Natural Area Profile (or equivalent); or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. • Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an International/European level, or at the UK/National level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the Region; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
County/ Metropolitan	• Designated sites at the county level including SNCIs, County Wildlife Sites; areas of a key habitat type identified in the Local BAP; or discrete areas which meet the published selection criteria for county designation but which are not themselves designated as such. • Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an International/European level, or at the UK/National level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the County; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle.
District/ Borough	• Designated sites at the local level including Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); or areas of habitat identified in a sub-county (district/borough) BAP; or in the Natural Area profile (or equivalent). • Resident or regularly occurring populations of species which may be considered at an International/European level, or at the UK/National level, the loss of which would adversely affect the conservation status or distribution of the species across the

	District; or where the population forms a critical part of a wider population; or the species is at a critical phase of its life cycle. • Areas of habitat or populations of species listed within the Overseeing Organisation's BAP.
Local	• Features of local value include areas of habitat or populations/communities of species considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the local context, for example, species-rich hedgerows as well as SINC's and SMIs.
Site	• Areas of habitat considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the site. Includes viable populations of species which are of importance within the site.
Negligible	• Areas of a site considered to have no ecological value such as built development or hardstanding with no species of importance present or using the area.
Notes: 1: - Species protected at a European level means: bird species listed within the Birds Directive or animal/plant species listed within the Habitats Directive. 2: - Species protected or which may be considered at the UK or National level means: birds, other animals and plants listed within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedules 1, 5 and 8 respectively; and/or listed for their principal importance for biodiversity in accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Section 41 [England] or 42 [Wales] and/or Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 Section 2(4) [Scotland]; species listed within the UKBAP or UK Red Data Books.	

- 3.24 The report uses a topic specific assessment framework. The ecological features of the site will be evaluated on a scale for the purpose of this study with reference to the Significance Criteria detailed in Table 2. The evaluation of features takes into account the direct biodiversity value of habitats and species, the indirect value of features which help support the ecological integrity of key features, legal protection and evaluation against national and local planning guidance and objectives. There is no universally accepted quantitative threshold for assessing significance of impacts to ecological receptors. However, professional judgement has been used to define the significance of an impact.

Table 2: Significance Criteria

Significance Criteria	Description of Criteria
Major beneficial	Positive Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at Regional, National or International level.
Moderate beneficial	Positive Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at District-County level.
Minor beneficial	Positive Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at the site-Local level.
Neutral/Not significant	No Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status.
Minor adverse	Adverse Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at the site-Local level.
Moderate adverse	Adverse Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at District-County level.
Major adverse	Adverse Impact on ecological integrity or conservation status at Regional, National or International level.

- 3.25 The potential impacts on designated sites, habitats and species were considered in relation to the proposals. The assessment was made by reference to the baseline conditions at the site. The residual impacts have been characterised according to the following variables:

- **magnitude and extent** - quantitative size of an impact (e.g. area of habitat/number of individuals);
- **duration and reversibility** - timescale of impact (days/weeks/months/years) until recovery. Permanent impacts are described as such, and likelihood of recovery is detailed where appropriate;
- **frequency** - frequency of impact (if appropriate; described as low to high and quantified where possible);
- **complexity** - whether the impact will directly or indirectly affect the feature; and
- **negative/positive** - if the impact will be beneficial or detrimental to the feature.

3.26 The assessment also includes an indication of the confidence level that the change will take place. The following terminology has been used:

- **certain:** probability estimated to exceed 95 %;
- **likely/probable:** probability estimated to be 50 - 95 %;
- **unlikely/possible:** probability estimated to be 5 - 49 %; and
- **extremely unlikely:** probability estimated to be less than 5 %.

Assumptions and Limitations

3.27 The availability and quality of the data obtained during the desk-top study is reliant on third party responses. This typically varies from region to region and for different species groups. Furthermore, the comprehensiveness of data often depends on the level of coverage, the expertise and experience of the recorder and the submission of records to the local recorder. It should be noted that any ecological site visit provides a 'snapshot' of ecological conditions at the site and do not record plants or animals that may be present on-site at different times of the year.

3.28 The assessment has been based on information received from a number of parties and it is assumed that the information is accurate. The assessment of residual effects assumes that the proposed development would be realised as per the plans and proposals that accompany the planning submission. It should be noted that two separate site visits have been completed by AAe at different times of the year (January and May 2025), affording more accurate information with regards to the species and habitats present on the site.

4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS AND EVALUATION

Baseline Data

4.1 According to the Multi-agency website and data returned by TVERC, there are no statutory designated ecological sites located on or adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated site is Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located 1.3 km to the south-east. The site is located within the outer Impact Risk Zone¹⁰ for Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), recorded approximately 3 km to the north-west. The nearest non-statutory designated site is Bearwood Estate – woods and lakes, located 0.75 km to the south-west of the site. Full details of the designated sites located within the 2 km search area are provided in Table 3.

4.2 There were no records of protected species located on or adjacent to the site. There are a number of records of protected species within the 2 km study area, the majority of which were supplied with specific 6-figure grid references allowing a high-resolution indication of their locations. Further details of protected species recorded within 2 km of the site are provided in Table 3.

4.3 According to the Multi-agency Website, there are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on the site. The nearest Habitat of Principal Importance is an area Deciduous Woodland, located approximately 0.02 km to the west of the site, beyond the adjacent arboretum. The majority of the site is located within a Network Enhancement Zone 2¹¹.

¹⁰ Due to the nature of the proposals, the Local Planning Authority may consult with Natural England to ensure no adverse impact upon the nearby SSSI.

¹¹ Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.

Table 3: Summary of Data Search Results (TVERC)

Statutory Designated Sites		
Description	Protection/designation	Distance/direction
Holt Copse & Joel Park	LNR	1.30 km to the SE
Non-Statutory Designated Sites		
Description	Protection/designation	Distance/direction
Bearwood Estate – Woods and Lakes	LWS	0.75 km to the SW
Furze Covert	LWS	1.10 km to the NNE
Holt Copse	LWS	1.30 km to the SE
Cantley Park	LWS	1.60 km to the SE
Woosehill Meadows	LWS	1.60 km to the S
Dinton Pastures Country Park	LWS	1.70 km to the NNW
Winnersh Meadows	LWS	1.80 km to the NW
Protected/notable Species (Specific Grid References)		
Description	Protection/designation	Distance/direction
Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.12 km to the W
Cinnabar (<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>)	Priority Species	0.20 km to the SW
Bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>)	Protected Species	0.20 km to the SW
Red Kite (<i>Milvus milvus</i>)	Protected Species	0.20 km to the SW
Brown Long-eared Bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.22 km to the SSW
Common Frog (<i>Rana temporaria</i>)	Protected Species (against sale)	0.24 km to the SSW
Smooth Newt (<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>)	Protected Species (against sale)	0.24 km to the SSW
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	Priority Species	0.25 km to the SSE
Stag Beetle (<i>Lucanus cervus</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species (against sale) & Priority Species	0.28 km to the S
West European Hedgehog (<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>)	Priority Species	0.34 km to the ENE
Common Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	0.37 km to the SSE
Song Thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)	Priority Species	0.42 km to the ESE
Eurasian Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.42 km to the NNE
Slow-worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	0.44 km to the ESE
Serotine (<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	0.44 km to the SSW
Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>)	European Protected Species	0.45 km to the NE
Pipistrelle species (<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species	0.50 km to the S
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)	Protected Species	0.54 km to the NE
Bat (<i>Chiroptera sp.</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species	0.54 km to the S
Noctule (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.56 km to the SW
Soprano Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.56 km to the SW
Eurasian Badger (<i>Meles meles</i>)	Badgers Act (1992)	0.60 km to the SSE
Whiskered Bat (<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	0.93 km to the SSW
Long-eared species (<i>Plecotus sp.</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species	0.95 km to the WNW
Myotis species (<i>Myotis sp.</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species	0.95 km to the WNW
White Admiral (<i>Limenitis camilla</i>)	Priority Species	0.99 km to the SSW
Black Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>)	Protected Species	1.10 km to the E
Barn Owl (<i>Tyto alba</i>)	Protected Species	1.12 km to the ENE
Cuckoo (<i>Cuculus canorus</i>)	Priority Species	1.21 km to the SSE
Daubenton's (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	1.22 km to the N

Palmate Newt (<i>Lissotriton helveticus</i>)	Protected Species (against sale)	1.22 km to the W
Beaded Chestnut (<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Blood-vein (<i>Timandra comae</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Brindled Beauty (<i>Lycia hirtaria</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Centre-barred Sallow (<i>Atethmia centrago</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet (<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Dot Moth (<i>Melanchra persicariae</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Dusky Brocade (<i>Apamea remissa</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Dusky Thorn (<i>Ennomos fuscantaria</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Ear Moth (<i>Amphipoea oclea</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Feathered Gothic (<i>Tholera decimalis</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Figure of Eight (<i>Diloba caeruleocephala</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Garden Dart (<i>Euxoa nigricans</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Green-brindled Crescent (<i>Allophyas oxyacanthae</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Grey Dagger (<i>Acronicta psi</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Knot Grass (<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Large Nutmeg (<i>Apamea anceps</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Large Wainscot (<i>Rhizedra lutos</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Minor Shoulder-knot (<i>Brachylomia viminalis</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Mottled Rustic (<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Mouse Moth (<i>Amphipyra tragopoginis</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Oak Hook-tip (<i>Watsonalla binaria</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Rosy Rustic (<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Rustic (<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
September Thorn (<i>Ennomos erosaria</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Small Emerald (<i>Hemistola chrysoprasaria</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Small Square-spot (<i>Diarsia rubi</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Spinach (<i>Eulithis mellinata</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Sprawler (<i>Asteroscopus sphinx</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
White Ermine (<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>)	Priority Species	1.23 km to the WNW
Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)	Protected Species	1.24 km to the SSE
Yellowhammer (<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>)	Priority Species	1.39 km to the E
Linnet (<i>Linaria cannabina</i>)	Priority Species	1.49 km to the ENE
Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	Priority Species	1.49 km to the ENE
Grass Snake (<i>Natrix helvetica</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1.50 km to the SSE
Cornflower (<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>)	Priority Species	1.52 km to the SSE
Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	Priority Species	1.52 km to the SSE
Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	Priority Species	1.52 km to the SSE
Yellow Wagtail (<i>Motacilla flava</i>)	Priority Species	1.52 km to the SSE
European Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>)	Priority Species	1.53 km to the NNW
European Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1.56 km to the N
Nathusius's Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	1.58 km to the SE
Red-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius collurio</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1.61 km to the E
Shaded Broad-bar (<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>)	Priority Species	1.64 km to the NNE
A Bat (<i>Nyctalus/Eptesicus agg.</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species	1.66 km to the WSW
Western Barbastelle (<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	1.66 km to the WSW
Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	Protected Species	1.67 km to the SE

Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>)	Priority Species	1.68 km to the SSE
Hobby (<i>Falco subbuteo</i>)	Protected Species	1.72 km to the NNE
Common Toad (<i>Bufo bufo</i>)	Protected Species (against sale) & Priority Species	1.73 km to the NW
Lesser Redpoll (<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>)	Priority Species	1.74 km to the SSE
Ghost Moth (<i>Hepialus humuli</i>)	Priority Species	1.75 km to the NW
Small Phoenix (<i>Ecliptopera silaceata</i>)	Priority Species	1.81 km to the NW
Lackey (<i>Malacosoma neustria</i>)	Priority Species	1.87 km to the NW
Deep-brown Dart (<i>Aporophyla lutulenta</i>)	Priority Species	1.9 km to the NW
Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa striata</i>)	Priority Species	1.91 km to the E
Brambling (<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>)	Protected Species	1.91 km to the E
Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)	Protected Species	1.91 km to the E
Redwing (<i>Turdus iliacus</i>)	Protected Species	1.91 km to the E
Natterer's (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	2.14 km to the SW
Protected/notable Species (Coarse Resolution Records)		
Description	Protection/designation	Record Accuracy
Leisler's Bat (<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>)	European Protected Species & Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Grasshopper Warbler (<i>Locustella naevia</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Hawfinch (<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Reed Bunting (<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Ring Ouzel (<i>Turdus torquatus</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Small Heath (<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Tree Pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Turtle Dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Wall (<i>Lasiommata megera</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Wood Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>)	Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Bats (<i>Vespertilionidae</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Black-necked Grebe (<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Cetti's Warbler (<i>Cettia cetti</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Crossbill (<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Firecrest (<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Little Gull (<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Little Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius dubius</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Little Tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Ruff (<i>Calidris pugnax</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Whimbrel (<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)	Protected Species	1 km grid accuracy
Bittern (<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy

Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
Tundra Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy
White-letter Hairstreak (<i>Satyrrium w-album</i>)	Protected Species & Priority Species	1 km grid accuracy

N.B.: All distances are calculated from the centre of the site, National Grid Reference: SU 794702.

LWS = Local Wildlife Site; LNR = Local Nature Reserve. European Protected Species = species listed under *The Habitats Directive* Annexes II and IV.

Protected Species = species listed under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* Schedules 1, 5 and 8.

Priority Species = species listed under the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006* Section 41.

- 4.4 Historic satellite imagery shows that the site previously formed part of a larger arable field, which was partially cleared to facilitate the construction of Toutley Road in 2020. Since this time, the site has remained largely unchanged, comprising the periodically managed grass fields, with boundary ditches and vegetation including hedgerows and trees.

Field Survey

Introduction

- 4.5 AAe carried out an extended Phase 1 habitat survey in January 2025, with a follow-up walkover survey and habitat condition assessments completed in May 2025. The survey results found the site to be dominated by the existing grass fields, with areas of colonising scrub, bracken and ruderal vegetation at the boundaries. Boundary hedgerows and ditches were also present, with a number of individual trees recorded. An access track connected the site to Old Forest Road, with areas of more formal planting and mown verges.
- 4.6 The results of the surveys are presented as a series of habitat descriptions for each of the areas on the site. The Existing Habitats Plan is shown on Figure 2 and the UK Habs habitat descriptions should be read in conjunction with this Plan (*UKHab Ltd, 2023*). Target Notes (TNs) were made on any species or features of particular importance. An indicative plant species list is attached at Appendix B (nomenclature follows Stace, 2019). A series of site photographs has been provided at Appendix C.

Habitat Types and Evaluation

Modified Grassland

- 4.7 The site comprised two grass fields, separated by ditches and boundary vegetation. Species recorded within the fields were typical of modified grassland and included perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). A few isolated areas of lawn were present bordering the shared access track, with species recorded including perennial rye-grass and daisy (*Bellis perennis*).
- 4.8 The grass fields, due to their ongoing periodic management and regular disturbance from walkers and pets, provided limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for wildlife. The restricted areas of lawn bordering the access track were intensively managed, with a uniform, short sward and lacking in species diversity, thus reducing their overall ecological value.

Habitat value: Low to Intermediate

Artificial Unvegetated/Unsealed Surface

- 4.9 The access track leading to the site comprised of gravel and bare ground, regularly disturbed by vehicles and walkers, with no vegetation recorded.
- 4.10 The unvegetated ground provided limited value for wildlife.

Habitat value: Low

Hedgerows

- 4.11 A blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*) hedgerow was present at the south-eastern site boundary, with colonising bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and common ivy (*Hedera helix*) also present.
- 4.12 The hedgerow provided some foraging and sheltering opportunities for common species of wildlife and some bird nesting habitat.

Habitat value: Intermediate

Bramble Scrub

- 4.13 Areas of bramble scrub were recorded at the site boundaries, along the access track and separating the two grass fields.
- 4.14 The areas of colonising scrub provided some foraging and sheltering opportunities for common species of wildlife as well as some bird nesting habitat, although their restricted size reduces their overall ecological value.

Habitat value: Intermediate

Ruderal Vegetation

- 4.15 Restricted areas of colonising ruderal vegetation were recorded at the site boundaries. Species recorded included common nettle, clover (*Trifolium spp.*) and docks (*Rumex spp.*).
- 4.16 The ruderal vegetation provided some foraging and sheltering opportunities for wildlife, but due to its restricted extent and diversity, its overall ecological value was limited.

Habitat value: Low

Bracken

- 4.17 An area of colonising bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) was recorded along the western site boundary.
- 4.18 The bracken provided limited sheltering and foraging habitat for common species.

Habitat value: Low

Ditches

- 4.19 Boundary ditches were recorded on the site, located at the western and eastern site boundaries, with a restricted ditch present between the two grass fields. The ditches had fluctuating water levels, with some standing water recorded during the initial site visit (January 2025) but with all ditches dry during the second site visit (May 2025). The ditches were all heavily shaded with overhanging vegetation and areas of colonising bracken and common nettle present along the banks, with no aquatic vegetation recorded.
- 4.20 The ditches provide some alternative foraging opportunities for wildlife and could provide connectivity to neighbouring habitat, acting as wildlife corridors. However, their lack of vegetation and dense shading, limits their overall ecological value.

Habitat value: Low to intermediate

Introduced Shrub

- 4.21 Restricted areas of ornamental planting were present along the existing access track, with species recorded limited to cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*).

- 4.22 The shrubs, comprising non-native species, provided only limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for common species of wildlife, although did provide some bird nesting habitat.

Habitat value: Low

Rural Trees

- 4.23 A number of individual trees were recorded on site and at the site boundaries. Semi-mature/mature tree species recorded included oak (*Quercus sp.*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), cherry (*Prunus sp.*), western red-cedar (*Thuja plicata*), Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis X leylandii*).

- 4.24 The trees provide sheltering and foraging opportunities for a range of wildlife and bird nesting habitat.

Habitat value: Intermediate to high

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 4.25 The site is accessed via Old Forest Road to the south.

- 4.26 The highway (Old Forest Road) does not provide any suitable opportunities for species of wildlife.

Habitat value: Low

Adjacent Habitat

- 4.27 The site is bordered by Toutley Road to the north, a grass field to the east, residential properties and associated gardens to the south, with an arboretum to the west, with woodland beyond.

- 4.28 The adjacent Millennium Arboretum provides shelter and foraging habitat for a range of common species, as well as a green/wildlife corridor and link to the woodland beyond. The residential properties to the south provide some alternative habitat for a number of common species, however Toutley Road and Old Forest Road limited the overall connectivity of the site with surrounding habitats.

Fauna

Badgers

- 4.29 No evidence of badger or their setts was recorded on the site, with the nearest

Bats

- 4.30 No buildings or structures were recorded on the site.

- 4.31 The site, being dominated by grass fields and boundary vegetation, provides some foraging habitat for bats, with more suitable habitat recorded within the adjacent woodland area to the west. The results of the tree inspection are detailed in Table 4 below, and the numbering provided follows the Tree Constraints Plan produced by GHA Trees Arboricultural Consultancy (dated January 2025). It is understood that the majority of trees are scheduled to be retained and protected as part of the scheme, and a number of trees were assessed under the categories **FAR** or **PRF** for roosting bats, due to their age, size and/or presence of visible PRF's.

Table 4: Visual Observations (On Site Tree Assessment)

Tree no	Species	Observations	Roosting Value/potential
T1	Oak	Ivy clad	PRF-I
T2	Oak	Tree lacking any PRFs	NONE
T3	Oak	Peeling bark, ivy clad	PRF-I
T4	Oak	Tree lacking any PRFs	NONE

T5	Oak	Tree lacking any PRFs	NONE
T9	Oak	Ivy clad – upper trunk not visible	FAR
T10	Ash	Tree lacking any PRFs	NONE
T11	Oak	Cut trunk - hollow	PRF-I
T12	Oak	Rot hole	PRF-I
T13	Oak	Dead wood in canopy with rot hole	PRF-I
T14	Oak	Dead standing tree with rot hole	PRF-I
T15	Oak	Tree lacking any PRFs	NONE
G16	Oak	Trees lacking any PRFs	NONE
G23	Ash and Robinia	Trees lacking any PRFs	NONE
T24	Corsican pine	Ivy clad	PRF-I
G25	Sycamore, ash, oak	Trees lacking any PRFs	NONE
G26	Leyland cypress	Trees lacking any PRFs	NONE

Herpetofauna

- 4.32 There were no ponds on the site and therefore no breeding opportunities for any species of amphibian. The site, which was partially cleared to facilitate the construction of the adjacent Toutley Road and dominated by periodically managed grass fields, with restricted areas of colonising ruderal, bracken and scrub habitat at the boundaries, afforded only limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for common species of herpetofauna. The closest herpetofauna record returned by TVERC was for great crested newt, located 0.12 km from the site, beyond Toutley Road, which forms an intervening barrier to movement. It should be noted that the site is located within an 'Amber Zone'¹² for great crested newts on the NatureSpace Impact Risk Zone Map. The nearest reptile record (slow-worm) was located over 0.44 km away, with intervening barriers to movement including roads, residential properties and gardens. Despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna was seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted during either survey.

Other Wildlife

- 4.33 Apart from a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

Future Baseline

- 4.34 It is anticipated that, should the proposed development not take place, the baseline ecological conditions described above would remain largely unchanged. However, it is possible that without continued management the open areas of the site will eventually be lost and over time the site may develop into dense scrub.

Evaluation

Statutory & Non-statutory designated sites

- 4.35 No European protected sites are located within the surrounding 2 km study area, with the nearest statutory designated site being Holt Copse and Joel Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located 1.3 km to the south-east of the site, with Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), located 7.32 km to the south-east of the site¹³. Given the intervening barriers to movement (agricultural fields, infrastructure and residential buildings) and distance from the site, there are considered to be no impacts on these important sites. There are a number of non-statutory designated LWS's within the 2 km study area, with the nearest being Bearwood Estate – woods and lakes, located 0.75 km to the south-west of the site. However, the scheme has been designed sensitively, with the majority of boundary vegetation and trees scheduled to be retained, protected and enhanced, with new areas of public open space created on the site for the use of new residents. In addition, given the intervening barriers to movement, there are considered to be no direct impacts on the existing LWS's, which are to remain unaffected by the

¹² Amber – suitable habitat – great crested newts are likely to be present (available at: [Impact Risk Zone Maps - NatureSpace Partnership Limited](#))

¹³ There is a "Zone of Influence" around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA within which measures are required to avoid adverse impacts on its conservation interests. This 'buffer zone' extends from 400 meters to 5 km from the perimeter of the SPA and, therefore, the site is located outside the "Zone of Influence" and no further measures are required on this occasion.

proposals, with new pedestrian links provided to the Old Forest Road Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), located opposite the site, beyond Toutley Road.

Habitats & Fauna

- 4.36 The site does support habitats considered to be of sufficient ecological value to warrant inclusion as VERs within this assessment, as summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Valued Ecological Receptors: Habitats and Fauna

Habitat	Description & Distribution of Habitat	Ecological Value
Modified grassland	A number of areas of modified grassland were present on the site associated with existing fields (periodically managed) and shared access track	Site
Artificial Unvegetated/ Unsealed Surface	A shared access track links the Site to Old Forest Road to the south, surfaced with crushed aggregate and compacted, bare soil.	Negligible
Hedgerows	A native species hedgerow, dominated by blackthorn, was located along the south-eastern site boundary.	Site
Bramble scrub	There were areas of dense bramble at the boundaries of the site.	Site
Ruderal/ Ephemeral	Located mostly at the perimeter of the site, with re-colonising vegetation emerging.	Site
Bracken	Two areas of colonising bracken were recorded on site, with the largest section at the western boundary.	Site
Watercourse (ditches)	Boundary ditches were present on site – narrow and heavily overshadowed by dense scrub.	Site
Introduced Shrub	Restricted areas of formal, ornamental planting along the shared access track.	Site
Rural Trees	A number of individual trees were present at the boundaries of the site, including immature, semi-mature and mature trees.	Local
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Old Forest Road is recorded to the south and forms part of the existing access to the site.	Negligible
Fauna		
Badgers	No evidence of badgers or their setts was recorded.	Negligible
Bat	Although no bat roosts were recorded, the nearby woodland and several mature trees recorded on site have the potential to support bat roosts.	Local/District
Amphibians (Great Crested Newts)	No ponds present on the site, with no breeding opportunities recorded. Local great crested newt (GCN) records returned but separated from the site by intervening barriers to movement (Toutley Road) with likelihood of GCN's being present assessed as low on site.	Local/District
Reptiles	No reptiles recorded on the site during any visit carried out to date, although some suitable habitat does exist at the site margins.	Site/Local

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

Impacts and Mitigation

Predicted Likely Effects

- 5.1 The following section describes the potential impacts (both adverse and beneficial), in the absence of any mitigation measures, that could arise from the development proposals, both during the construction phase and once the development has been completed and fully occupied (Operational).

Effects during Construction Phase

Habitats

- 5.2 Construction impacts on the site relate to direct loss of natural habitats such as grassland, ruderal vegetation, scrub and trees. Although the majority of the site due for development lies within habitats of limited ecological value, parts of the site, particularly at the boundaries, are of some ecological value. The site provides foraging habitat and shelter for a range of common species. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase (such as increased noise, dust generation, lighting and increased human activity) could have an adverse impact on the site and there could be accidental damage from machinery.

Modified Grassland

- 5.3 The majority of the modified grassland will be lost to facilitate the proposals, with potential for restricted areas of boundary grassland to be retained and protected as part of the scheme. The areas of modified grassland are of limited ecological value, with any impact considered to be **neutral/not significant**.

Artificial Unvegetated/Unsealed Surface

- 5.4 The existing shared access track will be modified and re-surfaced as part of the works and any impact is considered to be **neutral/not significant**.

Hedgerows

- 5.5 The existing boundary hedgerows are to be retained and protected as part of the scheme, although there is some potential for accidental damage from machinery during the works. Therefore, any accidental impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Bramble Scrub

- 5.6 Areas of colonising bramble will be cleared from the site to permit the work and facilitate the development. The bramble is of limited value but does provide some cover for common species and bird nesting opportunities, therefore, any impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Ruderal/Ephemeral

- 5.7 Areas of colonising ruderal vegetation will be cleared from the site to permit the work including areas which are dominated by common nettle. The ruderal vegetation is of limited value but does provide some cover for common species and therefore any impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Bracken

- 5.8 An area of colonising bracken will be cleared from the west of the site to permit the works. The bracken is of limited value but does provide some cover for common species and therefore any impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Ditches

- 5.9 The existing boundary ditches are to be retained and protected as part of the scheme, although there is some potential for accidental damage from machinery during the works. Therefore, any accidental impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Introduced Shrub

- 5.10 The existing ornamental planting will be removed to permit the works. The ornamental planting, dominated by non-native species is of limited value but does provide some cover for common species and bird nesting opportunities and therefore any impact is considered to be **neutral/not significant**.

Rural Trees

- 5.11 The majority of the existing trees recorded on site are to be retained and protected as part of the scheme, with a total of five trees (T12, T13, T14, T19 and T22¹⁴) scheduled to be felled to facilitate the proposals. The trees scheduled for removal provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for common species and bird nesting habitat, with T12, T13 and T14 also

¹⁴ Tree numbering provided follows the Tree Constraints Plan produced by GHA Trees Arboricultural Consultancy (dated January 2025).

containing Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) for bats. Therefore, any impact is considered to be **moderate-adverse**.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 5.12 Old Forest Road, which forms part of the southern access to the site will remain unaffected by the works, albeit with a short-term, temporary increase in construction traffic during the works. Consequently, the any temporary increase in construction traffic is considered to be **neutral/not significant**.

Badger

- 5.13 No evidence of badgers or their setts was recorded on the site, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is considered to be **neutral/not significant**.

Bats

- 5.14 Although no roosts have been confirmed, a number of the trees scheduled to be felled (T12, T13 and T14) contain PRFs for bats. Felling of trees with PRFs may result in the accidental death or injury of bats, with the removal of any other vegetation (bracken, scrub, hedgerows and grassland) will result in some loss of potential foraging habitat for bats. However, the majority of existing individual trees and boundary vegetation are scheduled to be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the scheme, maintaining existing flightpaths and large areas of foraging habitat. In addition, temporary disturbance from the construction phase (such as increased noise, dust generation, lighting and increased human activity) can have an adverse impact on ecological receptors and the species they support. Although the existing boundary vegetation and majority of trees are to be retained as part of the proposals, it is recommended that any trees scheduled to be felled, are first subject to a more detailed tree inspection (such as a tree climbing inspection, or similar) prior to removal. Any impact is considered to be **major-adverse**.

Birds

- 5.15 Some direct loss of habitat (trees, scrub and ruderal vegetation) will result in a slight reduction of foraging and nesting habitat. In addition, temporary disturbance from the construction phase (such as increased noise, dust generation, lighting and increased human activity) can have an adverse impact on ecological receptors and the species they support, although birds can become habituated to construction activities. Any impact is considered to be **minor adverse**.

Amphibians

- 5.16 No ponds have been recorded on the site, with no species of amphibian recorded during either site visit. However, as some restricted areas of suitable habitat for herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) are present at the boundaries, there is a risk that animals could potentially come to harm by being trapped in excavations, or killed by machinery, with direct loss of some habitat also expected. In addition, temporary disturbance from the construction phase (such as run-off/pollution, increased noise, dust generation, lighting and increased human activity) can have an adverse impact on ecological receptors and the species they support, although as no ponds are to be impacted by the works and the existing boundary ditches are to be retained and protected, it is recommended that an ecological watching brief to be carried out for the clearance of any suitable habitat that will be removed. As a result, any impact to amphibians is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Reptiles

- 5.17 No reptiles have been recorded on the site during either site visit carried out to date. However, as some restricted areas of suitable habitat for common species of herpetofauna are present at the boundaries, there is a risk that animals could potentially come to harm by being trapped in excavations, or killed by machinery, with direct loss of some habitat also expected. In addition, temporary disturbance from the construction phase (such as increased noise, dust generation, lighting and increased human activity) can have an adverse impact on ecological receptors and the species they support. Although the existing boundary vegetation will remain unaffected by the proposals, it is recommended that an ecological watching brief be carried out for the clearance of any suitable habitat that will be removed. As a result, any impact is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Effects during Operation/Occupation

- 5.18 The development proposals are to construct up to 53 new dwellings, with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the clearance of some vegetation. Areas of the site, including the established boundary vegetation, ditches and majority of the existing trees, will be retained, protected and enhanced for the benefit of wildlife. A range of mitigation and enhancement measures will be implemented to minimise the impact on wildlife utilising the site. Although the site experiences some disturbance from on-site activities, the change of use will cause an increase in use from the new residents. Any impact is considered to be **minor adverse**.
- 5.19 The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. No lighting will be directed onto the nearby arboretum or established boundary vegetation to be retained, which will remain dark. As there is potential for foraging bats on site, which are light sensitive, any increased light levels are considered to be **minor-adverse**.
- 5.20 Additional pets will be introduced to the site which could result in the displacement and population decline of wildlife using the site. However, there is already a certain level of disturbance from the existing residents that use the site and a Public Right of Way within the arboretum to the west of the site and any impact from increased pressure is considered to be **minor-adverse**.

Summary of Significance of Effects (Before Mitigation)

- 5.21 Overall, adverse effects have been avoided or reduced through inherent mitigation and in the retention of the existing boundary habitats, including the majority of trees, established hedgerows and ditches present on the Site. Taken in combination with the relatively low level of importance attributed to the majority of the VERs, the overall impact is considered to be **minor-adverse** in the absence of mitigation.

Scope of Mitigation and Enhancement

During Construction Phase

- 5.22 In order to minimise impacts on habitats and ecological receptors (wildlife and flora) a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), dated May 2025 has been prepared by Stuart Michael Associates Limited (SMA) and held under separate cover (SMA Ref: 7365/CEMP). The CEMP includes measures proposed to manage, mitigate and monitor the main environmental impacts of the construction, including light, noise, vibration, emissions to air, dust, litter, traffic, water and pollution incidents.

Badgers

- 5.23 Although badger records were returned within the surrounding 2 km study area, [REDACTED]

Herpetofauna

- 5.24 As restricted areas of suitable terrestrial habitat are present on site (at the boundaries), all site clearance works will be carried out adopting Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs). In accordance with this precautionary approach, all works should be supervised by an ecologist and completed during the appropriate time of year when all herpetofauna are fully active (although weather and temperature-dependent, reptiles are usually latest to emerge and all species are fully active from April through to October). A Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for the works has been attached at Appendix E. In the unlikely event of encountering any great crested newts then all works must cease immediately and AAe or Natural England contacted immediately for advice. Procedures will then be followed to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) and/or a District Level Licence for great crested newts.

- 5.25 Any works carried out in close proximity to the boundary ditches will be carried out carefully to avoid any potential pollution, with standard controls applied as detailed within the Pollution Prevention Guidelines produced by the Environment Agency.

Bats

- 5.26 Although no bat roosts have been recorded on the site, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.
- 5.27 Although the majority of the existing trees are to be retained as part of the proposals, prior any tree removal works, further survey work would be required (such as a tree climbing inspection) to determine presence or likely absence of bats within those trees identified as supporting PRFs (T12, T13 and T14), to advise on any restrictions.

- 5.28 In order to protect the sensitive areas of the site to be retained, particularly the established trees, hedgerows and ditches; suitable fencing will be erected to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches will be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work Recommendations*'. Consideration should be given to tree surgery rather than the felling of any trees, where possible.

Nesting Birds

- 5.29 All species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. For this reason, vegetation clearance should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which generally runs from March to August, inclusive. If this is not possible a check should be carried out prior to the works to ensure there are no active nests present.

During Operation/Occupation

- 5.30 The scheme has been designed sensitively to retain areas of established habitat, wherever possible. These areas will be enhanced with other neutral grassland (sown with wildflower seed) and individual trees. Where trees are to be lost, to facilitate the new development, these will be cut as near to the ground as possible and used to form a number of loggeries within hedgerows and open grassland areas. Also, any existing deadwood will be carefully lifted and added to the loggeries. This will provide important habitat for invertebrates, bryophytes and fungi.
- 5.31 Any boundary treatment of the new development will be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by planting up a series of hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences. If close boarded fences are required for security reasons these should be minimised and raised slightly off the ground (c. 150-200 mm) to allow animals to pass underneath.
- 5.32 New planting will be introduced to the site. Wherever possible, native species of local provenance or species of known value to wildlife should be used.
- 5.33 In addition, enhancement measures across the site will include the provision of new roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species and the creation of new wildlife habitats, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:
- Nest boxes
 - Bug hotels
 - Bat boxes
 - Hedgehog houses
 - Pollinator nest sites
 - Planting wildflowers

- 5.34 In accordance with best practice a sensitive lighting scheme will be produced. The adjacent arboretum and existing boundary vegetation to be retained, will remain unlit. This will essentially minimise any impact the scheme may have on the local wildlife and in particular foraging/commuting badgers, bats, birds and herpetofauna.
- 5.35 In order to enhance the site for nature conservation a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will be produced. This will detail the creation of new habitats such as tree planting and wildflower meadow areas and the ongoing management of retained habitats such as mature trees, scrub, grassland and watercourses. Footpaths will be created through the site, which will be linked to other paths in the surrounding area and will be used by the public. The site and areas of open space will be managed sensitively by the appointed Management Company so that their ecological value is maximised.

Residual Effect Assessment

- 5.36 Once the development is complete, new tree planting and wildflower seed sowing would have been carried out on the site, along with sympathetic management of the retained areas, with any on site loss in biodiversity compensated for through the purchase of off-site credits and/or off-site habitat enhancements, with further details provided in the Technical Note: Biodiversity Net Gain (dated June 2025), produced by AAe and held under separate cover.
- 5.37 Sufficient habitat will be retained on the site and at the boundaries, to maintain foraging opportunities for bats, birds and herpetofauna that may be using the site, along with new soft landscaping within communal areas that could be utilised by a range of species, which would represent an overall **Neutral Residual Impact**.
- 5.38 A summary of the residual significance of effects assessment is detailed on Table 6.

Cumulative and In-combination Effects Assessment

- 5.39 The EclA process requires that any additional effects from other development activities that could reasonably be foreseen to have an in-combination or cumulative effect (positive or negative) should be assessed.
- 5.40 The development is to construct 53 new dwellings, with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the clearance of some vegetation, with areas of the site to remain unaffected by the proposals.
- 5.41 According to the planning consultants (Savills), there are currently no sites within the same zone of influence that require inclusion within a cumulative impact assessment but the developer will confirm with Wokingham Borough Council through the course of assessing the application. Therefore, there are considered to be no significant cumulative impact at this time.

Table 6: Residual Significance of Effects Assessment

VER	Value of Receptor	Likely Impact	Nature of Impact	Magnitude of Impact	Certainty	Residual Effect
Construction						
Modified grassland	Site	Direct loss of grassland. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible	Low	Certain	Minor adverse
Artificial Unvegetated/ Unsealed Surface	Negligible	Direct loss of existing access track. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	Neutral/not significant
Hedgerows	Site	Hedgerows on and adjacent to the site will be retained and protected. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/irre versible		Certain	Neutral/not significant
Bramble scrub	Site	Direct loss of scrub. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	Minor adverse
Ruderal/ Ephemeral	Site	Direct loss of colonising vegetation. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	Minor adverse
Bracken	Site	Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	Minor adverse
Watercourse (ditches)	Site	Watercourses on and adjacent to the site will be retained and protected. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/irre versible		Certain	Neutral/not significant
Introduced Shrub	Site	Direct loss of existing ornamental planting. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	neutral/not significant
Rural Tree	Local	Direct loss of trees. Temporary disturbance from the construction phase could have an adverse impact and there could be accidental damage from machinery. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/irre versible		Certain	Minor adverse
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Negligible	Temporary disturbance and increase in traffic from the construction phase. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Certain	Neutral/not significant

Badger	Negligible	Minimal loss of foraging habitat. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP, protection of retained habitat.	Permanent and Temporary/rev ersible		Likely/ Probable	Minor adverse
Bats	Local/District	Direct loss of tree roost(s) and minimal loss of foraging habitat. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP and protection of retained habitat.	Temporary	Low	Likely/ Probable	Major adverse
Birds	Local/District	Direct loss of nesting and foraging habitat. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP and protection of retained habitat and timing of site clearance to avoid the main nesting season.	Temporary		Certain	Minor adverse
Amphibians	Local/District	Direct loss of foraging habitat. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP and protection of retained habitat.	Temporary		Likely/ Probable	Minor adverse
Reptiles	Site/Local	Direct loss of foraging habitat. Inherent mitigation includes CEMP and protection of retained habitat.	Temporary		Likely/ Probable	Minor adverse
Operation						
Modified grassland	Site	Direct/indirect loss of a proportion of habitat, with direct/indirect deterioration from changes in management and degradation from human recreation. Recommendations for long-term management and enhancement of existing habitat. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent	Low	Certain	Minor beneficial
Artificial Unvegetated/ Unsealed Surface	Negligible	Direct loss of the existing habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of a new shared access. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent		Certain	Neutral/not significant
Hedgerows	Site	Minimal direct/indirect disturbance. Further details provided within the LEMP with active management to enhance the hedgerows.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Bramble scrub	Site	Direct loss of a proportion of habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of new boundary vegetation. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Ruderal/ Ephemeral	Site	Direct loss of a proportion of habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of new boundary vegetation. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Bracken	Site	Direct loss of a proportion of habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of new boundary vegetation. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Watercourse (ditches)	Site	Minimal direct/indirect disturbance. Further details provided within the LEMP with active management to enhance the ditches.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Introduced Shrub	Site	Direct loss of a proportion of habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of new ornamental planting across the site. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial

Rural Tree	Local	Direct loss of a proportion of habitat but replacement habitat provided by the planting of new trees. Full details to be provided within the LEMP with active management to ensure establishment and ongoing health of mature trees.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Negligible	Direct loss of the existing habitat but replacement habitat provided by the creation of a new shared access. Further details to be provided within the LEMP.	Permanent and Temporary/versible	Low	Certain	Neutral/not significant
Badger	Negligible	Direct disturbance (principally lighting) of foraging habitat. Mitigation includes new planting along with sensitive management of the retained boundary vegetation.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Bats	Local/District	Direct disturbance (principally lighting) of foraging habitat and potential loss of tree roosts. Mitigation includes new planting along with sensitive management of the retained boundary vegetation, with a number of wildlife boxes to be installed on the site.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Birds	Local/District	Direct loss of a proportion of nesting and foraging habitat but replacement habitat provided by the planting of new trees and installation of nest boxes.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Amphibians	Local/District	Direct disturbance (principally lighting) of foraging habitat. Sensitive management of habitats for the benefit of both amphibians and reptiles. Mitigation includes creation of log piles/hibernacula, replacement and new planting along with sensitive management.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial
Reptiles	Site/Local	Direct disturbance (principally lighting) of foraging habitat. Sensitive management of habitats for the benefit of both amphibians and reptiles. Mitigation includes creation of log piles/hibernacula, replacement and new planting along with sensitive management.	Permanent		Certain	Minor beneficial

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 An assessment of the potential impacts to ecological and nature conservation receptors was undertaken in accordance with guidelines produced by the *Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management* (CIEEM). The ecological baseline at and surrounding the site was characterised by means of desk-based study and field surveys including an Extended Phase I Habitat Survey and Habitat Condition Assessments.
- 6.2 The development proposals are to construct 53 new dwellings, with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the clearance of some vegetation. Areas of the site, including the established boundary vegetation, ditches and majority of the existing trees, will be retained, protected and enhanced for the benefit of wildlife. A range of mitigation and enhancement measures will be implemented to minimise the impact on wildlife utilising the site. The scheme has been sensitively designed, with areas of the site to be retained and managed sympathetically to enhance their ecological value in the long-term. Full details of the measures to be implemented will be provided within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), secured via a condition attached to planning.
- 6.3 It can be concluded, through sensitive design and with the range of mitigation and compensatory measures that can be delivered (including potential for off-site compensation measures as detailed within the Technical Note: Biodiversity Net Gain (June 2025)), and secured via suitably worded conditions, the proposals would have no overall adverse impact on the species recorded on the site, with the opportunity to enhance the site for biodiversity, in full compliance with National and local policy.

253026/HRS

AA Environmental Limited

June 2025

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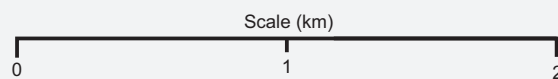
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Figures



KEY	
Site Boundary:	
2 km Study Area:	
 Ordnance Survey Explorer™ 159	UK Location: 
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Rev.	Details				Drawn	Date	
					Chkd.		
	 AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon, Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk Project 253026 Old Forest Road Winnersh Title Site Location Plan						
					Scale	Date	Drawn
	As shown	12.06.25	EC	HRS	Figure 1		



Target Notes:

TN 1 - Ivy clad oak (T11) = PRF-I

TN 2 - Dead standing oak (T12) (cut off at 2.5m) = PRF-I

TN 3 - Oak with dead limbs and rot hole (T13) = PRF-I

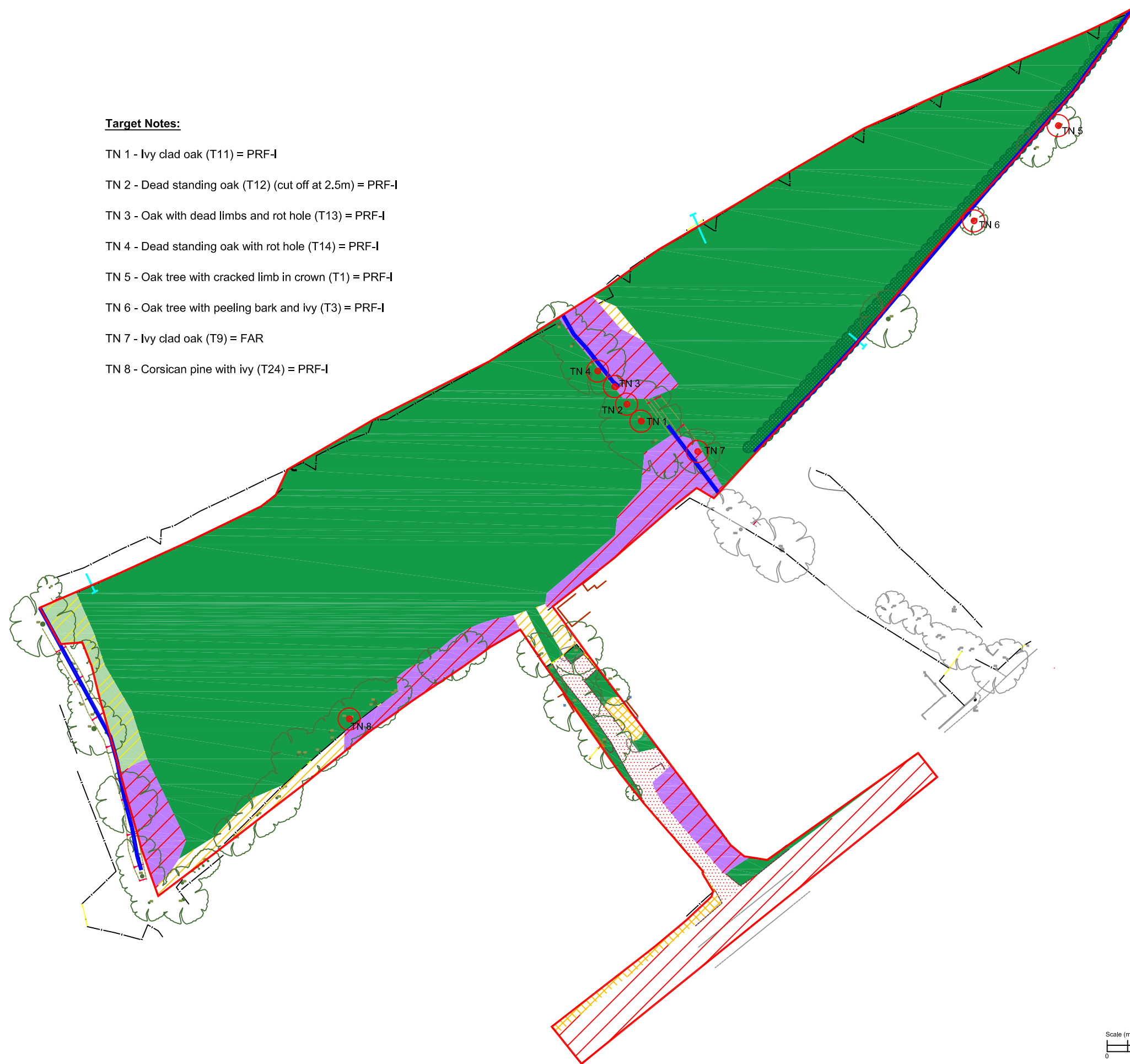
TN 4 - Dead standing oak with rot hole (T14) = PRF-I

TN 5 - Oak tree with cracked limb in crown (T1) = PRF-I

TN 6 - Oak tree with peeling bark and ivy (T3) = PRF-I

TN 7 - Ivy clad oak (T9) = FAR

TN 8 - Corsican pine with ivy (T24) = PRF-I



KEY

- Site Boundary*
- Modified Grassland*
- Artificial Unvegetated/Unsealed Surface*
- Bramble Scrub*
- Ruderal Vegetation*
- Bracken*
- Ditch*
- Introduced Shrub*
- Developed Land, Sealed Surface*
- Individual Tree*
- Hedgerow*
- Mammal Run*
- Target Note*

* Indicative location

Rev. A	Amended redline boundary and habitat areas	HRS ARB	04.06.25
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Project 253026 Old Forest Road Winnersh
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Title Existing Habitats Plan



AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6HX
T: (01235) 536042
F: (01235) 523849
info@aae-ltd.co.uk
www.aae-ltd.co.uk

Scale As shown	Date 20.02.25	Drawn EC	Chkd. HRS	Drg. No. Figure 2	Rev. A
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Appendix A

Summary of Ratcliffe Criteria

Fragility – some habitats, communities and species are particularly sensitive to environmental change and as such tend to be rare.

Rarity – the threat of loss of a particular habitat or species lends value to the organism and the site it occupies. Whether a species has rarity value is largely dependent upon the context, as a species or habitat can be internationally rare, but relatively common locally or nationally. Likewise, a nationally rare species can in some circumstances be more common at internationally level.

Size (area or extent) – size does play an important part in determining the ecological interest of an area, but is also a relative concept. For example, a 30 acre woodland or a one acre meadow could have a similar degree of nature conservation importance.

Diversity – the diversity of a site can be expressed in a number of ways and both low and high diversity can have a high nature conservation value under different circumstances.

Potential value – some sites have the potential to provide greater nature conservation interest than presently exists.

Position within the Ecological/Geographical Unit – a site which is near or adjacent to other similar habitats may have a higher nature conservation value than an isolated one because the range of fauna can be greater.

Typicalness – certain habitats have become important as they are good examples of what is, or has historically been, typical of the area. Efforts have been made to safeguard representative areas to prevent what was once common becoming fragmented or rare.

Recorded history – a well documented site with detailed biological and/or natural history records presents a valuable insight into the ecology of a site. Such information is important for current and future management.

Naturalness – this is a measure of the degree to which an area has been modified by human activity. In England unmodified habitats are extremely rare being restricted to remote, inaccessible areas such as cliffs, and some saltmarshes. The bulk is either semi-improved, improved or artificial.

Intrinsic Appeal – this refers to value in a popular rather than ecological sense, and highlights the fact that value is also derived from society's preferences for landscape and other aesthetic features and is not just based on ecological considerations.

Appendix B

PLANT SPECIES LIST

<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Cupressocyparis X leylandii</i>	Leyland cypress
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Common ivy
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Juncus inflexus</i>	Hard rush
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial rye-grass
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Corsican pine
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow-grass
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry laurel
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Prunus sp.</i>	Cherry
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Quercus sp.</i>	Oak
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Robinia
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Rumex spp.</i>	Dock
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry
<i>Thuja plicata</i>	Western Red-Cedar
<i>Trifolium spp.</i>	Clover
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle

Appendix C



Photograph 1: Showing the site, facing west.



Photograph 2: Showing the site, facing east.



Photograph 3: Showing the central area of colonising vegetation and individual trees.



Photograph 4: Showing the existing access track and restricted lawn areas.

Rev.	Details		Drawn	Date
			Chkd.	
PROJECT				
253026 Old Forest Road Winnersh				
TITLE				
Photograph Record Sheet				
 Environmental Consultants AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk				
Scale	Date	12.06.25	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	Drawn EC	Chkd. HRS	Appendix C	

Appendix D

TOOLBOX TALK: AMPHIBIANS

Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell
Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- Species of common amphibian include common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt. Whereas great crested newts or **GCNs** are the largest and rarest species of newt found in the UK.
- These species can be found on a wide range of sites, including brownfield, industrial, residential and rural.
- Populations are showing a general decline.
- All amphibians require waterbodies for breeding but will spend much of their lives on land.
- For their survival, a link between a suitable breeding pond and terrestrial habitat is essential.
- During winter, amphibians will mostly hibernate on land (although young may over-winter in ponds) and may not wake up if disturbed. Furthermore, they are cold blooded and may be very slow moving when cold. This makes them vulnerable to site works, especially during the winter months.
- Unlike GCNs the four species are not protected by European law and so you do not require a Natural England licence to handle or work near them.
- GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.

Common Toad, Common Frog, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt & Palmate Newt

Identification

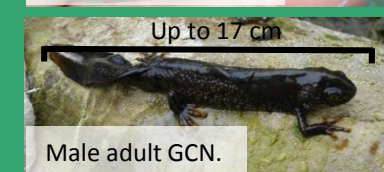
- Smooth and palmate newts can easily be mistaken for great crested newts (GCNs) and common lizards due to their similar size, body shapes and colouring.
- On land, lizards are much faster than newts and can disappear in the blink of an eye. Newts movement however is slow and lumbered.
- Smooth and palmate newts are smaller than GCNs, growing up to 11 cm long and their skin is smooth and velvety in appearance, whereas GCN skin is warty and common lizard skin is scaly.
- Mature GCNs may grow up to about 17 cm long. Most of their skin is dark brown or black and warty in texture/appearance with a orange/yellow and black pattern on their tummy.
- Common frogs and toads look similar to each other but can be told apart by their skin. Toads have loose, warty skin and frogs have tight, smooth skin.
- All four species breed in ponds. The eggs, or spawn, of frogs and toad look like black pin heads covered in a clear jelly. Frog spawn is clustered together, whereas toad spawn forms chains.

Legislation

- All species are protected under Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 against being sold, offered for sale or being held or transported for sale either dead or alive, whole or part.
- GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.
- Common toads have been identified as a UK Priority Species, of principal conservation importance, under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Site Controls

- Although not specifically protected, in accordance with good practice, care should be taken when clearing sites or draining down ponds to ensure no species of amphibian are harmed.
- Although considered unlikely, in the event of GCNs being encountered during the works it is a legal requirement to stop work immediately and Natural England informed so that appropriate advice can be provided.
- Additional controls may be necessary if GCNs are present on site as they are legally protected by additional legislation.
- Remember, you are not expected to be an expert, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**



TOOLBOX TALK: REPTILES

Did you know?

- There are six species of reptile native to the UK, three of which are snakes and three are lizards.
- Smooth snakes and Sand lizards are very rare and are presently restricted to a few localised areas.
- Adders, Grass snakes, Common lizards and Slow-worms are widespread and found in a number of different urban and rural habitats across the UK.
- All reptiles are ectothermic. This means they rely upon the sun's heat for warmth. As a result, you may find reptiles basking in sunny places. If it becomes too warm they will seek shade, to avoid overheating.
- Reptiles movement will be slower in cooler conditions.
- Reptiles hibernate during the winter and may not wake up if disturbed. This makes them vulnerable to site works during winter months.
- Reptiles depend upon a varied habitat for survival. They need basking spots, shade, protection from predators, food resources and somewhere to hibernate!

Identification

- Reptiles may be found in a variety of habitats within a site. Most species favour scrubland, heathland or long grassland. Railway embankments are also highly favoured.
- On the right are photos of the reptiles you are most likely to encounter on a site, if any.
- Adders can be distinguished from Grass snakes by the diamond (or jagged) stripe running down the centre of their back.
- Slow-worms look a lot like a snake but are in fact legless lizards! They tend to be light brown/golden in colour, with a smooth appearance.
- Common lizards are fast-moving, but may be sighted from a distance when basking.

Legislation

- All reptile species are protected under UK law.
- This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill or injure and protects them against sale and transporting for sale.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that as reptiles move through the habitat that they could be encountered during site works.
- **If any reptiles are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If reptiles are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately**, with any reptiles left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. During works, operatives must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with reptiles.
 3. Site operative must not intentionally handle reptiles.
 4. Care must be taken when moving logs, stones or rubble. These are favoured habitats for reptiles and they may be found sheltering underneath.
 5. Stockpiling of materials is only permitted within designated areas. Any building materials must be stored above ground on pallets and any waste material must be placed into skips, to prevent the risk of reptiles taking refuge within them.
 6. Trenches must be covered overnight to prevent animals falling into them.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You are not expected to be able to identify reptiles or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042



Appendix E

**Old Forest Road
Winnersh**

Report for:
Elstree Land Limited
7 Grena Gardens
Richmond
London
TW9 1XP

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Elstree Land Limited to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the site known as Land at Old Forest Road, Winnersh. The proposals are to construct up to 53 new dwellings, with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the clearance of some vegetation. Areas of the site, including the established boundary vegetation, ditches and majority of the existing trees, will be retained, protected and enhanced for the benefit of wildlife.

Although a number of ecological surveys of the site have been completed with no evidence of protected species recorded, in accordance with best practice and under the precautionary approach, all works will be carried out carefully and follow the controls set out in this Method Statement. A copy will be circulated to key site staff and other site operatives so that they are fully aware of the sensitivity of the works and of the possibility of encountering protected and notable species, with a copy kept on site.

LEGISLATION

Amphibians

All amphibian species have some level of protection under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection', is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles

All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of *Section 9(1)* and all of *Section 9(5)*. This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.

SITE CONTROLS TO BE APPLIED

Timing of Works

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

Although no evidence of any species has been recorded on the site, site clearance works will only be carried out when all species are active. Although activity is weather and temperature dependent, all species of herpetofauna will be fully active from April thorough to October, inclusive.

Prior to the works commencing all site personnel will be given a toolbox talk to inform them about the potential presence of herpetofauna and the legal protection they are given (toolbox talks covering both amphibians and reptiles are attached at Appendix A).

The following controls will be implemented during the works:

- areas of the pond bank to be affected by the works should be managed to reduce the sward height, this will render the area unsuitable for any species of herpetofauna. The cutting down of the vegetation should be completed carefully and in a phased approach;
- removal of ground vegetation should then be completed leaving bare earth;
- any deep excavations should be covered overnight to prevent any animals falling into them, where possible;
- any materials required should be stored above ground on pallets;
- any stored or excess excavated material should be positioned in suitable locations within the site and not stored close to adjacent habitat as animals may attempt to take refuge and/or overwinter in them.

In the unlikely event any species of herpetofauna are encountered, then any animals should be caught and released into nearby habitat that is outside the construction zone. In the event that high numbers of reptiles or **any** great crested newts are found, then works will stop and AAe contacted so that appropriate way forward can be agreed in full consultation with the Council's Biodiversity Officer. Procedures will then be followed to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) and/or a District Level Licence for great crested newts.

SUMMARY

The controls set out in this PWMS will ensure that the works are carried out sensitively to minimise disturbance to local wildlife and avoid any contravention of current legislation.

Author:

Harry Simpson
BSc (Hons) MSc
Principal Ecologist
E harry.simpson@aae-ltd.co.uk

Office:

AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon
Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6HX

Company No. 8474322

E info@aae-ltd.co.uk

T 01235 536042

F 01235 523849

Appendix A Toolbox Talks (Amphibians and Reptiles)

TOOLBOX TALK: AMPHIBIANS

Common Toad, Common Frog, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt & Palmate Newt

Identification

- Species of common amphibian include common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt. Whereas great crested newts or **GCNs** are the largest and rarest species of newt found in the UK.
- These species can be found on a wide range of sites, including brownfield, industrial, residential and rural.
- Populations are showing a general decline.
- All amphibians require waterbodies for breeding but will spend much of their lives on land.
- For their survival, a link between a suitable breeding pond and terrestrial habitat is essential.
- During winter, amphibians will mostly hibernate on land (although young may over-winter in ponds) and may not wake up if disturbed. Furthermore, they are cold blooded and may be very slow moving when cold. This makes them vulnerable to site works, especially during the winter months.
- Unlike GCNs the four species are not protected by European law and so you do not require a Natural England licence to handle or work near them.
- **GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.

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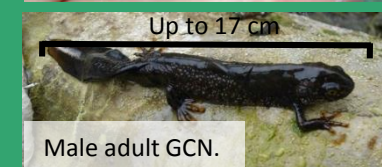
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