



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

For

Lee West

Loddon Valley Leisure Centre

Rushey Way

Lower Earley

Reading

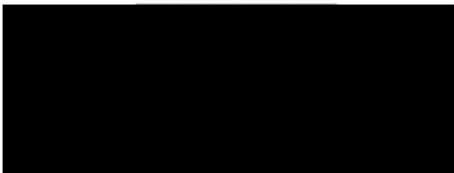
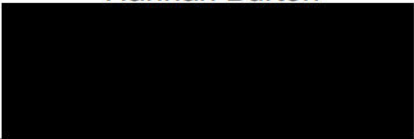
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Disclaimers

All information set out in this report is true and based on the opinions and knowledge of ProHort at the time of writing. This report has been set out for the sole use of the client under the conditions set out in this document.

This report was prepared to the standard set out in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. Adhering to this guidance, this report is considered valid for a period of 12 months after the date of the site visit, after this date this report will no longer be an accurate assessment of the current conditions of the Site/project area.

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Summary

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken at Loddon Valley Leisure Centre, Rushey Way, Lower Earley, Earley, Reading, RG6 4PS (grid reference: SU 74175 69979), to support a planning application to convert three porous asphalt netball courts to four synthetic turf padel courts. A site survey was undertaken on the 27th August 2026 and a desktop study was undertaken in September 2026.

The appraisal assessed the current ecological value of habitats within the Site and their potential to support protected and notable species.

Overall, no further surveys are required to determine species presence within the Site.

For full details, please read the report in its entirety.

1. Introduction

ProHort Limited have been commissioned by Lee West of Loddon Valley Leisure Centre, Rushey Way, Lower Earley, Earley, Reading, RG6 4PS (grid reference: SU 74175 69979) to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), hereafter referred to as the 'Site'. The purpose of the survey was to assess the likely presence of rare or protected species, to identify any features, habitats or species which would constitute potential constraints to any development which may take place on the Site, and to make recommendations for mitigation and/or further survey work.

This report sets out the results of a desk-based study and a survey of the Site. The site survey was undertaken on the 27th August 2026 and a desktop study was undertaken in September 2026. A PEA is required to support a planning application.

1.1. Site location

The Site comprises an existing outdoor sports pitch used as three netball courts (Figure 1). It is located within the grounds of Loddon Valley Leisure Centre, Rushey Way, Lower Earley, east of Reading (grid reference: SU 74175 69979). The Site is surrounded by hardstanding associated with the leisure centre and car park, areas of amenity grassland, and mature trees and other established vegetation. The wider surroundings comprise predominantly recreational and leisure uses, with residential and commercial development within the wider Lower Earley area.

The existing three netball courts are currently floodlit, and artificial lighting is therefore an established feature of the Site and its immediate surroundings. The existing floodlighting comprises 8 no. columns approximately 10.0 m in height supporting 12 no. 2 kW metal halide projector fittings.

There are plans to develop the site. The planning application involves converting three porous asphalt netball courts to four synthetic turf padel courts. As part of the proposals, the existing metal halide floodlighting installation would be removed and replaced with a new LED floodlighting system comprising 16 no. 320 W LED fittings mounted on 6.0 m high columns. The proposed luminaires would have a 2700 K colour temperature and no UV content.

From an ecological perspective, these changes have the potential to reduce the extent and intensity of artificial lighting effects, particularly in relation to nocturnal fauna such as bats. The detailed lighting design should minimise light spill onto surrounding vegetation and mature trees.



Figure 1 – Red line boundary of the Site

Taken from Bing Maps (© 2026 Microsoft Corporation, © 2026 Maxar, ©CNES (2026) Distribution Airbus DS)

1.2. Historic Context

According to opensource historic mapping, little has changed in the wider landscape in recent times.

2. Methodology

2.1. Aims and Objectives of the Survey

The aims and objectives of this report are as follows:

- To record and describe the current habitats and species present within the Site.
- To identify any occurrences or rare and/or protected plant species within the Site.
- To identify any invasive, non-native plant species.
- To undertake a habitat appraisal and assess the potential of the site to support protected species.
- To identify any potential ecological concerns or constraints that could influence the development and provide feedback on appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, mitigate or compensate for impacts on protected species and other local wildlife.

2.2. Desk Top Study

The purpose of a desk study is to collect baseline ecological data held by statutory and non-statutory consultees. This includes any records of species from the Site and the surrounding 2km.

To ensure the information within this report is current, only species data collected within the last 10 years was considered. This data is used as an indicator of species presence and should not be used to indicate absence.

A search on DEFRA's open source, online MAGIC Maps tool was used to identify any designated sites, priority habitats, and previous protected species licences within 2km of the Site.

Data provided by the Site's Local Record Centre was used to identify any non-statutory designated sites and any protected and notable species records within 2km of the Site.

Any trees with the Site or any trees affected by the proposed works will be checked to identify any existing Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). The local authority maps/records were searched.

2.3. Habitat Survey

A survey was completed of the defined boundary of the Site as well as the surrounding area, where applicable. The Site area was assessed in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd 2023). A species list of flora was compiled for each habitat and an estimate of abundance was assigned using the DAFOR (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, or Rare) scale (Walker *et al.* 2010). The Site was then assessed for its suitability for any protected and notable species. The surrounding area was assessed for any evidence or suitability for any protected and notable species.

2.4. Preliminary Roost Assessment

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on any objects of interest within the Site (buildings or trees etc. where applicable) in reference to the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (Collins, 2023). A thorough search for evidence of bats was undertaken in any internal loft spaces or voids and on any external features of any appropriate buildings, notably any windowsills, walls, floors and flat surfaces.

A ground level tree assessment for all individual trees and tree groups within the Site was undertaken to determine any bat roosting potential. A note was made of any features (e.g. cracks, holes, crevices, loose bark, or dense ivy *Hedera helix*) or evidence of bats visible from ground level.

Evidence of roosting bats include:

- Presence of live/dead bats.
- Bat droppings (can be distinguished from rat/mouse droppings by their crumbly texture).

- Staining from fur around access points.
- The presence of feeding remains, such as insect wings and casings.
- Absence of cobwebs around crevices

A building/tree would be identified as a 'confirmed' bat roost if evidence of roosting bats was recorded.

Evidence of bats is often concealed and/or inaccessible due to remote nature of the roost. Therefore, where no evidence of roosting bats was recorded, an assessment on the availability of potential roosting areas and bat access points around the building/tree, as well as the quality/availability or surrounding bat habitat, was conducted. The building/tree was then assigned a category that is based on a sliding scale of 'negligible' to 'high potential' (based on Collins, 2023).

2.5. Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

Ponds within 250 m of the Site, where possible, were assessed for the suitability for Great Crested Newts (GCN). The assessment of these ponds followed the GCN Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) methods (ARG UK, 2010). The HSI methods assess a number of parameters that influence breeding populations of GCN. These parameters include: location, pond size, permanence of pond, water quality, bank shading, waterfowl activity, presence of fish, number of ponds within the surrounding area, terrestrial habitat type, and macrophyte cover of the pond. Each of these variables can score a number between 0 and 1 and the geometric mean of these numbers provide a final value which can be used to categorise the suitability level (poor, below average, average, good, or excellent). These categories can then be used to inform the need for further surveys.

2.6. Legislation and Policy

Appendix 2 sets out the relevant policies and environmental and wildlife legislation relevant to the Site. The project must follow these documents, and this report is set out to avoid any offenses being committed regarding these policies and legislations.

2.7. Limitations of the Survey

There were no limitations to the survey; the whole of the site was accessible on foot, allowing the full appraisal of habitats and species present. It should be noted that a single visit cannot always ascertain the presence or absence of a protected species. However, an assessment is made of the likelihood for protected species to occur based on habitat characteristics and ecology of each species. Where there is potential for protected species, additional survey work may be required to ascertain their presence or absence.

Data on species that has been obtained from local records, are sometimes only available at low spatial resolutions and are constrained by the voluntary nature of the contributions and what has been chosen to be submitted. While these records provide a useful indication of species recorded in the local area, the data is not necessarily an accurate reflection of species assemblages or abundance in the vicinity.

3. Results

3.1. Designated Sites

2 statutory designated sites were identified within 2km of the Site. Additionally, 16 non-statutory designated sites were identified within 2 km of the Site (Table 1).

Table 1 – All statutory and non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the Site; taken from Magic Maps in September 2026 and provided by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

Site and Designation	Distance from the Site	Connectivity	Site description
Maiden Eriagh Park (LNR)	c. 1000m NE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	Habitats include lowland mixed deciduous woodland, ancient semi natural woodland and eutrophic open water.
Pearman's Copse (LNR)	c. 700m SW	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	Pearmans Copse is a small area of ancient woodland, in Lower Earley, covering 2 hectares. It contains ash, hazel, and oak trees. It contains many classic archaeological features, such as boundary banks and ditches. It is surrounded by community woodland within and it links with Dinton Pastures Country Park.
St John's Copse (LWS)	c. 940m SE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	This small woodland is a neglected, mixed coppice under oak standards interplanted with douglas fir, which in places forms the dominant tree in the canopy. There is also ash and more alder to the north. It is situated in the valley of the River Loddon on fairly dry loam soil though there are low lying areas within the wood that have impeded drainage. In the wetter areas ash and alder dominate. The wood is surrounded by arable or improved grassland. A hedge network links the site to another small woodland to the east. There is still a significant semi-natural component and the wood supports a small regenerating population of wild service tree, a species of restricted distribution in Berkshire. The field layer predominantly consists of abundant common nettle with ground ivy and cleavers covering a lot of dead wood. Elsewhere, bluebell is locally abundant especially under the hazel as is remote sedge and three-nerved sandwort. Greater stitchwort is locally frequent. Bramble is locally abundant more so in the south.

**Arborfield
Bridge
Meadow
(LWS)**

c. 2000m
SE

Low –Dispersal
barriers for fauna
species (roads and
houses) reducing
connectivity.

This is an eyot within the River Lodden with a few manmade channels created between the two. It is predominantly an area of wet woodland with widespread mature hybrid crack-willow and dense common sallow across the site along with some mature weeping willow. Alder is locally abundant and there's frequent sycamore. Many other trees such as ash, elder and pedunculate oak are only occasional throughout the site. The sub-canopy is very dense in places with bramble and snowberry lining some of the routes. Common nettle and himalayan balsam dominate the ground flora throughout. There's also some japanese knotweed. Riparian margins contain some fen species such as purpleloosestrife, common figwort, great yellow-cress, gypsywort and water mint. It used to be more open with more indicators of fen and marshy grassland. In the past species such as arrowhead, common meadow-rue and yellow loosestrife have also been recorded.

**The Cowsey
(LWS)**

c. 1560m
NW

Low –Dispersal
barriers for fauna
species (roads and
houses) reducing
connectivity.

This west-facing hillside stretches over 17.8 ha and is largely covered by mature scrub and broadleaved woodland which surrounds grassy enclaves. There are natural springs, one supporting a ribbon of wetland plants in a shallow valley, one feeding a small pond and another drains an area of mature woodland. Some grassland areas are locally damp and support patches of rushes. There are fragments of richer grassland by the northwestern boundary with bird's-foot trefoil, agrimony, lesser stitchwort, common knapweed, meadow vetchling, creeping cinquefoil, common sorrel and hard rush. More sandy, acidic grassland occurs in an area rich with large anthills. The geology is plateau gravel; the soils appear to be mixed, sandy in places on the top of the hill but with more clay further down. The height of the site ranges from 60 to over 75 metres. The Cowsey is situated in Whitley, South Reading. It lies next to the John Rabson Recreation Ground and forms part of a larger playing area with open access. On other boundaries the land uses are roads, housing and a school playing field.

Gravel Pit Wood, The Holt (LWS)	c. 2000m SE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	A Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance), which was probably planted up around a 100 years ago. The canopy varies but is predominately oak and ash with areas of birch over hazel coppice and a carpet of bluebells. In areas rhododendron has encroached where there is little in the way of a field layer. The woodland is split by a road and also a stream. Along the stream lies an area of alder with nettle, which has elements of Wet Woodland Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance). A couple of springs are also present. Moving south the woodland grades to dense holly and rhododendron scrub and open areas of bracken and bluebell. A couple of fine veteran oaks are scattered amongst the scrub. Towards the north lie a couple of ponds that feed into a ditch. They are heavily silted and appear quite stagnant with sparse vegetation apart from creeping buttercup, bittersweet, marsh bedstraw and lesser spearwort. Some willow lies around the ponds. Grading out from the pond the field layer is relatively rank with nettle, herb robert, garlic mustard, cleavers and wood dock. Towards the central area lies a former pit where birch has colonised. Overall eight ancient woodland indicators are present and include primrose, moschatel and wood speedwell. The site lies to the south west of Sindlesham and another woodland Wildlife Heritage Site lies approximately 200 metres from the site.
Loaders Copse (LWS)	c. 2000m E	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	The site is a small area of ancient woodland, surrounded by grassland / marshy grassland and situated just south of the M4 motorway. The wood is located on an area with a relatively high water table, on London Clay. It is less than 0.2km away from another Local Wildlife Site (LWS) woodland. The site is not easily accessible and appears to be largely unused by local people. 20 ancient woodland indicator species have been found on this site.
The Grove (LWS)	c. 1667m SW	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and	A small mosaic of rank grassland, scrub, secondary woodland, broadleaved plantation and two ponds completely enclosed by roads towards the north of

		houses) reducing connectivity.	Shinfield. The majority of the site consists of a mosaic of scrub and a tall grassland sward which is dominated by forbs. The sward is predominately black knapweed, wild carrot, upright hedge parsley, stone parsley and ragwort with areas of meadow vetchling, agrimony, common vetch and ribwort plantain. The grassland appears damp in areas with the presence of greater bird's-foot-trefoil and sneezewort. The grassland sward has affinities to the MG1 Arrhenatheretum elatioris grassland, Centaurea nigra sub community. Scrub is encroaching throughout the sward, where it ranges from scattered hawthorn, to dense areas of bramble with young sapling oak, hawthorn and ash. Towards the north lies an area of scrubby, relatively disturbed secondary woodland. The canopy is predominately ash and oak (relatively young) over a mix of hawthorn, field maple, hazel and elder. It appears that some planting has been carried out. The ground is relatively uneven which suggests some work has been carried out in conjunction with the recent road building. The field layer is made up of patches of locally abundant ivy, nettle, ground ivy and patches of garlic mustard, dog's mercury and chickweed. Mixed tree planting has occurred with species such as ash, pine, hawthorn and the occasional dogwood, whitebeam and wayfaring tree. Against the gateway lies an area of gravel which has been colonised by an ephemeral, open sward made up of species such as common figwort, scarlet pimpernel, bristly oxtongue, nettle, shepherds purse and field forget-me-not. Overall the site forms a mosaic of habitats which is confined to a small pocket to the south of Reading and north of the M4.
Shinfield Park, Nores Hill (LWS)	c. 1620m SW	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	A mixture of woodland including areas of semi-natural ancient woodland. These areas have a canopy of ash and oak with hazel coppice below. Dormouse has been recorded at this site in 1987. Woodland species present include yellow pimpernel, three-nerved sandwort, yellow archangel and bluebell.
Redhatch Copse (LWS)	c. 721m N	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and	This site is a small area of varied ancient woodland. Parts of the site are dominated by ash with hazel coppice and elder. Birch dominates other areas in the site and there

		houses) reducing connectivity.	are wet flushy areas with alder and ash. Sycamore is invading in places. Bramble and bluebell are dominant on the ground. Species associated with long established woodland that have been recorded here include opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage, which is abundant in the wet areas, hairy wood-sedge, yellow pimpernel, wood spurge, wood melick and wood sorrel. Wetland species are found in the wetter areas including marsh marigold and water mint.
Maiden Erlegh Woods (LWS)	c. 1517m NE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	The site consists of ancient and semi-natural woodland, with a stream flowing through part and a couple of associated marshy areas. Most of the site lies within the Maiden Erlegh Park Local Nature Reserve which extends to the west to include a lake and seeded grassland which are not included in the Local Wildlife Site. The woodland canopy is predominately ash with occasional oak and locally frequent sycamore. The understorey is made up of holly, hazel, hawthorn, privet, elder and blackthorn. The field layer consists of nettle, rough meadow-grass, ground ivy, herb robert, cleavers, broad buckler-fern, male fern and occasional bluebell. Locally frequent dog's mercury, wood sorrel and wood anemone are also present. Occasional alder and crack willow line the stream, where a couple of wet flushes extend out, with wetland species such as opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage, creeping jenny, marsh marigold and yellow iris. Some of the areas of woodland now form extensions to gardens, where some plots have been cleared, planted or now dense with scrub and rhododendron. The site is located in the town of Earley and besides the other parts of the LNR the surrounding land use includes gardens, road and a recreational field.
River Loddon (Part) (LWS)	c. 1600m SE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	A seventeen kilometre stretch of the River Loddon running from Swallowfield to its confluence with the River Thames near Wargrave. This section of the river has a diversity of features such as adjacent marsh, islands, inlets, riffles, river cliffs and extensive and varied channel vegetation. This includes the uncommon Loddon Pondweed <i>Potamogeton nodosus</i> . Water

			vole and a variety of dragonflies and damselflies are also found along its length.
Whiteknights Park (LWS)	c. 1880m N	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	Whiteknights Park consists of a mosaic of landscaped trees with mown grassland, a large shaded, eutrophic lake, mixed secondary woodland, several stands of introduced shrubs and trees and a couple of areas managed as meadow. The mixed woodland canopy is predominately oak (several species including turkey oak) with hornbeam, wild cherry, sycamore, ash and several ornamental species such as swamp cypress. In a couple of sections, stands of yew are also present. Dense rhododendron and cherry laurel make up the understorey throughout the majority of the woodland. Other species include sapling hazel, sycamore and beech. The field layer varies but is relatively species poor and patchy with dense nettle and low bramble, areas of small balsam and scattered species such as lords-and-ladies, male fern, enchanter's nightshade, foxglove, a couple of patches of bluebell and three-nerved sandwort. Towards the east it appears more acidic and the canopy grades to sweet chestnut (a couple have previously been coppiced) with silver birch and rowan. The understorey consists of holly, cherry laurel and bramble. The field layer is sparse with occasional foxglove, cleavers, wood avens, bracken and compact rush. A large eutrophic lake lies towards the centre of the site with little in the way of aquatic species apart from a small area of white water-lily and common duckweed. Little emergent vegetation is present as it is heavily shaded by trees. However small pockets of yellow iris, sweet flag and bulrush, with water mint, gipsywort, marsh woundwort, great willowherb and hemlock water-dropwort are present. The lake is surrounded by a mown grassland sward and scattered landscaped tree planting (parkland). The site is thought to have previously been identified for its ornithological interest and has been recorded by English Nature as a Parkland or Wood Pasture with nine veteran trees on site. To the west there are three areas

which are managed as a meadow which have remnants of lowland meadow habitat including sneezewort, glaucous sedge, common knapweed and oxeye daisy in what is essentially a rough grassland sward with much false oat-grass.

Rushey Way Pond (LWS)	c. 1112m NE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	Rushey Way Pond (also known as Marefield Pond) is a small site in an urban area which consists of a pond surrounded by dense scrub. It is surrounded by housing at the east, north and western boundaries, with a native hedgerow at the southern boundary beyond which lies a roadside verge and a road. It is managed by Earley Town Council. The site was originally notified for its amphibian population which includes great crested newt, palmate newt and common toad. During the 2021 surveys, great crested newt and common toad were not re-found, but a strong smooth newt and invertebrate population was identified to be using the pond. A small area of roadside verge to the south of the pond was added as an extension in 2022. It was planted up with wildflower plugs by volunteers (approximately 10 different species) and has been seeded with yellow rattle and resembles lowland meadow habitat.
Rushy Mead (LWS)	c. 1274m SE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.	Rushy Mead contains some wet woodland with areas dominated by Alder and willows especially in the north-west of the site. Some poplars have been planted on the site. The drier areas have some mixed Hazel, Ash and Field Maple coppice and areas of Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Dogwood scrub. There are also some old Oak and Ash standards. Wetland plants include Water Mint, Meadowsweet, Yellow Iris, Common Comfrey, Common Marsh-bedstraw, and pond sedges. Ragged-Robin and Purple Loosestrife were present in the past. This was expanded to include similar woodland to the north in the 2023 survey.

3.2. Priority and Notable Habitats

The priority habitats (outlined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended)) within 2km of the Site are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – All priority habitats within 2km of the Site; taken from Magic Maps in September 2026.

Priority habitat	No. of sites within 2km	Closest site	Connectivity
Priority Habitat Inventory - No main habitat but additional habitat exists (England)	19	c. 850m SW	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.
Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat (England)	3	c. 1000m NE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.
Priority Habitat Inventory - Traditional Orchards (England)	6	c. 800m SW	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.
Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)	101	c. 100m SW	<u>High</u> – No significant dispersal barriers
Ancient Woodland (England)	16	c. 650m N	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.
Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Fens (England)	1	c. 2000m S	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.
Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)	10	c. 950m SE	<u>Low</u> –Dispersal barriers for fauna species (roads and houses) reducing connectivity.

It is considered that multiple hedgerows and ponds within 2km of the Site may meet criteria of priority habitats.

3.3. European Protected Species Licences

6 European Protected Species licences were identified within 2km of the Site (Table 3).

Table 3 – All granted European Protected Species licences within 2km of the Site; taken from Magic maps January 2026.

Species	Distance from Site	Dates	Connectivity
Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats	c. 1150m S	14/08/2013 - 01/09/2017	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier
Daubentons and soprano pipistrelle	c.1550m SE	03/10/2020 - 01/11/2025	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier
Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats	c. 1150m S	23/04/2014 - 01/09/2018	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier
Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats	c. 1150m S	28/01/2015 - 01/09/2018	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier
Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats	c. 1150m S	06/11/2015 - 01/09/2018	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier
Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats	c. 1150m S	27/01/2015 - 01/09/2018	<u>Low</u> – Some connecting habitat including linked back gardens, line of trees and woodland blocks; however, distance may act as a dispersal barrier

3.4. Tree Preservation Orders

No TPOs were found surrounding within directly surrounding the Site.

3.5. UK Habitat Classification Survey

All UKHab habitats were identified within the Site:

- u1b Developed land, sealed surface
- u1c Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

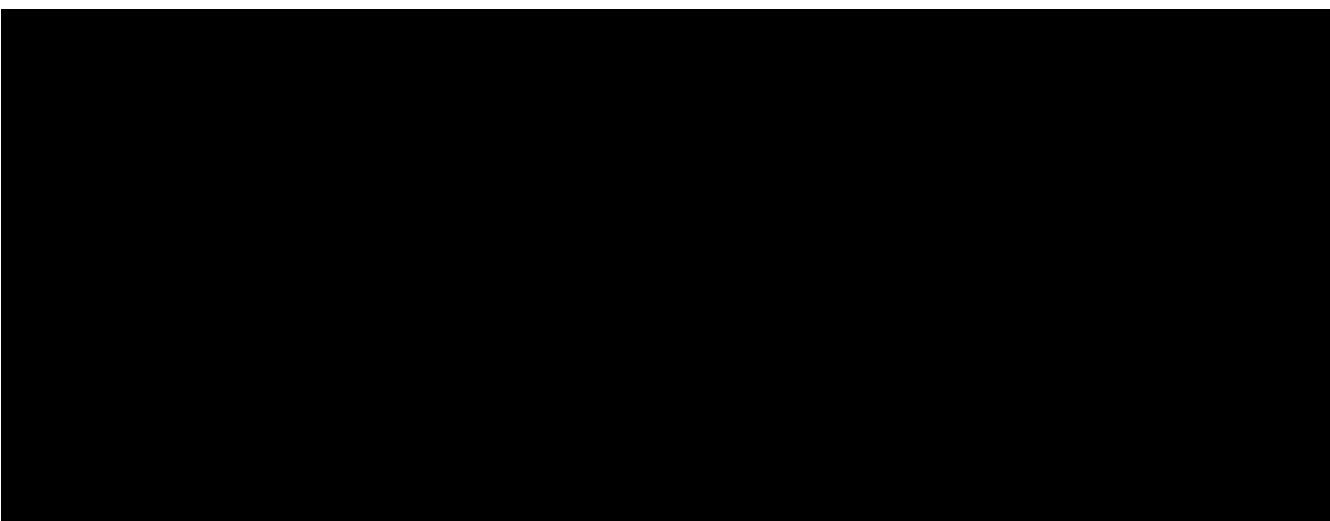
An on-site habitat plan is shown in Appendix 3 and photographs of the Site are shown in Appendix 4. Each of these habitats are described in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – All UKHabs classification descriptions.

Habitat Type	Habitat Description	Flora Species
Developed land, sealed surface	Sealed Surfaced car park to the north of the courts.	-
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	Three porous asphalt netball courts.	Rare: - Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) - Willowherb (<i>Epilobium</i> spp.) - Hawkbit (<i>Leontodon</i> spp.) - Annual meadow grass (<i>Poa annua</i>)

3.6. Species Records

A search of local biological records was conducted by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre up to 2km from the Site. Only records within the past 10 years were included in the following assessment. The records were filtered based on the relevance to the project proposal.



3.6.2 Bats

The records search and European Protected Species licence application identified breeding, foraging and resting bats were locally present

420 records of bats were returned by the data search. However, the proposed works will not impact any potential roost sites, and it is unlikely any changes to the Site will significantly impact any foraging habitat. Therefore, these results were not analysed further.

The bat species returned by the local records are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5 – bat records.

Species	Number of records
Nyctalus bat species (<i>Nyctalus</i>)	1
Barbastelle (<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>)	6
Bat (<i>Chiroptera</i>)	19
Bat (<i>Vespertilionidae</i>)	1
Brown long-eared (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)	27
Daubentons' bat (<i>Myotis daubentoniid</i>)	17
Pipistrellus bat species (<i>Pipistrellus</i>)	29
Bat (<i>Nyctalus/Eptesicus</i> agg.)	3
Lesser noctule (<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>)	1
Natterer's bat (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>)	1
Noctule (<i>Nyctalus noctule</i>)	75
Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	114
Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	90
Nathusius Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>)	3
Serotine (<i>Cnephaeus serotinus</i>)	19
Myotis bat species (<i>Myotis</i>)	14

3.6.3 Birds

There were 28 species of protected or priority bird species (species listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 or Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) returned by the local records (Table 6).

Table 6 – bird records.

<i>Species name</i>	<i>Number records</i>	<i>of Likelihood of presence on site</i>
<i>Schedule 1</i>		
Cetti's Warbler (<i>Cettia cetti</i>)	3	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Firecrest (<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>)	68	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Mediterranean Gull (<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Little Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius dubius</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Brambling (<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>)	16	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Marsh Harrier (<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)	38	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Hobby (<i>Falco Subbuteo</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)	90	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Barn Owl (<i>Tyto alba</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat

Red Kite (<i>Milvus milvus</i>)	237	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Redwing (<i>Turdus iliacus</i>)	349	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat

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Lesser Redpoll (<i>Acanthis flammea cabaret</i>)	6	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Yellowhammer (<i>Emberiza citronella</i>)	2	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>)	13	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Reed bunting (<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>)	7	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus subsp. argenteus</i>)	102	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	2	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	46	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Linnet (<i>Linaria cannabina</i>)	5	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Cuckoo (<i>Cuculus canorus</i>)	4	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Dunnoek (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	77	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat

Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	86	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa Striata</i>)	3	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos subsp. clarkei</i>)	154	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat
Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)	1	<u>Negligible</u> – Habitat onsite not appropriate nesting or foraging habitat

3.6.4 Great Crested Newt

The local record search returned no occurrences of Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN).

No ponds were located within the Site and 1 pond was present within 250m of the site boundary. However, the pond was not accessible during the survey due to being on private land.

Table 7 outlines the results from the HSI survey of the surrounding ponds.

Table 7 – HSI results.

Pond number	Grid reference of pond	Pond suitability
P1	SU 73902 69959	Not accessible

The terrestrial habitat surrounding the Site is considered suitable for GCN to some extent, given the presence of a woodland block and amenity field within the surrounding area. However, there are no ponds or other suitable breeding waterbodies within the Site, and the Site itself comprises an unvegetated, unsealed surface, providing negligible opportunities for GCN to forage, shelter or disperse. In addition, the Site is enclosed by secure high fencing along each side, which presents a significant barrier to GCN movement into, across and within the Site.

Given the absence of suitable breeding habitat within the Site and the limited suitability of the Site for terrestrial GCN activity, the proposed works are considered to have a negligible impact on GCN breeding populations. Therefore, no further GCN surveys are required.

3.6.5 Other Mammals

No records of Hazel Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) were returned from the records search. The Site is not connected to a woodland block which has Dormice records. Additionally, no evidence of hazel dormice was found on site during the time of the survey. Overall, the likelihood for the Site to support Hazel Dormice is low and no further action is required.

8 records of otter (*Lutra lutra*), beaver (*Castor fiber*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) or white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) were returned by the records search. The nearest watercourse to the Site was the Maiden Erlegh Lake, approximately 1200m northeast of the site. There are significant dispersal barriers from the watercourse for the site to support breeding, commuting or foraging watercourse mammals. The Site does not contain a watercourse and there is no watercourse directly surrounding the Site. Additionally, no signs of watercourse mammals were found on site during

the time of the survey. Overall, the likelihood for the Site to support watercourse species is negligible and no further action is required.

The habitats within the Site are considered to provide negligible suitability for Hedgehog breeding, commuting or foraging, as the Site comprises an unvegetated, unsealed surface with no areas of dense vegetation, suitable cover or foraging habitat. Furthermore, the Site is enclosed by secure high fencing along each side, which would restrict Hedgehog movement into, across and within the Site. No evidence of Hedgehog activity was identified during the Site visit.

Any rubble or brash piles present on Site could potentially provide temporary sheltering opportunities for Hedgehogs. Where such piles are present, these should be removed by hand and checked carefully prior to removal. Removal should be avoided during the Hedgehog hibernation period, where practicable.

Overall, the likelihood of the Site supporting Hedgehogs is considered negligible, and no further action is required, subject to the appropriate precautionary removal of any rubble or brash piles.

3.6.6 Reptiles

The habitats within the Site are considered to provide negligible suitability for reptiles, as the Site comprises an unvegetated, unsealed surface with no areas of suitable grassland, scrub, vegetation or other habitat features to provide opportunities for reptile breeding, foraging, commuting or sheltering. Furthermore, the Site is enclosed by secure high fencing along each side, which would restrict reptile movement into, across and within the Site. No evidence of reptiles was identified during the Site visit.

Any rubble or brash piles present on Site could potentially provide temporary refuge or hibernation opportunities for reptiles. Where such piles are present, these should be removed by hand and carefully checked prior to removal. Removal of such features should be avoided during the reptile hibernation period, where practicable.

Overall, the likelihood of the Site supporting reptiles is considered negligible, and no further action is required, subject to the precautionary removal of any rubble or brash piles.

3.6.7 Amphibians

A total of 17 records of amphibians were returned from the records search, comprising Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) and Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*). The habitats within the Site are considered to provide negligible suitability for amphibians, as the Site comprises an unvegetated, unsealed surface with no ponds, standing water or other suitable breeding habitat present. The Site also provides negligible opportunities for amphibian foraging, commuting or sheltering. Furthermore, the Site is enclosed by secure high fencing along each side, which would restrict amphibian movement into, across and within the Site. No evidence of amphibian activity was identified during the Site visit.

Any rubble or brash piles present on Site could potentially provide temporary refuge or hibernation opportunities for amphibians. Where such piles are present, these should be removed by hand and carefully checked prior to removal. Removal of such features should be avoided during the amphibian hibernation period, where practicable.

Overall, the likelihood of the Site supporting amphibians is considered negligible, and no further action is required, subject to the precautionary removal of any rubble or brash piles.

3.6.8 Invasive non-native plant species

There was 1 record of Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) returned by the data search, located approximately 1930m east from the site. No signs of any invasive (Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) flora species were found during the site visit. The site survey was conducted within the flowering period, therefore if any invasive or protected plants were present within the Site they would have been visible. It can be assumed no invasive or protected plants were present within the Site and therefore no further action is required.

3.7. Preliminary Roost Assessment

3.7.1 Foraging and Commuting Bats

The general surrounding area has moderate suitability for commuting and foraging bats, due to the Site's proximity to several wooded blocks, the presence of connective features such as hedgerows and lines of trees and the trees surrounding the site which could offer some foraging opportunities for commuting bats. Licence records show that Daubentons (*Myotis daubentonii*), Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Brown Long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*) are present within 2km of the Site. Due to the suitability for foraging and commuting bats in the area, it is recommended that an Artificial Lighting Strategy is implemented throughout the proposed works (see section 4.1.1).

3.7.2 Conclusions on Roosting Bats

In the unlikely event bat(s) are encountered at any stage, work will cease and Natural England or a suitably qualified bat ecologist must be sought for advice by the applicant/landowner. The applicant must be aware of the severe penalties associated with bat crimes and their legal obligations to report this information.

3.8. Evaluation

Based on these results, no further considerations are required before the proposed works begin.

4. Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

4.1. Mitigation

All the following measures should be adhered to throughout the proposed works to protect local fauna and flora:

- In the situation where any protected, notable or vulnerable animals are encountered during the works all work must stop and a suitable ecologist should be consulted before continuing.
- Any trenches created by the works should be covered overnight or a means of escape should be provided for any fauna that enters it.
- The creation of rubble, soil or brash piles should be avoided where possible as these can be used by hedgehogs, reptiles and amphibians.
- Using artificial lights between dusk and dawn should be avoided/minimised where possible.
- Avoid using unnecessary chemicals during the works and if any chemicals are required leakages are avoided through fuel drip trays, drip-capture devices and/or spill mitigation devices.

4.1.1 Artificial Lighting Strategy

Artificial lighting can impact local bats as it can impede their ability to forage successfully and can deter bats from commuting across the property. Therefore, to ensure any lighting disturbance on bats is minimised, the following strategy for artificial lighting around the property will be adhered to:

- Where lighting is required for health and safety purposes only, any external lighting required as part of the scheme (e.g. security lighting) will be motion triggered, set on timers (1 minute or less) and directional towards the ground to avoid upward light spill.
- Any light spill must be directed away from the roof and from surrounding tree canopies and vegetation.
- All luminaires used will lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources will not be used.
- LED luminaires will be used due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- A warm white spectrum (ideally <2700 Kelvin) must be adopted to reduce blue light component.
- Luminaires must feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats.
- Internal luminaires will be recessed where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill.
- The use of specialist bollard or low level downward directional luminaires to reduce upwards lighting spill can be considered, however, should be used as a final resort.
- Column heights should be carefully considered to minimise light spill. Only luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% and with good optical control must be used.
- Luminaires will always be mounted on the horizontal, i.e., no upward tilt.

4.2. Recommendations for biodiversity enhancement

The below measures are recommended to increase viable habitat for specific species within the local environment:

- Transporting of any offsite soil should be avoided. However, where unavoidable, ensure soil is peat free.
- Avoid pollutants and litter/debris within the Site and the surrounding area.

Appendix 1 Reference List and Useful Sources

- **Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (2010)** Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index. London, Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK.
- **British Standards (2012)** BS 5837: 2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. London, British Standards Institution.
- **British Standards (2020)** BS 42020: 2013 - Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development. London, British Standards Institution.
- **British Standards (2021)** BS 8683: 2021 - Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain. London, British Standards Institution.
- **CIEEM (2017a)** Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (2nd Edition). Winchester, CIEEM.
- **CIEEM (2017b)** Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing (2nd Edition). Winchester, CIEEM.
- **CIEEM (2018)** Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Winchester, CIEEM.
- **CIEEM (2019)** Advice Note: On the Lifespan of Ecological Reports & Surveys. Winchester, CIEEM.
- **Collins, J. (ed.) (2023)** Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- **Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023)** National Planning Policy Framework. London, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.
- **HMSO (1981)** Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>
- **HMSO (2000)** Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>
- **HMSO (2017)** Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>
- **HMSO (2006)** Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/27/contents/made>
- **Magic database (2024)** <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>
- **Reason, P.F. & Wray, S. (2023)** UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Ampfield, CIEEM.
- **UKHab Ltd (2023)** UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. Available at: ukhab.org.
- **Walker, K., Pearman, B.E., McIntosh, J. & Lockton, A. (2010)** BSBI Recording the British and Irish flora 2010-2020. Annex 1: Guidance on sampling approaches. Cumbria, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland.

Appendix 2 Planning Policy & Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework 2026

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2026) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF states that 'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan.
- Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
- Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions, such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the NPPF which includes the following:

- Distinguish between international, national and locally designated sites.
- Allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.
- Maintain and enhance habitats and green infrastructure networks.
- Enhance natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- Give weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including wildlife corridors and stepping stones, and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation.
- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species
- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Species Scientific Interest.
- Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981

The WCA is the primary piece of legislation relating to nature conservation in Great Britain. The Act is supplemented by provisions in the CRoW Act 2000 and the NERC Act 2006.

Part 1 of this act makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird, to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, and/or to take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Part 1 also makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 of the act, and to take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird included in Schedule ZA1. Schedule 5 lists non-avian species that are afforded various protections under Sections 9.1a, 9.1b, 9.2, 9.4a, 9.4a (Wales), 9.4b, 9.4c, 9.5a and 9.5b.

Schedule 8 lists plant species that are protected from intentionally picking, uprooting or destroying under Section 13.

Schedule 9 lists non-native invasive plants for which it is an offence under Section 14 to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any part of said plants.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (animals) as listed on Schedule 2:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species.
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species.
- Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute this activity).

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (plants) as listed on Schedule 5:

- Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a European Protected Species.
- Be in position of or to transport said plant.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

The CRoW Act applies only to England and Wales, and importantly adds the word “reckless” to the offence of damaging or destroying a place a bat uses for shelter or rest or disturbing a bat while using a roost.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Section 40 of Part 3 of this act compels public bodies (local authorities, police, fire and health authorities, and utility companies) with exercisable functions within England to consider actions to be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England—in particular to have regard to the United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992, any relevant local nature recovery strategies, and any relevant species conservation strategy or protected site strategy (prepared by Natural England).

Section 41 of Part 3 of this Act ensures the publishing of a list containing species and habitat types that are of principle importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity in England.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

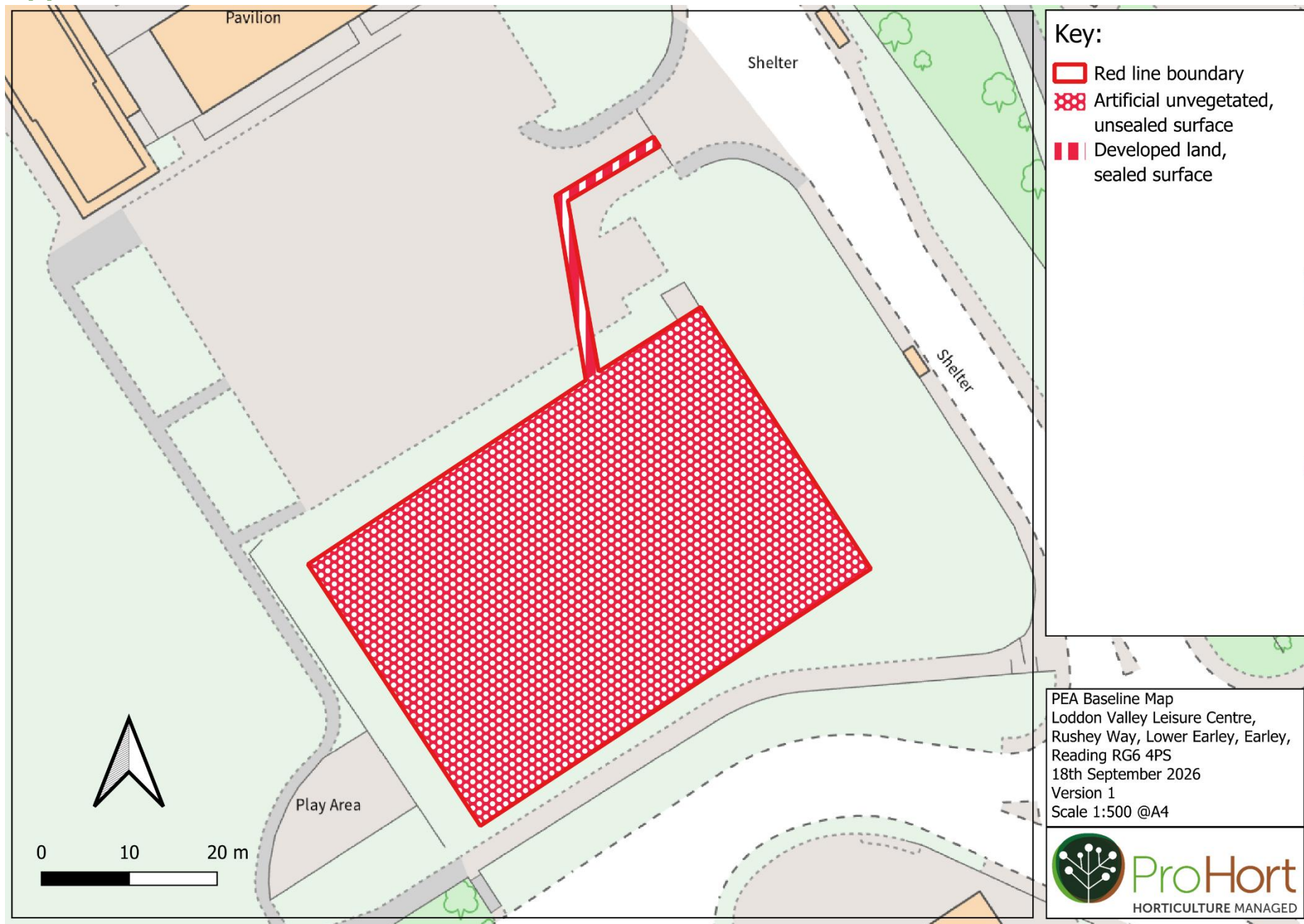
Under this legislation it is an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with the intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Under this legislation it is an offence to (or intend to, or to be reckless as to whether your actions would have these consequences):

- Wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempts to do so).
- Damage or destroy any part of a badger sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).
- Obstruct access to a badger sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).

Appendix 3 Habitat Plan of the Site



Appendix 4 Additional Photographs



Image 1 – Existing porous asphalt netball courts



Image 2 – Existing porous asphalt netball courts



Image 3 – Entrance car park to the north of the site