

Land West of Kingfisher Grove, Three Mile
Cross (1005796-04)

**Updated Ecological Appraisal,
Mitigation and Enhancement
Measures**

May 2025

Quality Management	
Client:	Sovereign Network Group
Project:	Land West of Kingfisher Grove, Three Mile Cross
Report Title:	Updated Ecological Appraisal
Project Number:	1005796-04
File Reference:	5796-04 UEA vf1 /LP/CL
Date:	19/05/2025

Copyright
The copyright of this document remains with Aspect Ecology. All rights reserved. The contents of this document therefore must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part for any purpose without the written consent of Aspect Ecology.

Confidentiality
This report may contain sensitive information relating to protected species. All records of Badger setts must remain confidential. Where this report is circulated publicly or uploaded to online planning portals, reference to Badger setts must be redacted and any maps pertaining to the locations of Badger setts removed from the document.

Legal Guidance
The information set out within this report in no way constitutes a legal opinion on the relevant legislation (refer to the relevant Appendix for the main provisions of the legislation). The opinion of a legal professional should be sought if further advice is required.

Liability
This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of the commissioning client and unless otherwise agreed in writing by Aspect Ecology no other party may use, or rely on the contents of the report. No liability is accepted by Aspect Ecology for any use of this report, other than for the purposes for which it was originally prepared and provided. No warranty, express or implied, is made as to the advice in this report. The content of this report is partly based on information provided by third parties; Aspect accepts no liability for any reliance placed on such information. This report is subject to the restrictions and limitations referenced in Aspect Ecology's standard Terms of Business.

Contact Details
Aspect Ecology Ltd Hardwick Business Park Noral Way Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 2AF t 01295 279721 e info@aspect-ecology.com w www.aspect-ecology.com

Contents

Text:

Executive Summary 1

1 Introduction 2

2 Methodology 4

3 Ecological Designations..... 8

4 Habitats and Ecological Features..... 11

5 Faunal Use of the Site 13

6 Mitigation Measures and Enhancements..... 22

7 Conclusions 29

Plans:

Plan 5796/UECO1	Site Location and Ecological Designations
Plan 5796/UECO2	Habitats and Ecological Features

Appendices:

Appendix 5796/1	Proposed Layout
Appendix 5796/2	Desktop Study Information
Appendix 5796/3	Evaluation Methodology
Appendix 5796/4	Legislation Summary

Executive Summary

- i) **Introduction.** Aspect Ecology has been commissioned by Sovereign Network Group to undertake an updated Ecological Appraisal in respect of the site at land to the west of Kingfisher Grove, Three Mile Cross in order to inform a reserved matters submission relating to the permitted development of the site.
- ii) **Proposals.** The proposals are for the erection of 49 affordable dwellings with new publicly accessible open space and access.
- iii) **Survey.** The site was originally surveyed in March 2020, with further update survey work undertaken in April 2024 based on standard extended Phase 1 methodology. In addition, a general appraisal of faunal species was undertaken to record the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable species, with specific surveys conducted in respect of bats and Badger.
- iv) **Ecological Designations.** The site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations. The nearest statutory designation is Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 2.2km south east of the site. The nearest non-statutory designation is Woods between Whitehouse and Highlands Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is located approximately 0.5km south of the site. All of the ecological designations in the surrounding area are physically well separated from the site and are therefore unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- v) **Habitats.** The site is made up of two fields, largely comprising species-poor semi-improved grassland. The fields are bounded by hedgerows, which contain a number of mature trees. The south western corner of the site is damp in nature where an area of marshy grassland is present, whilst three drainage ditches are present at the field boundaries. At the northern corner of the site is a single building with an area of hardstanding. Features of ecological importance include the grassland, hedgerows and mature trees, which are of site to local level value. The majority of these are to be fully retained under the proposals and will be protected during construction. The loss a portion of the grassland and other habitats of no ecological importance to the proposals is not considered to be significant.
- vi) **Protected Species.** The previous survey work undertaken at the site recorded evidence of Dormouse within the hedgerows around the site boundaries. The trees and hedgerows within the site are likely to be of local level value to foraging and commuting bats and a number of trees present within the site support features offering potential for roosting bats. Nesting birds are also likely to make use of on-site hedgerows and trees. The vast majority of trees and hedgerows present within the site will be fully retained under the proposals, with only a small losses to facilitate access into the site. As such, it is considered that subject to the granting of a Natural England Dormouse Mitigation Licence and implementation of mitigation measures including a sensitive lighting schedule, careful timing of works and supervised clearance of vegetation, there will be no adverse effects on protected species as result of the proposed development.
- vii) **Enhancements.** The proposals present the opportunity to secure a number of ecological enhancements, including additional native tree planting, new roosting opportunities for bats, and more diverse nesting habitats for birds.
- viii) **Summary.** In summary, the proposals have sought to minimise impacts on biodiversity and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Proposals

- 1.1.1 Aspect Ecology has been commissioned by Sovereign Network Group in regard to ecological matters relating to land to the west of Kingfisher Grove, Three Mile Cross centred at grid reference SU 709 672 (see Plan 5796/UECO1), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The site is the subject of Outline planning permission, granted at appeal on 31 January 2023 (Appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/22/3304042, Application ref: 201002), for the proposed erection of 49 affordable dwellings with new publicly accessible open space and access. The outline planning application was informed by previous ecological survey work, the results of which are set out within the submitted Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, dated September 2020) and Protected Species Report (Aspect Ecology, dated September 2020).
- 1.1.3 Further details of the proposed development have subsequently been prepared in relation to reserved matters (RM), which were originally submitted to Wokingham BC in October 2024 (ref: 242665). Given the time that had elapsed since the previous ecological survey work (noting available guidance in relation to the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys (CIEEM, 2019)), in order to inform the RM submissions and confirm the up to date position with regard to ecology at the site and any evident changes (or otherwise), Aspect Ecology Ltd was commissioned in April 2024 to undertake update ecology survey work and appraisal of the site, the results of which were set out in a previous version of this report (dated July 2024), which was provided to inform the RM submissions.
- 1.1.4 Following comments received from WBC officers, a number of revisions and amendments have been undertaken to the proposed details in order to address concerns and requirements raised. Accordingly, this report has been reviewed in respect of the updated scheme details (see Appendix 5796/1) in order to ensure it remains accurate in relation to the current proposals.

1.2 Site Overview

- 1.2.1 The site is located to the south of Reading, immediately south of Three Mile Cross. Immediately west of the site is a band of woodland between the site and the A33. North of the site is existing residential development, whilst east of the site are further grassland fields and agricultural land, and to the south is an area of open space (SANG) associated with a separate permitted development further to the south-east.
- 1.2.2 The site itself was recorded to be dominated by species-poor grassland within two fields, bounded by hedgerows and drainage channels, along with tall herbs, scrub, ruderal vegetation, and grasses, which appear to be recolonising within the areas of hardstanding, broadly consistent with the previously recorded position, albeit with generally denser, more developed vegetation reflecting the progression of typical successional processes. Other habitats are limited to a small number of trees, areas of hardstanding, and a single building.

1.3 Purpose of the Report

- 1.3.1 This report documents the methods and findings of the current (updated) baseline ecology surveys and desktop study carried out in order to establish the current ecological interest of the site in order to inform the current reserved matters submissions (noting the existing outline permitted position). The importance of the habitats and species present is evaluated. Where necessary, avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are

proposed (with reference to the previously permitted position where appropriate) so as to safeguard any significant existing ecological interest within the site.

2 Methodology

2.1 Previous Survey Information

- 2.1.1 Previous ecological survey work was undertaken at the site most recently in 2020 by Aspect Ecology, in order to inform the outline planning application at the site, granted at appeal (Appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/22/3304042, Application ref: 201002), the results of which are set out within the permitted Ecological Appraisal (Aspect Ecology, dated September 2020) and associated Protected Species Report (Aspect Ecology, dated September 2020).
- 2.1.2 Accordingly, the previous survey information has been reviewed in order to inform the current work and associated ecological considerations and set the current survey results in the correct context.

2.2 Updated Survey Work

Desktop Information

- 2.2.1 In order to ensure that the background information on the site and its immediate surroundings is fully up to date, including in line with standard guidance, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) has been contacted, with data requested on the basis of a search radius of 2km around the site.
- 2.2.1 Up to date information on statutory designations has been obtained from the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database, which utilises data provided by Natural England, with an extended search radius (25km). In addition, the MAGIC database was searched to identify the known presence of any Priority Habitats within or adjacent the site.
- 2.2.2 In addition, the Woodland Trust database was searched for any records of ancient, veteran or notable trees within or adjacent to the site.
- 2.2.3 Where information has been received from the above organisation(s) this is reproduced at Appendix 5796/2 and on Plan 5796/UECO1, where appropriate.

Habitat Survey

- 2.2.4 The land within the current site boundary, along with the immediately adjacent areas was subject to further survey in April 2024 in order to confirm the current, up to date position and identify the main habitats and ecological features present.
- 2.2.5 The site was surveyed based on standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology¹, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail through Phase 2 surveys. This method was extended, in line with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal² to record details on the actual or potential presence of any notable or protected species or habitats.

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010, as amended) 'Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit.'

² Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2013) 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.'

2.2.6 Using the above method, the site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified. The nomenclature used for plant species is based on the Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) Checklist.

Faunal Survey

2.2.7 General faunal activity, such as mammals or birds observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys was recorded. Specific attention was also paid to the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable species. In addition, specific consideration was given to the potential presence of bats and Badger.

2.2.8 Bats - Trees. Trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats based on the presence of features such as holes, cracks, splits or loose bark. Suitability for roosting bats was rated based on relevant (updated) guidance³ as:

- None;
- FAR (Further Assessment Required); or
- PRF (A tree with at least one Potential Roost Feature present, further categorised into PRF-I / PRF-M for individual / multiple capacity features, respectively).

2.2.9 Any potential roost features identified were also inspected from ground level for any signs indicating possible use by bats, e.g. staining, scratch marks, bat droppings, etc.

2.2.10 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.2.12 Otter⁵ and Water Vole⁶. The habitats present (in particular ditches) within the site were thoroughly searched for signs of Otter and Water Vole in April 2024. For Otter, such signs include holts (underground chambers used for lying up), spraints, prints, paths and slides.

³ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edn).' The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

⁴ Based on: Mammal Society (1989) 'Occasional Publication No. 9 – Surveying Badgers'

⁵ Surveys based on: Life in UK Rivers (2003) 'Monitoring the Otter - Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers'. Monitoring Series No. 10

⁶ Surveys based on: Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016) 'Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Matthews and Paul Chanin. The Mammal Society, London.

For Water Vole, such signs include latrines, tunnels, lawns (small areas of vegetation grazed by Water Vole) and footprints. The banks of the watercourse were examined thoroughly from both sides (where accessible) and from the watercourse itself where vegetation and water depth allowed.

2.2.13 Great Crested Newt. As a first step in identifying the potential presence of Great Crested Newt at the site, a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) study was undertaken of all relevant water bodies within 250m⁷ of the site boundary (based on a review of Ordnance Survey mapping and satellite imagery). Guidance set out within Natural England's Method Statement template, to be used when applying for a Great Crested Newt development licence, states that surveys of ponds within 500m of the site boundary are only required when '(a) data indicates that the pond(s) has potential to support a large Great Crested Newt population, (b) the footprint contains particularly favourable habitat, (c) the development would have a substantial negative effect on that habitat and (d) there is an absence of dispersal barriers.' Given that in this instance, none of the four points listed above are applicable to the site, it is considered that survey of ponds within 500m of the site boundary is not required, and that survey of ponds within 250m represents adequate survey effort.

2.2.14 An HSI study is used to assess the potential of water bodies to support Great Crested Newt. It is undertaken by attributing a score to a number of factors that can affect the presence or absence of this species. Ten factors are utilised in an HSI assessment, as described below:

- *SI1 Location.* The location of the water body within Great Britain;
- *SI2 Pond area.* The size of the water body;
- *SI3 Permanence.* How often the water body dries out;
- *SI4 Water Quality.* The water quality, based primarily on invertebrate diversity;
- *SI5 Shade.* The percentage of the perimeter of the water body that is shaded;
- *SI6 Fowl.* The presence or absence of water fowl;
- *SI7 Fish.* The presence or absence of fish;
- *SI8 Pond Count.* The number of water bodies within 1km of the surveyed water body (not counting those on the far side of major barriers such as roads);
- *SI9 Terrestrial.* The quality of terrestrial habitat surrounding the water body; and
- *SI10 Macrophytes.* The percentage cover of the surface area of the water body covered by macrophytes (aquatic plants).

2.2.15 The overall suitability of the water body is then determined by entering these figures into an equation devised by Oldham *et al.* (2000)⁸. The suitability of water bodies is classed into one of five categories, either 'poor', 'below average', 'average', 'good' or 'excellent'.

2.2.16 This HSI study was undertaken in line with the guidelines developed by Oldham *et al.* and subsequently adapted by ARG UK (2010)⁹. A suitably experienced ecologist undertook the assessment in line with these guidelines, with the study also supplemented by desktop research where appropriate.

⁷ 250m is the typical maximum migratory range of this species, see English Nature (2004) 'An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*'. English Nature Research Report 576

⁸ Oldham RS, Keeble J, Swan MJS & Jeffcote M (2000) 'Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)'. Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155

⁹ Amphibian & Reptile Groups of the UK (2010) 'ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index'

2.3 Survey Constraints and Limitations

- 2.3.1 All of the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent during different seasons. The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken within the optimal season therefore allowing a robust assessment of habitats and botanical interest across the site.
- 2.3.2 Attention was paid to the presence of any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, the detectability of such species varies due to a number of factors, e.g. time of year, site management, etc., and hence the absence of invasive species should not be assumed even if no such species were detected during the Phase 1 survey.
- 2.3.3 Densely vegetated habitats within the site have the potential to reduce the detectability of field signs for faunal species such as Badger. A detailed survey was able to be completed and, whilst dense scrub vegetation is present within the site, this is limited in extent and it is considered that the survey results provide an accurate baseline to assess the potential for impacts on Badger under the development proposals.

2.4 Ecological Evaluation Methodology

- 2.4.1 The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018)¹⁰, which involves identifying 'important ecological features' within a defined geographical context (i.e. international, national, regional, county, district, local or site importance). For full details refer to Appendix 5796/3.

¹⁰ CIEEM (2018) '*Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*', ver. 1.2, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

3 Ecological Designations

3.1 Statutory Designations

Description

- 3.1.1 The statutory designations of ecological importance that occur within the local area around the site are shown on Plan 5796/UECO1.
- 3.1.2 The nearest statutory designation is Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 2.2km south east of the site. The SSSI is designated on the basis of its traditionally managed seasonally waterlogged hay meadows and the river Loddon, which supports nationally important populations of Snake's-head Fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, and Loddon Pondweed *Potamogeton nodosus*, indeed it comprises the national stronghold of the latter species. The next nearest statutory designation is Swallowfield Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which is located approximately 2.9km south east of the site. The LNR is designated for its meadows and associated habitats, including native hedgerows, a small copse, ditches and seasonal ponds. In addition, the ponds and ditches are noted to support Water Vole *Arvicola amphibious*.
- 3.1.3 Natural England has developed Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) as an initial tool to help assess the risk of developments adversely affecting SSSIs, taking into account the type and scale of developments. The site sits within IRZs in relation to Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI and Bramshill SSSI for which strategic solutions with regard to recreational impacts are in place.
- 3.1.4 The closest component of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 5.2km south west of the site. The SPA is identified as one of the South East's most important natural assets with the lowland heath supporting internationally important populations of Annex I species, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Woodlark *Lullula arborea*.
- 3.1.5 The site is located over 5km from the SPA and the proposals are for fewer than 50 dwellings. As such, in accordance with Policy CP8 (see Section 2), no specific assessment for significant impacts upon the SPA is required.
- 3.1.6 The proposals incorporate a substantial area of public green space which will link with the adjacent off-site SANG being delivered immediately south of the site as part of a separate residential development. The proposals themselves do not require a SANG for the reasons above (being located more than 5km from the SPA and comprising less than 50 units) – as such the on-site greenspace is not required to function as SANG and the off-site SANG is not required as part of these proposals - however it is considered to be good planning and design practice to link these two areas of greenspace as it will deliver benefits for public recreation and habitat connectivity.

Evaluation

- 3.1.7 The site itself is not subject to any statutory ecological designations. All identified statutory ecological designations in the surrounding area are well separated from the site by existing development and given the nature and scale of the proposals, these designations are unlikely to be affected. Given the size of the development at 49 units and the distance from Thames Basin Heaths SPA, it is not considered it is necessary to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

3.2 Non-statutory Designations

Description

- 3.2.1 The non-statutory designations of nature conservation interest that occur within the local area are shown on Plan 5796/UECO1. The nearest non-statutory designation is Woods between Whitehouse and Highlands Local Wildlife Site (LWS) located approximately 0.5km to the south of the site. The LWS is designated on the basis of its mature deciduous woodland habitat, which contains a number of species associated with ancient woodland. The next nearest non-statutory designation is Clare's Green Road Grasslands located approximately 0.7km to the east of the site.

Evaluation

- 3.2.2 The site itself is not subject to any non-statutory nature conservation designations. All non-statutory designations in the surrounding area are well separated from the site by existing development and given the nature and scale of the proposals, these designations are unlikely to be affected.

3.3 Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland and Notable Trees

Description

- 3.3.1 The Woodland Trust database lists a total of three trees as veteran trees within the site, two within the hedgerow through the site and a further one within vegetation at the south eastern corner.
- 3.3.2 There are a number of areas identified on MAGIC as the Priority Habitats 'Deciduous Woodland', 'Woodpasture and Parkland' and 'Traditional Orchards' within the surrounding area. No habitats within the site are mapped as Priority Habitats on MAGIC, but the strip of woodland adjacent to the western site boundary is mapped as 'Deciduous Woodland' and the area adjacent to the eastern boundary is mapped as 'Woodpasture and Parkland'. The closest area of mapped Ancient Woodland is located approximately 1.6km south of the site.

Evaluation

- 3.3.3 The Woodland Trust database lists a total of three trees as veteran trees within the site, albeit none of these trees are identified as being veteran within the Tree Survey report (ACD Environmental, dated April 2020). During the survey work undertaken veteran features were noted to be present on two of these trees (shown as T2 and T3 on Plan 5796/UECO2), in any case, these trees are fully retained under the proposals and development is not proposed within the veteran buffer zone distance to these trees. There are a number of other mapped notable / veteran trees within the surrounding areas, but they are largely on private land and are therefore inaccessible and thus unlikely to be affected by the current proposals.
- 3.3.4 All areas identified as Ancient Woodland in the surrounding area are well separated from the site and are thus unlikely to be affected by the proposed development. As stated, there are two areas mapped as Priority Habitat located offsite immediately adjacent to the site. The area mapped as Woodpasture and Parkland is inaccessible, separated from the site by a dense hedgerow.
- 3.3.5 The strip of woodland located west of the site contains an existing Public Right of Way (PROW) which connects to the existing housing estate situated north of the site. During

survey work undertaken at the site, the woodland was recorded to be subject to fly-tipping and littering, with a number of informal paths through the woodland into the site, including evident trampling of vegetation, soil compaction and litter being spread throughout the wood.

- 3.3.6 The wooded belt will be buffered from the proposed residential development by landscaping which will include Sustainable Drainage features in the form of swales and additional woodland tree / shrub planting. It is anticipated that this additional planting and physical presence of the SuDS will deter/prevent use of the informal footpaths which will benefit the woodland habitat. As detailed within the soft landscape strategy (Design and Access Statement (2020)) the woodland tree and shrub planting will be dominated by native species including Oak *Quercus robur*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Male Fern *Dryopteris felix-mas*. It is considered that the proposed planting adjacent to the woodland will be beneficial, providing additional native species adjacent to the woodland and buffering it from the proposed development.
- 3.3.7 Therefore, subject to suitable mitigation measures (see Section 6), it is not considered that the proposals will significantly change the use of these areas in such a way to have negative impact upon the Priority Habitats present.

3.4 Summary

- 3.4.1 In summary, the site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations and, subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures (as described above), it is unlikely that any such designations in the surrounding area will be significantly affected by the proposals.

4 Habitats and Ecological Features

4.1 Previous Survey Information

- 4.1.1 The previous (2020) survey work undertaken in order to inform the permitted outline planning application confirms that the land forming the site was formerly dominated by species-poor grassland fields, bounded by hedgerows and drainage channels, with a single building and area of hardstanding present in the northernmost corner.
- 4.1.2 Hedgerows H1 to H3 were considered to qualify as Priority Habitats and therefore constitute important ecological features.

4.2 Current Survey Results

- 4.2.1 At the time of the current survey (April 2024), the habitats present were recorded to be largely consistent with the previous information, except insofar as the areas of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Bramble scrub *Rubus fruticosus* were noted to have expanded, in places dominating areas previously identified to support tall herbs and ruderal vegetation (see Plan 5796/UECO2), reflecting clear progression of normal successional processes and a lack of recent management at the site.
- 4.2.2 The grassland sward is still very species poor, vastly comprising approximately 2-3 species per m², dominated by Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, with few herb species present. A small number of additional herb species were identified in field **F2**, including locally frequent Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans* and in the western extent, previously identified to be of a marshy character, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, and Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*.
- 4.2.3 The hedgerows were recorded to be largely consistent with the previous information. The southern extent of hedgerow **H1 (H1a)** was noted to for the edge of the off-site woodland. Hedgerow **H3** was noted to vary in character, with the southern extent (**H3b**) comprised almost entirely of Blackthorn, with a northern extent (**H3a**) having a greater variety of species in comparison. Additional ground flora species noted to be present here included Black Bryony *Tamus communis*, Common Vetch *Vicia sativa subsp. segetalis*, and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*.
- 4.2.4 As noted above The Woodland Trust database lists a total of three on-site trees as veteran trees, albeit none of these trees are identified as being veteran within the Tree Survey report (ACD Environmental, dated April 2020). During the survey work undertaken veteran features were noted to be present on two of these trees, shown as T2 and T3 on Plan 5796/UECO2 and discussed in Section 5 with regard to their suitability to support roosting bats below.
- 4.2.5 The previously identified narrow strip of tall ruderal vegetation at the south of the site has now largely been overtaken by Bramble.
- 4.2.6 The areas of hardstanding surrounding the on-site building are largely as previously described, albeit with a greater extent of scrub to the south and east of the building.
- 4.2.7 All of the species recorded are common and widespread and remain consistent with the previously recorded position, albeit with greater colonisation of Bramble and scrub reflective of general successional processes.

4.3 Habitat Evaluation Summary

- 4.3.1 As set out above, the vast majority of the site is currently dominated by species-poor grassland, with the majority of the remaining habitats also still in line with the previous survey work undertaken at the site.
- 4.3.2 In line with the previously permitted position, the grassland supports a low diversity of common and widespread species. Species-poor semi-improved / marshy grassland is not an uncommon or particularly valuable habitat type, and as such, was previously considered to be of importance the site level only. Under the proposals, the majority of the grassland is to be retained and enhanced as public open space. As such, the loss of a small part of the grassland to the proposals is not considered to be significant, and is in line with the outline permitted position.
- 4.3.3 The hedgerows within the site constitute important ecological features and are of importance at the local level. The hedgerows are largely retained under the proposals, with only small losses required for access. It is not considered that small losses to **H1**, **H2** and **H5** are of ecological significance. Retained hedgerows will be protected during the construction phase of the proposals in line with the recommendations included at Section 6 below. Furthermore, there is the potential under the proposals to implement new planting and a suitable management regime to strengthen the existing / retained hedgerows (which are leggy / gappy in nature), which would enhance the value of these features for biodiversity.
- 4.3.4 A number of the trees within hedgerows are mature in nature, and trees T2 to T7 are likely to be of considerable age. The mature trees (notably T3) being of ecological interest in their own right. As such, these trees are considered to be of value at the local level and are an important ecological feature. It is understood that the trees within the site are to be fully retained under the proposals and as such, subject to recommended safeguards set out in Section 6 below, the trees within the site will be fully protected under the proposals.

5 Faunal Use of the Site

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 During the current survey work, general observations were made of any faunal use of the site with specific attention paid to the potential presence of protected or notable species. Specific attention was paid to the potential presence of Badger, bats, and Great Crested Newt, with the results described below. In addition, background records and previous specific survey work available in relation to the site and adjacent areas was reviewed in order to inform the current considerations.

5.2 Priority Species

- 5.2.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places duties on public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their normal functions. In particular, Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species which are of principal importance for conservation in England. This list is largely derived from the 'Priority Species' listed under the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which continue to be regarded as priority species under the subsequent country-level biodiversity strategies.
- 5.2.2 During the previous survey work undertaken, the presence of the priority species Dormouse was identified at the site, as discussed further below.

5.3 Bats

- 5.3.1 **Legislation.** All British bats are classed as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and are also listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As such, both bats and their roosts (breeding sites and resting places) receive full protection under the legislation (see Appendix 5796/4). If proposed development work is likely to result in an offence a licence may need to be obtained from Natural England which would be subject to appropriate measures to safeguard bats. Given all bats are protected species, they are considered to represent important ecological features. A number of bat species are also considered S41 Priority Species.
- 5.3.2 **Previous Survey Results and Background Records.** The previous survey information identified that the on-site building had low suitability to support roosting bats and a total of seven trees within the site were identified to support potential bat roosting features. Background records were returned for a number of bat species, with the closest specific record being of Brown Long-eared Bat, located 0.2km east of site. The hedgerows and trees were identified to offer suitable foraging / commuting habitat and indeed foraging and commuting bats were recorded during the activity surveys undertaken at the site. Frequent passes from two common species (Common and Soprano Pipistrelle) were recorded, along with occasional passes from rarer species (Barbastelle, Serotine and Nathusius' Pipistrelle).
- 5.3.3 No specific records of bats from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. Information received from TVERC includes records of Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Long-eared Bat *Plecotus* sp., Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*, Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* sp. within 2km of the site. The closest specific record is for a Brown Long-eared Bat, located 0.2km to the east of site.

5.3.4 Survey Results and Evaluation.

Visual Inspection Surveys

Buildings

5.3.5 An update detailed visual inspection was undertaken of the building within the site, the results of which are summarised below.

5.3.6 Building **B1** is a single storey barn in the northern corner of site. The base is of metal frame, with breeze block facades, with corrugated metal cladding to the upper portions. The roof is also constructed of corrugated metal, with skylight sections. Where the corrugated metal of the walls meets metal flashing at the top under the roof line, a number of small crevices are formed, providing some minor potential roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling species of bat. Internally, the building was recorded to be largely open to the roof, with no enclosed void or cavity walls. An internal room is present, of wooden construction, with doors open into the remainder of the building and a number of evident cavities identified in the wooden walls. Building **B1** is not in active use.

5.3.7 Due to the low number of potential roosting opportunities for bats, building B1 is assessed as providing low suitability for bats. No evidence of bat occupation, e.g. droppings, staining, feeding remains, etc., were recorded during the inspection surveys.

Trees

5.3.8 A number of semi-mature and mature trees are present on site. The results of the update tree assessment work undertaken at the site are summarised in Table 5.1 below and illustrated on Plan 5796/UECO2, along with the previous tree survey results.

Table 5.1 Updated Tree inspection results.

Tree No.	Species	Age	Potential Roost Features	Previous BCT Category	Suitability / features, based on vurrent guidance (BCT, 2023)
T1	Ash	Mature	Thick ivy on truck	Low	PRF-I
T2	Oak	Mature	Split limbs, Rot Holes	Moderate	PRF-M
T3	Oak	Mature / veteran	Split limbs, hole in base, snagged branches	Moderate	PRF-I
T4	Oak	Mature	Lifted bark, Deep Rot Holes	Moderate	PRF-M
T5	Oak	Mature	Rot hole, split limb, lifted bark at top, woodpecker hole	Moderate	PRF-M
T6	Oak with Clematis <i>Clematis</i> sp. climbing up trunk	Dead/Dying	Large cavity behind main stem of the Clematis at the bottom of the trunk, rot holes at top and hallway down trunk, split limb, lifted bark.	High	Multiple PRF-M
T7	Oak	Mature	Broken limbs creating crevices and potentially leading to a cavity, cavity in trunk (doesn't lead anywhere)	Moderate	PRF-M
T9	Unknown	Dead	Lifted Park	Low	PRF-I

5.3.9 Evaluation and Assessment of Likely Effects

Roosting

Buildings

5.3.10 As with the previously submitted survey information, building B1 was recorded to support a small number of gaps between the corrugated metal cladding and the metal flashing, which may provide some limited opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species such as Common Pipistrelle. In addition, the now vacant building was recorded to contain an internal office construction, within which limited potential opportunities for roosting bats were noted.

5.3.11 It is therefore recommended that the mitigation measures outlined in the approved Protected Species Report (Aspect Ecology, dated September 2020) are followed, and that an internal inspection survey and a single dawn-retry survey of building **B1** is undertaken immediately prior to the building being demolished to ensure that no roosting bats are present within the building at that time. In the unlikely event that evidence of roosting bats is recorded within the building, or a bat is observed re-entering the building, demolition works would be postponed, and Natural England Licence may need to be obtained before the building can be demolished. Subject to the implementation of this precautionary approach, it is considered that bats will be fully safeguarded under the proposals.

Trees

5.3.12 On the basis of the detailed proposals (e.g. see Appendix 5796/1) all of the existing trees within the site, including those described above and within the previous survey results with potential bat roost features, will be retained under the proposals, such that in the event that bats are present within the trees they will remain unaffected. As such, subject to the implementation of the recommendation outlined at Chapter 6 below in relation lighting, it is considered that bats will be fully safeguarded under the proposals.

Foraging / Commuting

5.3.13 Previous survey work recorded foraging and commuting bats within the site during the activity surveys. The combination of on-site habitat types occurs relatively frequently in the surrounding area and taking this into the account, together with the levels of activity and species recorded during the survey work, the site is considered to be of at least local level value to foraging and commuting bats.

5.3.14 In line with previously submitted information, the hedgerows and trees are to be almost fully retained under the detailed proposals, whilst new planting, wildflower grassland creation and wetland habitat creation would increase the foraging potential of the site. Therefore, subject to the implementation of suitable mitigation methods (see Section 6), it is not foreseen that the proposals will have any negative effects upon the conservation status of local bat populations. Indeed, the proposals create the opportunity to deliver habitat enhancements which will benefit commuting and foraging bats, such as habitat enhancements and new planting, which can be guided by the results of the survey work to achieve maximum benefit.

5.4



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.5 Dormouse

5.5.1 Legislation: Dormouse is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Such legislation affords protection to individuals of the species and their breeding sites and places of rest (see Appendix 5796/UECO4). Dormouse is also a S41 Priority Species. On this basis, Dormouse is considered to form an important ecological feature.

5.5.2 Previous Survey Results and Background Records: Specific Dormouse surveys undertaken at the site in 2020 recorded the potential presence of a single nest at the site. No specific records of Dormouse within or immediately adjacent to the study area were returned from the desktop study.

5.5.3 No specific records of Dormouse were returned from the desktop study within the 2km search area; however, Dormouse are known to be present to the west of the site on the opposite side of the A33. Dormouse surveys carried out as part of a historic planning application to the south of the site did not record Dormouse presence.

¹¹ English Nature (2002) 'Badgers and Development'

¹² Natural England (2011) 'Badgers and Development: A Guide to Best Practice and Licensing', Interim Guidance Document

5.5.4 Survey Results and Evaluation: The site continues to provide suitable opportunities for Dormouse in the form of hedgerows and, to a lesser extent, scrub. The majority of the site however is dominated by open grassland fields which are unsuitable for Dormouse.

5.5.5 Based on the previous survey work undertaken, Dormouse are confirmed to be present within the site and further survey work is not considered necessary for this species, given presence has already been demonstrated. Accordingly, in line with previously permitted (outline) information, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures detailed within Chapter 6 below, it is considered the Dormouse population present within the site will be safeguarded during construction, and measures can be readily incorporated into the detailed design to protect and enhance the Dormouse population, including through the provision of new native woodland planting.

5.6 Water Vole and Otter

5.6.1 Legislation. Water Vole is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Water Vole is also a S41 Priority Species. As such, this species is considered to represent an important ecological feature. The legislation affords protection to individuals of the species and their breeding sites and places of shelter (see Appendix 5796/UECO4).

5.6.2 If, despite all reasonable efforts, properly authorised development will adversely affect Water Vole and there are no alternative habitats nearby, Natural England may issue a licence to displace or trap and translocate Water Vole for the purpose of development. To issue such a licence, Natural England would need to be assured there is no reasonable alternative to the development and that there are no other practical solutions that would allow Water Vole to be retained at the same location. Natural England would also require no net loss of Water Vole habitat resulting from the works.

5.6.3 Otter is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Such legislation affords protection to individuals of the species and their breeding sites and places of rest (see Appendix 5796/UECO4). Otter is also a S41 Priority Species. On this basis, Otter is considered to represent an important ecological feature.

5.6.4 Previous Survey Results and Background Records. The drainage channels within the site were identified to be unsuitable for Water Vole and Otter. Two records of Water Vole were returned from the surrounding search area and no specific records of Otter were returned from within the 2km search area.

5.6.5 No specific records of Water Vole within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. Two records of Water Vole were returned from the surrounding search area, with the closest specific record of this species being located approximately 0.5km west of the site. No specific records of Otter were returned from within the 2km search area.

5.6.6 Survey Results and Evaluation. The habitat conditions have not significantly changed at the site and no elevated suitability was identified for either Water Vole or Otter. As such, in line with previously permitted (outline) information, it is considered the site is of negligible ecological importance to both Water Vole and Otter

5.7 Other Mammals

5.7.1 Legislation. A number of other UK mammal species do not receive direct legislative protection relevant to development activities but may receive protection against acts of

cruelty (e.g. under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996). In addition, a number of these mammal species are S41 Priority Species and should be assessed as important ecological features.

- 5.7.2 **Previous Survey Results and Background Records.** No evidence of any other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded within the site during the previously permitted survey work. Records were previously returned from the relevant search area for Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* (Priority Species).
- 5.7.3 No specific records of other mammals from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. A number of records of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and a single record of Brown Hare, *Lepus europaeus* (Priority Species) was returned from within the 2km search area around the site. The closest record of Hedgehog is located 0.6km to the east of the site, whereas the record of the Brown Hare was from 1km to the south-west.
- 5.7.4 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** In line with previously permitted (outline) information, no evidence of any other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded within the site. Other mammal species likely to utilise the site, such as Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, remain common in both a local and national context, and as mentioned above do not receive specific legislative protection in a development context. As such, these species are not a material planning consideration and the loss of potential opportunities for these species to the proposals is of negligible significance.
- 5.7.5 The desktop study returned background records of the Priority Species Hedgehog and Brown Hare within the surrounding area, albeit well separated from the site. The site offers some opportunities for these species, although habitats are unlikely to be of importance in a local context. Abundant similar opportunities are present within the local area and there is no evidence to suggest the proposals will significantly affect local populations of these species. However, it is recommended that precautionary safeguards are put in place to minimise the risk of harm to both species in the event they are present, as detailed in section 6 below.

5.8 Amphibians

- 5.8.1 **Legislation.** All British amphibian species receive a degree of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Great Crested Newt is protected under the Act and is also classed as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). As such, both Great Crested Newt and habitats utilised by this species are afforded protection (see Appendix 5796/UECO4). Great Crested Newt is also a S41 Priority Species, as are Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, Natterjack Toad *Epidalea calamita*, and Pool Frog *Pelophylax lessonae*. As such, these species should be assessed as important ecological features.
- 5.8.2 **Previous Survey Results and Background Records.** Two ponds were identified within 250m of the site during the previous work (see 5796/UECO1). Pond **P1** is a shallow pond adjacent to the southern site boundary, fed by and draining into in a drainage ditch (WC2). Pond **P2** is a brick lined semi-circular pond located with the housing estate approximately 200m north of the site. Both were previously subject to presence / absence survey work for Great Crested Newt, which found this species to be absent during 2020. No specific records of Great Crested Newt or any other amphibian species from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. A number of records of Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus* and Common Frog *Rana temporaria* were returned from the search area surrounding the site.

- 5.8.3 No specific records of Great Crested Newt or any other amphibian species from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. A number of records of Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*, Common Toad, and Common Frog *Rana temporaria* were returned from the search area surrounding the site, with the closest record of Great Crested Newt located approximately 0.4km east of the site. Surveys undertaken by Aspect Ecology in 2019 and 2023 for a planning application at Spencers Wood also recorded Great Crested Newt in ponds located approximately 0.7km and 0.45km from the site boundary, respectively, to the south-east of the site.
- 5.8.4 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** On the basis of the current survey work, the habitats within the site itself appear largely unchanged from the previous position. Nonetheless, subsequently to the previous survey, a further new pond (P3) was recorded to have been created within the adjacent SANG situated south of the site.
- 5.8.5 Accordingly, in order to update the previous results and incorporate consideration in regard to the new pond, further Great Crested Newt /eDNA surveys have been undertaken of ponds P1, P2 and P3 during 2024 (details of which are set out separately at Aspect Ecology's Technical Note – ref: 5796-04 TN01 EDNA dv1, dated November 2024). In summary, the survey work recorded no evidence for the presence of Great Crested Newt and accordingly (in line with the previous information), it is concluded that Great Crested Newts are unlikely to be present within the identified ponds.

Reptiles

- 5.8.6 **Legislation.** All six species of British reptile are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which protects individuals against intentional killing or injury. Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* receive additional protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); refer to Appendix 5796/UECO4. All six reptile species are also S41 Priority Species. As such, all reptile species should be assessed as important ecological features.
- 5.8.7 **Previous Survey Results and Background Records.** No reptiles were recorded during the previous specific survey work undertaken at the site in 2020. Four records of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and two records of Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* were returned from the surrounding search area.
- 5.8.8 No specific records of reptiles within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. Four records of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and two records of Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* were returned from the surrounding search area, with the closest specific record of being of Grass Snake, located approximately 0.6km west of the site. During reptile surveys undertaken for the planning application at Spencers Wood a single grass snake was recorded, approximately 0.4km to the south-east of the site.
- 5.8.9 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** In line with the previously permitted (outline) information, the habitats present within the site include apparently suitable opportunities for reptile species should they be present within the wider area (albeit noting the previous (historic) absence of this group from the surrounding area and previous disturbance).
- 5.8.10 Accordingly, in the absence of any specific up to date survey work for reptiles (and in line with the permitted outline position) it is recommended that suitable precautionary mitigation measures are put in place (as set out at Chapter 6) in order to safeguard any individual reptiles in the event they are present.

5.9 Birds

- 5.9.1 Legislation.** All wild birds and their nests receive protection under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of killing and injury, and their nests, whilst being built or in use, cannot be taken, damaged or destroyed. Species included on Schedule 1 of the Act receive greater protection and are subject to special penalties (see Appendix 5796/4).
- 5.9.2 Conservation Status.** The conservation importance of British bird species is categorised based on a number of criteria including the level of threat to a species' population status¹³. Species are listed as Green, Amber or Red. Red Listed species are considered to be of the highest conservation concern being either globally threatened and or experiencing a high/rapid level of population decline (>50% over the past 25 years). A number of birds are also S41 Priority Species. Red and Amber listed species and priority species should be assessed as important ecological features.
- 5.9.3 Previous Survey Results and Background Records.** The only species observed on-site during the Phase 1 survey was Great Tit *Parus major*. Information from the data search included records for several bird species in the vicinity of the site, including a number of Red Listed species.
- 5.9.4** Information from the data search included records for several bird species in the vicinity of the site, including a number of Red Listed species, among them Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, and Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, which are also all Priority Species. None of the records originate from within the site itself.
- 5.9.5 Survey Results and Evaluation.** Several species of bird were observed within the site during the update Phase 1 survey, including Great Tit, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* and Greater Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. Most of the birds recorded at the site are not listed as having any special conservation status, and none are identified to be on the Red list. The proposals will result in the loss of small sections of hedgerow to facilitate site access and this could potentially affect any nesting birds that may be present at the time of works. Accordingly, a number of safeguards in respect of nesting birds are proposed, as detailed in Chapter 6 below. In the long-term, new nesting opportunities will be available for birds as described in Chapter 6 below.

5.10 Invertebrates

- 5.10.1 Legislation.** A number of invertebrate species are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition, Large Blue Butterfly *Maculinea arion*, Fisher's Estuarine Moth *Gortyna borelii lunata* and Lesser Whirlpool Ram's-horn Snail *Anisus vorticulus* receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); refer to Appendix 5796/4. A number of invertebrates are also S41 Priority Species. Where such species are present, they should be assessed as important ecological features.

¹³ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D. and Win I. (2021). 'The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain.' British Birds 114, p.p. 723-747.

5.10.2 Previous Survey Results and Background Records. No evidence for the presence of any protected, rare or notable invertebrate species, was recorded within the site. A single record of the Priority Species Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus*, and records of Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* and White Admiral *Limenitis camilla* (also Priority Species) were returned from the records centre.

5.10.3 Survey Results and Evaluation. No evidence for the presence of any protected, rare or notable invertebrate species, including Stag Beetle, was recorded within the site during any of the survey work undertaken. The site is dominated by species-poor semi-improved grassland, which is likely to support only a limited diversity of invertebrates, and contains relatively few micro-habitats that would typically indicate elevated potential for invertebrates¹⁴, such as a variable topography with areas of vertical exposed soil, areas of species-rich semi-natural vegetation; variable vegetation structure with frequent patches of tussocks combined with short turf; free-draining light soils; walls with friable mortar or fibrous dung. It is likely that the off-site habitats, such as the woodland, are of relatively higher value to invertebrates, particularly Stag Beetle, and the deadwood resource on site is very limited.

5.10.4 Accordingly, given the habitat composition of the site and the scale and nature of the proposals, and in line with previous permitted outline position it is considered unlikely that any significant harm to any protected, rare or notable invertebrate populations will occur, and the site is not considered to support an important invertebrate assemblage. The inclusion of substantial enhanced habitats and ecological features within the proposed green infrastructure at the site presents the opportunity to deliver enhancements for invertebrates, and in particular Stage Beetle, by increasing the dead wood resource on site in the long-term).

5.11 Summary

5.11.1 On the basis of the above, a summary of the evaluation of fauna is provided below:

Table 5.2. Evaluation summary of fauna forming important ecological features.

Species / Group	Supported by or associated with the site	Level of Importance
Bats – Roosting	Potential habitat in the form of trees and buildings	Local
Bats – Foraging / Commuting	Confirmed presence on site	Local
Dormouse	Confirmed presence on site	Local
Birds	Confirmed presence on site	Site
Invertebrates	Single record of UK Priority Species Stag Beetle within / adjacent to site	Site

5.11.2 Other fauna supported by the site include non-priority species of mammals, amphibians and invertebrates. However, these species do not form important ecological features.

¹⁴ Natural England (2010) 'Higher Level Stewardship – Farm Environment Plan (FEP) Manual', 3rd Edition

6 Mitigation Measures and Enhancements

6.1 Mitigation

- 6.1.1 Given the habitats, ecological features and associated fauna identified within / adjacent to the site are largely in line with the previously permitted information submitted with the outline planning application, it is proposed that the mitigation measures are kept consistent, (reproduced as **MM1** to **MM11** below) are implemented under the detailed proposals. Further, detail and confirmation in respect of construction measures in particular will be provided within the Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP:Biodiversity) required under planning condition 9 of the outline planning permission and as summarised below.).

Hedgerows and Trees

- 6.1.2 **MM1 – Hedgerow and Tree Protection.** All hedgerows and trees to be retained within the proposed development shall be protected during construction in line with standard arboriculturalist best practice (BS5837:2012) or as otherwise directed by a suitably competent arboriculturalist. This will involve the use of protective fencing or other methods appropriate to safeguard the root protection areas of retained trees / hedgerows.

Watercourses

- 6.1.3 **MM2 – Pollution Prevention.** In order to safeguard the three watercourses/ditches and waterbodies against any potential run-off or pollution events during construction, the following safeguards will be implemented:

- Storage areas for chemicals, fuels, etc. will be sited well away from the watercourse (minimum 10m) and stored on an impervious base within an oil-tight bund with no drainage outlet. Spill kits with sand, earth or commercial products approved for the stored materials shall be kept close to storage areas for use in case of spillages;
- Where possible, and with prior agreement of the sewage undertaker, silty water should be disposed of to the foul sewer or via another suitable form of disposal, e.g. tanker off-site;
- Water washing of vehicles, particularly those carrying fresh concrete and cement, mixing plant, etc. will be carried out in a contained area as far from the watercourse as practicable (minimum 10m), to avoid contamination; and
- Refuelling of plant will take place in a designated area, on an impermeable surface, away from the watercourse (minimum 10m).

- 6.1.4 Post-development, the drainage system for the development will ensure the watercourse is not subject to adverse changes in surface water run-off or quality. On the contrary, the removal of agricultural run-off from the land will likely be beneficial in terms of water quality.

Bats

- 6.1.5 **MM3 – Precautionary Internal Inspection Survey and Dawn Re-entry Survey of Building B1.** Immediately prior to the demolition of building B1, an internal inspection survey and a single dawn re-entry survey will be undertaken to ensure bats are likely absent from the building. During the internal inspection survey, the building will be searched for evidence of roosting bats (including droppings, staining etc.). During the dawn re-entry survey, the

building will be observed by a suitable number of surveyors for 1.5 hours before sunrise and 15 minutes after sunrise as per good practice guidelines. If no evidence of bats is recorded within the building and no bats are seen returning to the building, then the building can be demolished. Should evidence of roosting bats be recorded within the building, or bats be observed returning to the building during the re-entry survey, demolition works will be postponed, and a Natural England Mitigation Licence may need to be obtained before the building can be demolished.

6.1.6 MM4 – Further Surveys (if required). As stated above, there are a number of trees with the potential to support roosting bats on-site. To date no survey work has been undertaken upon these trees as they are to be fully retained under the current layout. However, should the layout change, or a need for works to these trees be identified at a later stage (e.g. for health and safety purposes) further survey work may be required in the form of the climbed surveys or emergence surveys to ascertain whether roosting bats are present in the features identified.

6.1.7 MM5 – Sensitive Lighting. Light-spill onto retained and newly created habitat, in particular the retained hedgerows and woodland edge, will be minimised in accordance with good practice guidance¹⁵ to reduce potential impacts on light-sensitive bats (and other nocturnal fauna). This may be achieved through the implementation of a sensitively designed lighting strategy, with consideration given to the following key factors:

- **Light exclusion zones** – ideally no lighting should be used in areas likely to be used by bats. Light exclusion zones or ‘dark buffers’ may be used to provide interconnected areas free of artificial illumination to allow bats to move around the site;
- **Appropriate luminaire specifications** – consideration should be given to the type of luminaires used, in particular luminaries should lack UV elements and metal halide and fluorescent sources should be avoided in preference for LED luminaries. A warm white spectrum (ideally <2,700K) should be adopted to reduce the blue light component;
- **Light barriers / screening** – new planting (e.g. hedgerows and trees) or fences, walls and buildings can be strategically positioned to reduce light spill;
- **Spacing and height of lighting units** – increasing spacing between lighting units will minimise the area illuminated and allow bats to fly in the dark refuges between lights. Reducing the height of lighting will also help decrease the volume of illuminated space and give bats a chance to fly over lighting units (providing the light does not spill above the vertical plane). Low level lighting options should be considered for any parking areas and pedestrian / cycle routes, e.g. bollard lighting, handrail lighting or LED footpath lighting;
- **Light intensity** – light intensity (i.e. lux levels) should be kept as low as possible to reduce the overall amount and spread of illumination;
- **Directionality** – to avoid light spill lighting should be directed only to where it is needed. Particular attention should be paid to avoid the upward spread of light so as to minimise trespass and sky glow;

¹⁵ Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018) ‘Guidance Note 08/18: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK’; Stone, E.L. (2013) ‘Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance.’; ILP (2011) ‘Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light’ Institution of Lighting Professionals, GN01:2011.

- **Dimming and part-night lighting** – lighting control management systems can be used, which involves switching off/dimming lights for periods during the night, for example when human activity is generally low (e.g. 12.30 – 5.30am). The use of such control systems may be particularly beneficial during the active bat season (April to October). Motion sensors can also be used to limit the time lighting is operational.

Dormouse

- 6.1.8 **MM6 – Dormouse Licensing.** Due to a requirement to remove approximately 10m of hedgerow H1, along with associated scrub to facilitate construction of the access road in the north of the site, there will be a (minor) permanent loss of Dormouse habitat under the proposals, likely to be utilised by 1 or 2 adult Dormice. To avoid an offence under the relevant legislation, it will be necessary for the vegetation clearance to be carried out under a European Protected Species (EPS) development licence, obtained from Natural England. When determining whether to grant a licence, Natural England will need to give consideration to the three derogation tests under Article 16 of the Habitats Directive (1992), namely whether the development is for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, no satisfactory alternative, and maintenance of favourable conservation status.
- 6.1.9 The need for the development is set out by the planning documents associated with the application. In summary, the scheme will meet a local need for new housing which would need to be accessed via Grazeley Road in the north of the site. The existing access point is not wide enough to accommodate an access road and as such, the gateway will need to be widened which will result in unavoidable vegetation loss at the northern end of hedgerow H1.
- 6.1.10 In terms of maintenance of favourable conservation status, this would be achieved through implementation of safeguarding measures and provision of replacement habitat opportunities within the proposed development as set out below.
- 6.1.11 On this basis, it is therefore considered that, subject to planning permission being granted and confirmation of the detailed mitigation measures in line with those set out below, there is no reason to suggest that any associated licence would be unlikely to be granted by Natural England.
- 6.1.12 **MM7 – Safeguarding measures during vegetation clearance.** In order to minimise the risk to Dormice during vegetation clearance works, a number of safeguarding measures will need to be implemented. This will include sensitive timing of works, involving clearance outside of the peak hibernation or breeding periods, or as a two-stage process (removal of above ground vegetation during the winter months, followed by removal of stumps and ground works the following late spring once Dormice have emerged from hibernation). Works will also be carried out under ecological supervision, with progressive clearance of vegetation by hand, and will be preceded by check surveys of habitats for nests. These measures will be detailed in the method statement accompanying the EPS licence application.
- 6.1.13 **MM8 – Replacement habitat provision.** To compensate for the very small amount of habitat loss under the proposals, new tree and shrub planting will be provided within the site, particularly along the western site boundary where new woodland planting will be provided to buffer the existing woodland from the proposed development. In addition, nest boxes will also be provided in retained habitat areas to increase breeding opportunities for this species. Further detail is provided in the habitat creation and ecological enhancement section below.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hedgehogs

6.1.15 **MM10 – Hedgehog Safeguards.** In order to safeguard Hedgehogs and other small mammals should they enter the site during construction works, the following measures will be implemented:

- A watching brief should be maintained for Hedgehog and other small mammals throughout any clearance works;
- Any piles of material already present on site, particularly vegetation/leaves, etc. and any areas of dense scrub or hedgerows, shall be dismantled/removed by hand and checked for Hedgehog prior to the use of any machinery/disposal;
- Any material to be disposed of by burning, particularly waste from vegetation clearance and tree works, should not be left piled on site for more than 24 hours in order to minimise the risk of Hedgehogs occupying the pile. If this cannot be avoided, material should be stored within a container such as a skip to prevent animals from gaining access. Any material which has been stored on the ground overnight should be moved prior to burning to allow a thorough check for any animals which may have been occupying the pile;
- In the event that an injured Hedgehog is found, the animal should be wrapped carefully in a towel, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) phoned (01584 890 801) and the Hedgehog taken to a local vet immediately;

- To maintain connectivity throughout the site for Hedgehog and to allow access to suitable foraging habitat contained within residential gardens, small holes (13cmx13cm) should be created within garden fences or under gates.

Nesting Birds

- 6.1.16 **MM11 – Timing of Works.** To avoid a potential offence under the relevant legislation, no clearance of suitable vegetation should be undertaken during the bird-nesting season (1st March to 31st August inclusive). If this is not practicable, any potential nesting habitat to be removed should first be checked by a competent ecologist in order to determine the location of any active nests. Any active nests identified would then need to be cordoned off (minimum 5m buffer) and protected until the end of the nesting season or until the birds have fledged. These checking surveys would need to be carried out no more than three days in advance of vegetation clearance.

6.2 Ecological Enhancements

- 6.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages new developments to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity through incorporation of enhancement measures. The proposals present the opportunity to deliver ecological enhancements at the site for the benefit of local biodiversity, thereby making a positive contribution towards the broad objectives of national conservation priorities and the local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The recommendations and enhancements summarised below are considered appropriate given the context of the site and the scale and nature of the proposals and consistent with the previously recorded position. Through implementation of the following proposed ecological enhancements (**EE1** to **EE8**), which are in line with the previously permitted outline information.

Habitat Creation

- 6.2.2 **EE1 – New Planting.** New planting within the site will be comprised of native species of local provenance, including trees and shrubs appropriate to the local area. Suitable species for inclusion within the planting include native trees such as Oak, Birch *Betula pendula* and Field Maple, whilst native shrub species of particular benefit would likely include fruit and nut bearing species which would provide additional food for wildlife including Dormouse, such as Hawthorn and Hazel *Corylus avellana*. Where non-native species are proposed, these will include species of value to wildlife, such as varieties listed on the RHS' 'Plants for Pollinators' database, providing a nectar source for bees and other pollinating insects. The main areas which will be planted include a woodland buffer along the western site boundary and enhancement of existing boundary hedgerows. It is also recommended that hedgerows H3 and H4 be enhanced through planting of native species as they are gappy in places and would benefit from infill planting to increase connectivity across the site.
- 6.2.3 **EE2 – Wildflower Grassland.** In line with the previously permitted outline information, a large portion of the area currently identified as species-poor semi-improved grassland is to be retained under the proposals as public open space. The area is dominated by a small number of grass species with very few herb species present, resulting in a grassland that has a low diversity. There therefore exists the potential to improve this area, maximising both its biodiversity and amenity value by creating wildflower grassland. The wildflower grassland should comprise locally appropriate native species, which are tolerant of the

waterlogged conditions on-site. This may also a positive contribution towards the local BAP, which includes a target of wet grassland habitat creation¹⁶.

- 6.2.4 **EE3 – Wetland Features.** The detailed landscape proposals incorporate new ponds/SUDS features, which will be created on-site along the western boundary. These ponds will provide opportunities for a range of wildlife while also helping to attenuate surface water run-off and also make a positive contribution towards the local BAP, which lists pond creation as a target. In line with the proposed landscape plans, suitable aquatic / wetland vegetation will be provided within and around these features, to maximise their value to wildlife.

Bats

- 6.2.5 **EE4 - Bat Boxes.** It is proposed that a number of bat boxes be incorporated within the proposed development. The provision of bat boxes will provide new roosting opportunities for bats in the area, such as Soprano Pipistrelle, a national Priority Species. So as to maximise their potential use, the bat boxes should ideally be situated on suitable retained trees, erected as high up as possible and sited in sheltered wind-free areas that are exposed to the sun for part of the day, facing a south-east, south or south-westerly direction. In addition, where architectural design allows, a number of integrated bat boxes / roost features should be incorporated into a proportion of the new build. The precise number and locations of boxes / roost features should be determined by a competent ecologist, post-planning once the relevant final development design details have been approved.

Dormouse

- 6.2.6 **EE5 – Dormouse Nest Boxes.** In addition to the new landscape planting (detailed above) which will provide compensation for the loss of the small section of hedgerow H1 in the north of the site to facilitate the construction of the access road, a total of 20 Dormouse nest boxes will be erected within suitable vegetation present within the site to provide additional nesting opportunities for this species.

Birds

- 6.2.7 **EE6 - Bird Boxes.** It is recommended that bird nesting boxes be incorporated within the proposed development, thereby increasing nesting opportunities for birds at the site. Ideally, the bird boxes will have greater potential for use if sited on suitable, retained trees, situated as high up as possible. The precise number and locations of boxes should be determined by a competent ecologist, post-planning once the relevant final development design details have been approved.

Invertebrates

- 6.2.8 **EE7 – Habitat Piles / Loggeries.** It is proposed that a number of wood piles and/or partially buried loggeries, are provided within the open space areas at the site, located within areas of new planting, new wetland habitats or areas of wildflower grassland in order to provide potential habitat opportunities for invertebrate species, which in turn could provide a prey source for a range of other wildlife. In particular, the creation of loggeries by partially burying the larger logs arising from the vegetation clearance will create habitat for the Priority Species Stag Beetle, of which there are records of within the area. In addition, the provision and management of new native landscape planting will likely provide additional opportunities for invertebrates at the site in the long term.

¹⁶ Wokingham Borough Council (2014) *Wokingham Borough Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2012-2024*

- 6.2.9 **EE8 – Bee Bricks.** It is proposed that a number of bee bricks be incorporated within the proposed development thereby increasing nesting opportunities for declining populations of non-swarming solitary bee populations. Ideally, bee bricks should be located within suitable south-facing walls (where architectural design allows), located at least 1m off the ground. The bricks should be unobstructed by vegetation, though within close vicinity of nectar and pollen sources.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Aspect Ecology has carried out an updated Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development, based on the results of updated desktop study and Phase 1 habitat survey, with reference to the previous information provided to inform the outline planning permission. Following the submission of reserved matters information to WBC in October 2024, a number of revisions to the detailed information have been undertaken in order to address comments received from WBC officers, and accordingly, this report has been reviewed in order to ensure it remains accurate in relation to the current proposals.
- 7.2 The available information confirms that no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations are present within or adjacent to the site, and none of the designations within the surrounding area are likely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- 7.3 The Phase 1 habitat survey has established that the site is dominated by species-poor semi-improved grassland, which is only of value at the site level. The majority of this habitat is to be retained under the proposals, whilst the features identified to be of higher value, notably the hedgerows and the mature trees are to be almost entirely retained, with only small losses to hedgerows H2 and H5 likely to be necessary. New habitat creation has been proposed to offset losses, in conjunction with the landscape proposals in the form of a sizeable area of public green space.
- 7.4 The habitats within the site provide limited potential to support protected species, including species protected under both national and European legislation. Accordingly, a number of mitigation measures have been proposed to minimise the risk of harm to protected species, with compensatory measures proposed, where appropriate, in order to maintain the conservation status of local populations.
- 7.5 In conclusion, the proposals have sought to minimise impacts and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm to biodiversity. On the contrary, the opportunity exists to provide a number of biodiversity net gains within the large area of public open space and the proposed wetland features.

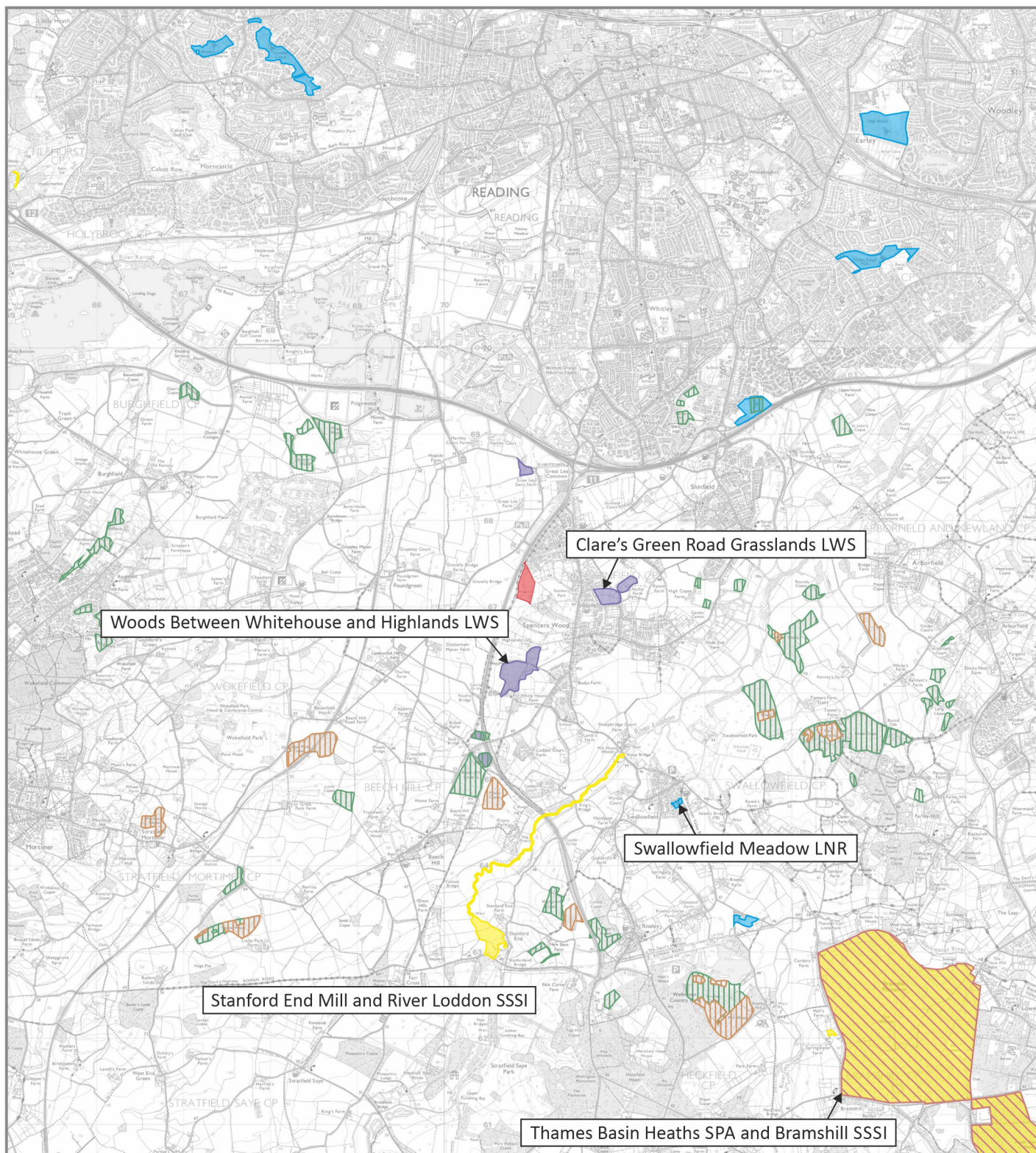
- 6.2.9 **EE8 – Bee Bricks.** It is proposed that a number of bee bricks be incorporated within the proposed development thereby increasing nesting opportunities for declining populations of non-swarming solitary bee populations. Ideally, bee bricks should be located within suitable south-facing walls (where architectural design allows), located at least 1m off the ground. The bricks should be unobstructed by vegetation, though within close vicinity of nectar and pollen sources.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Aspect Ecology has carried out an updated Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development, based on the results of updated desktop study and Phase 1 habitat survey, with reference to the previous information provided to inform the outline planning permission.
- 7.2 The available information confirms that no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations are present within or adjacent to the site, and none of the designations within the surrounding area are likely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- 7.3 The Phase 1 habitat survey has established that the site is dominated by species-poor semi-improved grassland, which is only of value at the site level. The majority of this habitat is to be retained under the proposals, whilst the features identified to be of higher value, notably the hedgerows and the mature trees are to be almost entirely retained, with only small losses to hedgerows H2 and H5 likely to be necessary. New habitat creation has been proposed to offset losses, in conjunction with the landscape proposals in the form of a sizeable area of public green space.
- 7.4 The habitats within the site provide limited potential to support protected species, including species protected under both national and European legislation. Accordingly, a number of mitigation measures have been proposed to minimise the risk of harm to protected species, with compensatory measures proposed, where appropriate, in order to maintain the conservation status of local populations.
- 7.5 In conclusion, the proposals have sought to minimise impacts and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm to biodiversity. On the contrary, the opportunity exists to provide a number of biodiversity net gains within the large area of public open space and the proposed wetland features.

Plan 5796/UECO1:

Site Location and Ecological Designations



Key:

- Site Location
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASW)
- Ancient Replanted Woodland (ARW)

aspect ecology

Aspect Ecology Limited - West Court - Hardwick Business Park
Noral Way - Banbury - Oxfordshire - OX16 2AF
01295 279721 - info@aspect-ecology.com - www.aspect-ecology.com

Land at Three Mile Cross, Reading

Site Location & Ecological Designations

5796/UECO1

A/JP

July 2024

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING NO.

REV.

DATE



Plan 5796/UECO2:

Habitats and Ecological Features



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Semi-improved d Grassland
 - Marshy Grassland
 - Amenity Grassland
 - Tall Ruderal Vegetation
 - Dense Scrub
 - Offsite Pond
 - Building
 - Hardstanding
 - Native Hedgerow
 - Native Hedgerow - Associated with bank or ditch
 - Ditch
 - Tree with Low Bat Roosting Potential (PRF-L)
 - Tree with Moderate/High Bat Roosting Potential (PRF-M)
 - Tree



Aspect Ecology Limited - West Court - Hardwick Business Park
Noral Way - Banbury - Oxfordshire - OX16 2AF
01295 279721 - info@aspect-ecology.com - www.aspect-ecology.com

Land East of Woodcock Lane,
Three Mile Cross
Habitats and Ecological Features



5796/UECO2

A/JP

July 2024

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING NO.

REV

DATE

Appendix 5796/1:

Proposed Landscape Masterplan



Appendix 5796/2:

Desktop Study Information



(c) Crown Copyright and database rights 2024. Ordnance Survey AC0000851168.

Legend

- Priority Habitat Inventory - Calaminarian Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non Priority) (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Calcareous Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Meadows (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Calcareous Grassland (England)

Ancient Woodland (England)

- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Traditional Orchards (England)

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 469600
ymin = 166600
xmax = 472500
ymax = 168000

Map produced by MAGIC on 12 July, 2024.
Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGIC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

Site Check Report Report generated on Fri Jul 12 2024
You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SU70936728
 The following features have been found in your search area:

Special Areas of Conservation (England) - points

Name	HARTSLOCK WOOD
Reference	UK0030164
Hectares	29.4
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030164
Name	THURSLEY, ASH, PIRBRIGHT & CHOBHAM
Reference	UK0012793
Hectares	5154.33
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012793

Special Areas of Conservation (England)

Name	HARTSLOCK WOOD
Reference	UK0030164
Hectares	29.4
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030164
Name	KENNET & LAMBOURN FLOODPLAIN
Reference	UK0030044
Hectares	115.8
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030044
Name	RIVER LAMBOURN
Reference	UK0030257
Hectares	28.87
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0030257
Name	CHILTERN BEECHWOODS
Reference	UK0012724
Hectares	1283.85
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012724
Name	WINDSOR FOREST & GREAT PARK
Reference	UK0012586
Hectares	1685.92
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012586
Name	THURSLEY, ASH, PIRBRIGHT & CHOBHAM
Reference	UK0012793
Hectares	5154.33
Hyperlink	https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012793

Special Protection Areas (England) - points

Name	THAMES BASIN HEATHS
Reference	UK9012141
Hectares	8309.5

Special Protection Areas (England)

Name	THAMES BASIN HEATHS
Reference	UK9012141
Hectares	8309.5

Ramsar Sites (England) - points
 No Features found

Ramsar Sites (England)
 No Features found

Proposed Ramsar Sites (England) - points
 No Features found

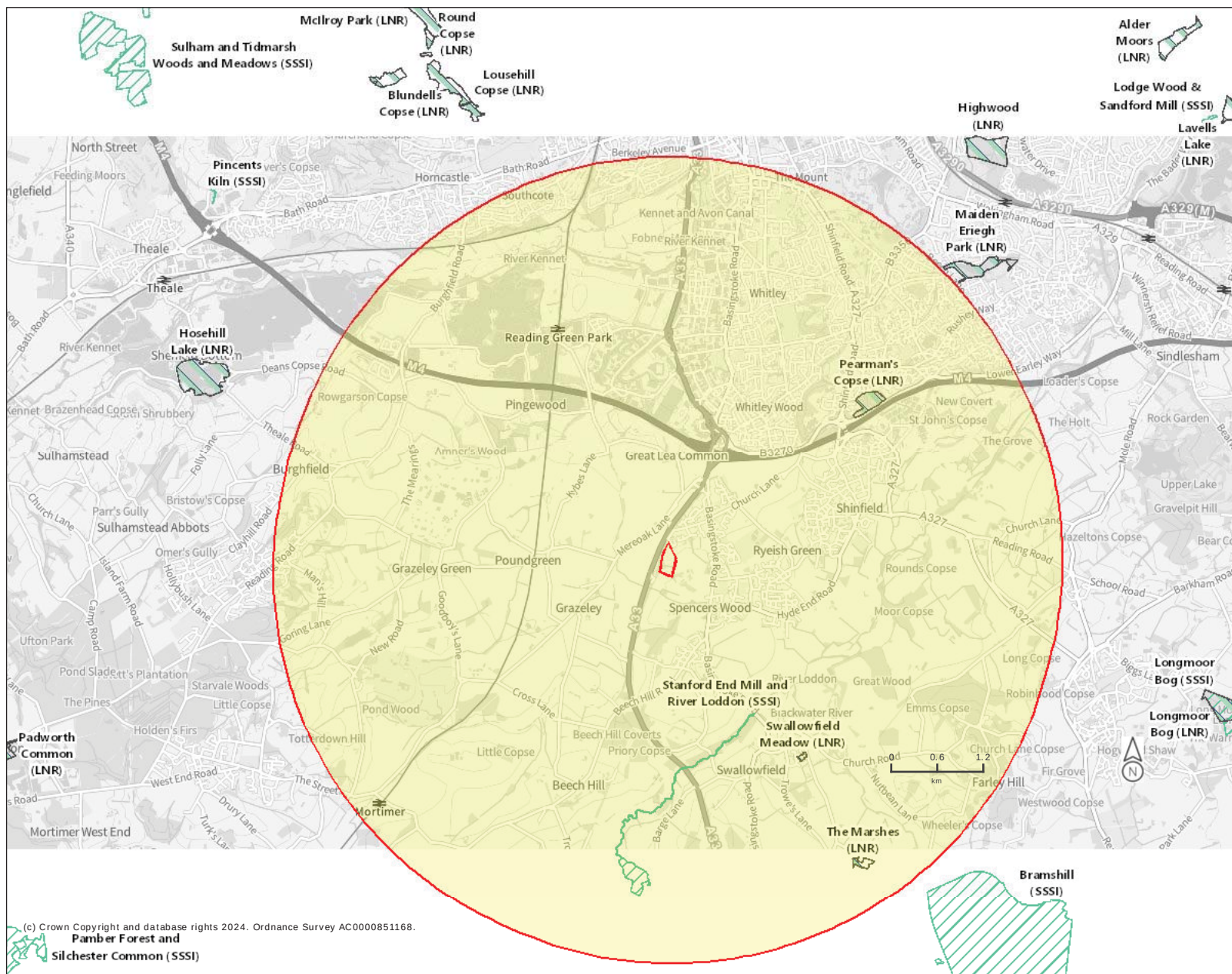
Proposed Ramsar Sites (England)
 No Features found

Possible Special Areas of Conservation (England) - points
No Features found

Possible Special Areas of Conservation (England)
No Features found

Potential Special Protection Areas (England) - points
No Features found

Potential Special Protection Areas (England)
No Features found



Legend

- Local Nature Reserves (England)
- National Nature Reserves (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

Projection = OSGB36

xmin = 460600

ymin = 163500

xmax = 480100

ymax = 172700

Map produced by MAGIC on 12 July, 2024.
Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGIC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

Site Check Report Report generated on Fri Jul 12 2024
You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SU70946726
 The following features have been found in your search area:

Local Nature Reserves (England) - points

Reference	1481599
Name	THE MARSHES
Hectares	2.21
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1481599
Reference	1009923
Name	SWALLOWFIELD MEADOW
Hectares	0.71
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009923
Reference	1009322
Name	PEARMAN'S COPSE
Hectares	6.89
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009322

Local Nature Reserves (England)

Reference	1481599
Name	THE MARSHES
Hectares	2.21
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1481599
Reference	1009923
Name	SWALLOWFIELD MEADOW
Hectares	0.71
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009923
Reference	1009322
Name	PEARMAN'S COPSE
Hectares	6.89
Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009322

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England) - points

Name	Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI
Reference	1000474
Natural England Contact	Conservation Delivery Team, Natural England
Natural England Phone Number	0845 600 3078
Hectares	11.8
Citation	1002963
Site Details Hyperlink	http://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1002963
Site Feature Condition Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteFeatureCondition.aspx?SiteCode=s1002963&SiteName=Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)

Name	Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI
Reference	1000474
Natural England Contact	Conservation Delivery Team, Natural England
Natural England Phone Number	0845 600 3078
Hectares	11.8
Citation	1002963
Site Details Hyperlink	http://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1002963
Site Feature Condition Hyperlink	https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteFeatureCondition.aspx?SiteCode=s1002963&SiteName=Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI

National Nature Reserves (England) - points

No Features found

National Nature Reserves (England)

No Features found

Site Check Report Report generated on Fri Jul 12 2024
You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SU70936731
The following features have been found in your search area:

SSSI Impact Risk Zones - for LPA's to determine likely impacts on terrestrial SSSI's and when to consult Natural England

GUIDANCE - How to use the Impact Risk Zones
HYPERLINK

[/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf](#)
[http://netracker2.geodata.co.uk/IRZ_icw4/step2.html?](http://netracker2.geodata.co.uk/IRZ_icw4/step2.html?irzcode=0301000530000~es=11404&location=468808,165816)
[irzcode=0301000530000~es=11404&location=468808,165816 \(IRZ polygon centre\)](http://netracker2.geodata.co.uk/IRZ_icw4/step2.html?irzcode=0301000530000~es=11404&location=468808,165816)

Appendix 5796/3:

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Methodology

1. The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland' (2018)¹.

Importance of Ecological Features

2. Ecological features within the site/study area have been evaluated in terms of whether they qualify as 'important ecological features'. In this regard, CIEEM guidance states that *"it is not necessary to carry out detailed assessment of features that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened and resilient to project impacts and will remain viable and sustainable"*.
3. Various characteristics contribute to the importance of ecological features, including:
 - Naturalness;
 - Animal or plant species, sub-species or varieties that are rare or uncommon, either internationally, nationally or more locally, including those that may be seasonally transient;
 - Ecosystems and their component parts, which provide the habitats required by important species, populations and/or assemblages;
 - Endemic species or locally distinct sub-populations of a species;
 - Habitat diversity;
 - Habitat connectivity and/or synergistic associations;
 - Habitats and species in decline;
 - Rich assemblages of plants and animals;
 - Large populations of species or concentrations of species considered uncommon or threatened in a wider context;
 - Plant communities (and their associated animals) that are considered to be typical of valued natural/semi-natural vegetation types, including examples of naturally species-poor communities; and
 - Species on the edge of their range, particularly where their distribution is changing as a result of global trends and climate change.
4. As an objective starting point for identifying important ecological features, European, national and local governments have identified sites, habitats and species which form a key focus for biodiversity conservation in the UK, supported by policy and legislation. These are summarised by CIEEM guidance as follows:

Designated Sites

- Statutory sites designated or classified under international conventions or European legislation, for example World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA);

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

- Statutory sites designated under national legislation, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR);
- Locally designated wildlife sites, e.g. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Biodiversity Lists

- Habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales (largely drawn from UK BAP priority habitats and priority species), often referred to simply as Priority Habitats / Species;
- Local BAP priority species and habitats.

Red Listed, Rare, Legally Protected Species

- Species of conservation concern, Red Data Book (RDB) species;
- Birds of Conservation Concern;
- Nationally rare and nationally scarce species;
- Legally protected species.

5. In addition to this list, other features may be considered to be of importance on the basis of local rarity, where they enable effective conservation of other important features, or play a key functional role in the landscape.

Assigning Level of Importance

6. The importance of an ecological feature should then be considered within a defined geographical context. Based on CIEEM guidance, the following frame of reference is used:
 - International (European);
 - National;
 - Regional;
 - County;
 - District;
 - Local (e.g. Parish or Neighbourhood);
 - Site (not of importance beyond the immediate context of the site).
7. Features of 'local' importance are those considered to be below a district level of importance, but are considered to appreciably enrich the nature conservation resource or are of elevated importance beyond the context of the site.
8. Where features are identified as 'important' based on the list of key sites, habitats and species set out above, but are very limited in extent or quality (in terms of habitat resource or species population) and do not appreciably contribute to the biodiversity interest beyond the context of the site, they are considered to be of 'site' importance.
9. In terms of assigning the level of importance, the following considerations are relevant:

Designated Sites

10. For designated sites, importance should reflect the geographical context of the designation (e.g. SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites are designated at the international level whereas SSSIs are designated at the national level). Consideration should be given to multiple designations as appropriate (where an area is subject to differing levels of nature conservation designations).

Habitats

11. In certain cases, the value of a habitat can be measured against known selection criteria, e.g. SAC selection criteria, 'Guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs' and the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, for the majority of commonly encountered sites, the most relevant habitat evaluation will be at a more localised level and based on relevant factors such as antiquity, size, species-diversity, potential, naturalness, rarity, fragility and typicalness (Ratcliffe, 1977). The ability to restore or re-create the habitat is also an important consideration, for example in the case of ancient woodland.
12. Whether habitats are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Habitats of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Habitats', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular habitat under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
13. Habitat inventories (such as habitat mapping on the MAGIC database) or information relating to the status of particular habitats within a district, county or region can also assist in determining the appropriate scale at which a habitat is of importance.

Species

14. Deciding the importance of species populations should make use of existing criteria where available. For example, there are established criteria for defining nationally and internationally important populations of waterfowl. The scale within which importance is determined could also relate to a particular population, e.g. the breeding population of common toads within a suite of ponds or an otter population within a catchment.
15. When determining the importance of a species population, contextual information about distribution and abundance is fundamental, including trends based on historical records. For example, a species could be considered particularly important if it is rare and its population is in decline. With respect to rarity, this can apply across the geographic frame of reference and particular regard is given to populations where the UK holds a large or significant proportion of the international population of a species.
16. Whether species are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Species of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Species', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular species under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
17. Species populations should also be considered in terms of the potential zone of influence of the proposals, i.e. if the entire species population within the site and surrounding area were to be affected by the proposed development, would this be of significance at a local, district, county or wider scale? This should also consider the foraging and territory ranges of individual species (e.g. bats roosting some distance from site may forage within site whereas other species such as invertebrates may be more sedentary).

Appendix 5796/4:

Legislation Summary

LEGISLATION SUMMARY

1. In England and Wales primary legislation is made by the UK Parliament, and in Scotland by the Scottish Parliament, in the form of Acts. The main piece of legislation relating to nature conservation in the UK is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
2. Acts of Parliament confer powers on Ministers to make more detailed orders, rules or regulations by means of secondary legislation in the form of statutory instruments. Statutory instruments are used to provide the necessary detail that would be too complex to include in an Act itself¹. The provisions of an Act of Parliament can also be enforced, amended or updated by secondary legislation.
3. In summary, the key pieces of legislation relating to nature conservation in the UK are:
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992
 - Hedgerows Regulations 1997
 - Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act for England and Wales 2000
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
 - Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
4. A brief summary of the relevant legislation is provided below. The original Acts and instruments should be referred to for the full and most up to date text of the legislation.
5. **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**. The WCA Act provides for the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) identified for their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. The Act contains strict measures for the protection and management of SSSIs.
6. The Act also refers to the treatment of UK wildlife including protected species listed under Schedules 1 (birds), 5 (mammals, herpetofauna, fish, invertebrates) and 8 (plants).
7. Under Section 1(1) of the Act, all wild birds are protected such that it is an offence to intentionally:
 - Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst in use* or being built;
 - Take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

* The nests of birds that re-use their nests as listed under Schedule ZA1, e.g. Golden Eagle, are protected against taking, damage or destruction irrespective of whether they are in use or not.
8. Offences in respect of Schedule 1 birds are subject to special, i.e. higher, penalties. Schedule 1 birds also receive greater protection such that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
 - Disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or while it is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young;
 - Disturb dependent young of such a bird.

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/secondary-legislation/statutory-instruments/>

9. Under Section 9(1) of the Act, it is an offence to:
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal included in Schedule 5.
10. In addition, under Section 9(4) it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
 - Obstruct access to, any structure or place which any wild animal included in Schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection; or
 - Disturb any wild animal included in Schedule 5 while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
11. Under Section 13(1) it is an offence:
 - To intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any wild plant listed in Schedule 8; or
 - Unless the authorised person, to intentionally uproot any wild plant not included in Schedule 8.
12. The Act also contains measures (S.14) for preventing the establishment of non-native species that may be detrimental to native wildlife, prohibiting the introduction into the wild of animals (releases or allows to escape) and plants (plants or causes to grow) listed under Schedule 9.
13. **Protection of Badgers Act 1992.** The Act aims to protect the species from persecution, rather than being a response to an unfavourable conservation status, as the species is in fact common over most of Britain. It should be noted that the legislation is not intended to prevent properly authorised development. Under the Act it is an offence to:
 - Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat* a Badger, or attempt to do so;
 - To intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett[#] (this includes disturbing Badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it).

* the intentional elimination of sufficient foraging area to support a known social group of Badgers may, in certain circumstances, be construed as an offence

A sett is defined as “any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a Badger”. Natural England advice (June 2009) is that a sett is protected so long as such signs remain present, which in practice could potentially be for some time after the last actual occupation by Badger. Interference with a sett includes blocking tunnels or damaging the sett in any way
14. Licences can be obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) for development activities that would otherwise be unlawful under the legislation, provided there is suitable justification. The SNCO for England is Natural England.
15. **Hedgerows Regulations 1997.** ‘Important’ hedgerows (as defined by the Regulations) are protected from removal (up-rooting or otherwise destroying). Various criteria specified in the Regulations are employed to identify ‘important’ hedgerows for wildlife, landscape or historical reasons.
16. **Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act for England and Wales 2000.** The CROW Act provides increased measures for the management and protection of SSSIs and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation. Schedule 12 of the Act amends the species provisions of the WCA 1981, strengthening the legal protection for threatened species. The Act also introduced a duty on Government to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

17. **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.** Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as local planning authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when exercising their normal functions. 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats and species in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
18. **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).** The Regulations enact the European Union's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in the UK. The Habitats Directive was designed to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity within member states through the conservation of sites, known in the UK as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), containing habitats and species selected as being of EC importance (as listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive respectively). Member states are required to take measures to maintain or restore these natural and semi-natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status.
19. The Regulations also require the compilation and maintenance of a register of European sites, to include SACs and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)² classified under Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). These sites constitute the Natura 2000 network. The Regulations impose restrictions on planning decisions likely to significantly affect SPAs or SACs.
20. The Regulations also provide protection to European Protected Species of animals that largely overlaps with the WCA 1981, albeit the provisions are generally stricter. Under Regulation 43 it is an offence, *inter alia*, to:
 - Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European Protected Species;
 - Deliberately disturb any wild animals of any such species, including in particular any disturbance likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or which is likely to affect significantly their local distribution or abundance;
 - Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.
21. Similar protection is afforded to European Protected Species of plants, as detailed under Regulation 47.
22. The Regulations do provide a licensing system that permits otherwise illegal activities in relation to European Protected Species, subject to certain tests being fulfilled.

² Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (aka the Birds Directive), which came into force in April 1979. SPAs are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory species.

ecology • landscape planning • arboriculture



Aspect Ecology Ltd
West Court
Hardwick Business Park
Noral Way
Banbury
Oxfordshire OX16 2AF

T: 01295 279721
E: info@aspect-ecology.com
W: www.aspect-ecology.com