

Property: Land at Duck Egg Farm adj to Highfield Park Wokingham Berkshire RG2 9PP

Application: Proposed change of use of the land for the standing of 3 no static caravans for human habitation and ancillary works.

Planning Authority; Wokingham

Ref:

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

1. Land in the vicinity of Highfield Park is identified by Natural England as not being suitable for Great Crested Newts in their national project that published its results in 2019. The project was funded by MHCLG. This is shown at **Tab 1**.
2. The same land in the vicinity of Highfield Park is identified by Wokingham Council as having a high probability of supporting populations of Great Crested Newts. This is shown at **Tab 2**.
3. The Wokingham impact risk zones appear to have been developed by an organisation known as Naturespace that relies upon volunteers for its information. This is shown at **Tab 3**.
4. Natural England identifies the ponds in the vicinity of Highfield Park. This is shown at **Tab 4**. The majority of these ponds do not exist (tinted red). There are ponds in the vicinity (tinted green). These were developed as balancing ponds to support development. Natural England further identifies that there have been no licences sought to enable Great Crested Newt surveys. This is also shown at **Tab 4**.
5. There has been detailed biological surveys of the area. This is shown at **Tab 5**. The surveys identify that the probability of Great Crested Newts being present is low.

6. There is a possibility that nature conservation organisations have sought to introduce the Great Crested Newt into the area, despite the available habitat being identifiable as not being suitable (lack of Great Crested Newts). This is increasingly common. There are substantial populations of Great Crested Newt (former Brick works) in areas of England, and it is known that these are often relocated by people licensed by Natural England.
7. Nature conservation data is often falsified by those involved in the decision-making process. This can be inadvertent. However, this means that there cannot be trust and confidence in the information that they make available.
8. The habitat on the land is suitable for Great Crested Newts that do not form part of a breeding population due to lack of suitable ponds. Any local population present is doomed to become extinct.

CONCLUSION

9. Finger tip searches of the land are to be undertaken prior to any development and in the unlikely event of Great Crested Newts being found a person holding a Natural England or District Newt Licence contacted to relocate any newts found.
10. There is comprehensive survey data available from DEFRA provided by Natural England and this identifies that the probability of Great Crested Newts being present is negligible, The proposed work to take account of great Crested Newts is in conformance with the **non-statutory** guidance published by Natural England and is proportionate. The guidance is shown at **Tab 6**.

Stuart H CARRUTHERS

January 2026

Natural England's Geoportal: England-wide data for great crested newts now available

[Natural England](#), 17 December 2019 - [Wildlife](#)

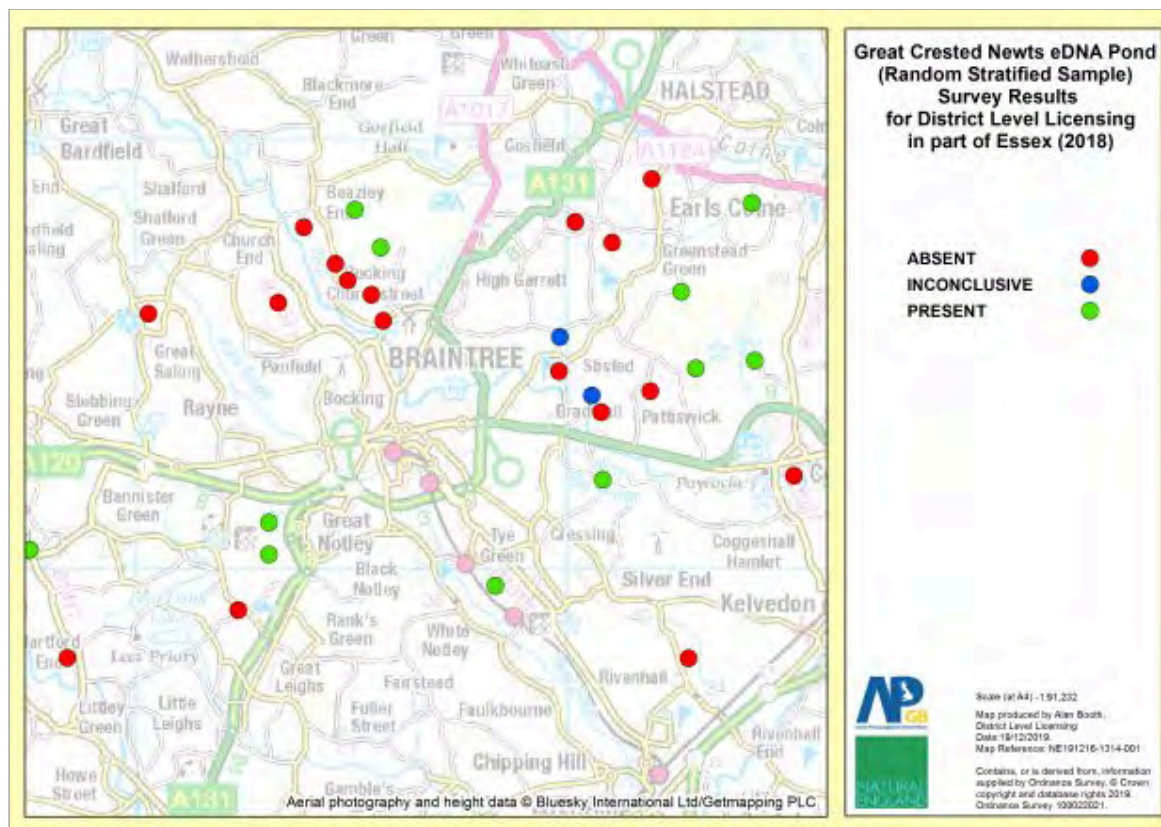
Jen Almond, Natural England's District Level Licensing Programme Manager, on the new data that will benefit great crested newts and developers alike.

Natural England has now [uploaded baseline survey data](#) on great crested newts (GCN) to make it available to all. The project – taking three years to complete – is the largest ever survey of its type for great crested newts across England, and was funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Why is the project important?

This England-wide survey data has enabled Natural England's district level licensing programme – without this data we couldn't have developed this significant new licensing option, an approach that better supports GCN populations, as well as reducing delays for developers.

We hope the data will bring other benefits: it is a fantastic resource coming out of the district level licensing programme, available to all. The data will mean that Local Environmental Record Centres and other groups such as the Wildlife Trusts can help better protect the species. Whilst only a sample of ponds were surveyed, the data will help inform conservation efforts. We hope making the data available will mean that GCN habitats can be better managed as well as linked-up on a landscape scale, helping the species to thrive.



A extract from Geoportal showing the location of GCN ponds

What did we do?

GCN are a visually striking but an elusive species, breeding in ponds and hibernating on land, typically in rough grassland, scrub and woodland. We worked with contractors, with permission from landowners, to survey more than 7,518 ponds using the relatively new environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling technique to establish the presence or absence of GCN.

The survey results are being used alongside mapped landscape features such as pond density to develop landscape scale licensing strategies for the species. We carefully ensured we surveyed a random stratified sample of ponds across a range of landscape and habitat types.

Central to the project are award-winning state-of-the-art species distribution models which predict suitable habitat for great crested newts. These spatial models incorporate all the pond survey data we collected plus existing records correlated with predictive geographic layers which are ecologically important for the species. The resulting model prediction maps of suitable habitat filter through to every part of the project. To find out more about the district level licensing approach read our [blog post on protecting great crested newts](#).



A male great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Its skin colour and crest is typical for breeding time.

Why should we protect great crested newts?

GCN are a European protected species. The animals and their eggs, breeding sites and resting places are protected by law. They are widely distributed throughout lowland England. However, the species has suffered enormous declines, with approximately 50% of ponds in the UK lost in the 20th Century and 80% of current ponds in a poor state. A [traditional](#) or a [district level licence](#) is required from Natural England if you're planning an activity and can't avoid disturbing them or damaging their habitats (ponds and the land around ponds).

Who can use the data?

As the data is available under an Open Government Licence absolutely anyone can use it. It is already being put to good use – the data will form part of the evidence used to update the 'Favourable Conservation Status' statement for great crested newts. The Conservation Status is considered 'favourable' when the population and range of the species is healthy and will be maintained into the long term. Monitoring this helps environmental managers, policymakers and scientists effectively protect habitats and species such as great crested newts.

What is the Natural England Open Data Geoportal?

The [Natural England Open Data Geoportal](#) was launched 2017 and provides free and open access to geographic products for download in multiple formats (CSV, KML, Shapefile and ESRI File Geodatabase), web services (ESRI REST and GeoJSON APIs), web applications and story maps. All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated.

A simple explanation of how to access the service can be viewed [here](#).

If you have and [ArcGIS Online](#) organisational or public account you can access and use our data on the [ArcGIS Online](#) platform. Sign in at the top right of the [Natural England Open Data Geoportal](#) home page and try it out, or register for a Public account [here](#). A subset of our geospatial open data layers are also published on the [ESRI Living Atlas of the World](#).

Updates to existing data and new content are released by the end of each month and you can view the latest releases on the [Geoportal home page](#). We [also tweet data and service updates, so please follow us to keep up with the latest news](#).

You can contact us at Data.Services@naturalengland.org.uk with any feedback.



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OG

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☐ Air Quality Management Areas

☐ Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Model

☒ Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones

☐ White

☐ Green

☐ Amber

☐ Red

☐ Landfill Gas Consultation Zones

☐ Local Geological Sites

☐ Local Nature Reserves

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How to...

Choose sites to clear

Layers:

- Layer visibility can be toggled on and off by checking and unchecking the box to the left of the layer in the map layers list to the left.
- Layer groups can be expanded and collapsed using the arrow to the left of the layer group in the map layers list to the left.
- Some layers will not be visible when zoomed out. These layers will appear grey in the map layers list to the left.

Legend (Styling):

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Pop-ups:

6



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DELIVERING FASTER DEVELOPMENT ALONGSIDE NATURE RECOVERY

In 2013, DEFRA published a review of the standard licensing system for great crested newts in England. It wasn't optimistic – not only were developers being held-up, but millions of pounds were being spent on on-site mitigation with no evidence of conservation success (and often evidence of the contrary). We recognised the need to help the planning system deliver long-term, meaningful conservation for great crested newts, and NatureSpace was born. Regulated by Natural England, for the past 7 years we have been delivering strategic licensing that's faster for developers, easier for planners and, most importantly, better for newts.

In 2018, the NatureSpace **District Licensing Scheme (/district-licensing)** was launched, set up in partnership with expert freshwater and amphibian NGOs (**The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (https://www.arc-trust.org/pages/category/reptiles-amphibians)**) and **Freshwater Habitats Trust (https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/)**) as well as seven pioneering local planning authorities across the South Midlands.

The scheme has since grown from strength to strength and now operates across more than 70 planning authorities throughout England as well as almost the whole **Network Rail (/organisational-licence/network-rail/)** region. Since 2018, hundreds of developers have been approved to use the local planning authorities' District Licences – meaning over £7.1 million has been put directly into creating or restoring hundreds of clean water ponds and terrestrial habitat.

0:00 / 0:12

OUR STORY IS TOLD IN THE VIDEO BELOW THROUGH OUR TRUSTED PARTNER, FREETHS LLP

A partnership to be proud of - Freeths X NatureSpace case study



BETTER FOR DEVELOPERS

The 'old' standard licensing route has gained great crested newts an unwelcome reputation. Applications through Natural England often take many months and the process is complex, resulting in delays to timescales and increased costs.

Using the latest science and technology, we develop **Impact Risk Zone maps (</district-licensing/impact-map/>)** to determine where newts are likely to be found, and our Natural England approved impact assessments ensure projects pay fair and proportionate fees for their proposed ecological impacts. This means money goes straight into habitat creation, delivered by our NGO partners off-site.

BETTER FOR NEWTS

Over the last 50 years, great crested newts have declined dramatically in the UK and although they are still widespread across lowland England they are no longer common. Despite protection under UK and European wildlife law, population numbers are still declining and habitat loss is sadly their biggest threat.

Together with our partners we have developed a long-term, landscape scale **conservation strategy** (**/conservation/**) for great crested newts, fully funded by our schemes. The compensatory habitats created are in strategic locations for newts, away from the pressures of development. The scheme also funds management and monitoring of these aquatic and terrestrial habitats for at least 20 years, ensuring a sustainable future for newts.

OUR PARTNERS



<http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/newt-partnership/>



**Freshwater
Habitats Trust** (<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/>)

**amphibian and reptile
conservation**



<https://www.arc-trust.org/pages/category/reptiles-amphibians>

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Privacy policy (/privacy-
policy/)
Careers (careers/)

Date: 9 April 2025
Application: 250733



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

WBC Ecology Newts

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology Newts,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 250733

Applicant: Sophie Horsley

Site Address: Land at Ducks Nest, Eversley Road, Arborfield

Parish: Arborfield and Newland

Grid Reference: Easting - 476108, Northing - 166301

Type of Development: Major Dwellings (10+)

Proposal: Hybrid application comprising a Full application for the change of use of land from agricultural land to provide an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), including the details of associated landscaping, planting, drainage measures, parking, walking routes and other works associated with the creation of the SANG, and an Outline application with all matters reserved other than access into the site for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping and all other associated works.

Case Officer: Mark Croucher

Development Management has received the above application and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 250733. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be found on the Z Drive at: [Z:\Standard Planning Conditions](#).

Your observations are required in respect of this application within **10 working days** of the above date or **15 working days** if the development type is classed as a major development.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	NatureSpace District Licensing Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology Newts	App No:	250733
Address:	Land at Ducks Nest, Eversley Road, Arborfield.		
Proposal:	Hybrid application comprising a Full application for the change of use of land from agricultural land to provide an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), including the details of associated landscaping, planting, drainage measures, parking, walking routes and other works associated with the creation of the SANG, and an Outline application with all matters reserved other than access into the site for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping and all other associated works.		
Type of Development:	Major Dwellings (10+)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes /No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
☐ No objection
☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Summary of further information request

Either

1. A NatureSpace report or certificate as evidence of joining Wokingham Borough Council's District Licence Scheme for great crested newts.

Or

2. Demonstrate that negative impacts on great crested newts and/or their habitat are unlikely by providing:
 - Up-to-date waterbody screening assessment including waterbodies missed from the original assessment and reasons specified for each waterbody screened out.
 - Up-to-date eDNA surveys of all waterbodies which are not screened out. If waterbodies cannot be accessed or other limitations arise, the significance of these limitations should be explained and appropriate recommendations be made.

- If after the above surveys impacts on great crested newts cannot be ruled out, appropriate mitigation/compensation proposals will be required. This may include an application to Natural England for a site-based mitigation licence (if the District Licence will not be used).

Detailed comments

The application site falls within a red Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts (though much of the SANG is within an amber zone), indicating an area of highly suitable habitat and potential great crested newt presence. There appear to be 11 ponds within 500m of the application site boundary as well as several ditches. Of these ponds, four are located within 50m of the application site and two within 250m. There are no ponds within the application site, but great crested newts could be present within the site if they are breeding in nearby ponds.

The applicant has provided an Ecological Impact Assessment (Thompson Environmental Consultants, September 2024). This Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) recommends that an enquiry should be submitted to NatureSpace about authorising the development under Wokingham Borough Council's District Licence for great crested newts. No enquiry has yet been received by NatureSpace. If the applicant intends to join the District Licence Scheme, this must be done prior to determination of the current application. A NatureSpace report or certificate would be required, which would satisfy the Council's obligations toward great crested newts.

Alternatively, if the applicant does not intend to use the District Licence, further information regarding great crested newts will be required. The EclA is broadly in accordance with guidance on the lifespan of ecological surveys, however justification as to why the 2022 great crested newt eDNA surveys were not updated alongside other surveys in 2024 should be clearly stated. The EclA recommends updated eDNA surveys be undertaken prior to commencement of development, likely because the existing surveys would be expected to be over three years old at that time. However, further surveys should not be the subject of a pre-commencement condition. This approach is uncertain and could result in a situation where great crested newts are discovered after planning approval has been given based on their likely absence. Therefore, I would recommend the eDNA surveys are updated prior to determination of the current application. It should be noted that up-to-date great crested newt surveys are not a requirement of the District Licence.

Only three out of five ponds identified for survey by the EclA were accessed and the impact that this limitation had on the assessment should be explained. Several ditches were scoped out of requiring survey and the reasons for this should be given in each case. Also, an additional six ponds are visible on OS maps which fall within the 500m survey area but are not identified within the EclA. It may not be necessary to survey all of these ponds, but an assessment should be made and surveys be carried out if necessary. In particular, two of these ponds are close to the site (30m east and 80m west) and not separated by any barriers to newt dispersal. Again, a complete set of survey information is not required if the District Licence is used.

The EclA states that impacts on great crested newts are considered unlikely. This appears contradictory to the recommendation to enquire with NatureSpace as the

District Licence cannot be used where no impacts on great crested newts are expected. The EclA also states that there will be no residual effects on great crested newts following mitigation implementation, which implies that there would be impacts on great crested newts in the absence of mitigation. The EclA does not detail any mitigation proposals and these should be provided if mitigation (other than through the District Licence) is required. Given the above limitations to the survey methodology, I would argue that it has not been demonstrated that impacts on great crested newts are unlikely, and therefore either the District Licence can be used or further information should be provided as detailed above.

Planning policy encourages the incorporation of ecological enhancements into development proposals, and the EclA states that the development will enhance the site for great crested newt, including a fenced off wildlife pond which will be undisturbed. However, I cannot see a wildlife pond on current landscaping proposals (Figures DNF-SANG-001.2 to 006), though a number of dog ponds are proposed. Regular disturbance by dogs has several impacts which negatively affect the suitability of ponds for wildlife.

Note on the Hybrid application

With an Outline planning application, if an applicant intends to join the Council's District Licence Scheme, it is not always necessary to do so at the Outline stage, though it can be beneficial as it ensures any access or enabling works are covered by the Licence. The District Licence can be joined as part of a future Reserved Matters application. However, with a Full application, the District Licence Scheme must be joined prior to determination. Due to the Full element of this Hybrid application, joining the District Licence at the Reserved Matters stage is not an option.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

Reasonable Likelihood of Protected Species

Permission can be refused if adequate information on protected species is not provided by an applicant, as it will be unable to assess the impacts on the species and thus meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), ODPM Circular 06/2005 or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Council has the power to request information under Article 4 of the Town and Country (Planning Applications) Regulations 1988 (SI1988.1812) (S3) which covers general information for full applications. CLG 2007 'The validation of planning applications' states that applications should not be registered if there is a requirement for an assessment of the impacts of a development on biodiversity interests.

Section 99 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 states:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has

been granted. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and / or planning obligations before permission is granted.

Great crested newts

Great crested newts and their habitats are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Therefore, it is illegal to deliberately capture, injure, kill, disturb or take great crested newts or to damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb any great crested newts occupying a place of shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any place of shelter or protection (see the legislation or seek legal advice for full details). Local planning authorities have a statutory duty in exercising of all their functions to ‘*have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity,*’ as stated under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended), as well as a duty under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive. As a result, GCN and their habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

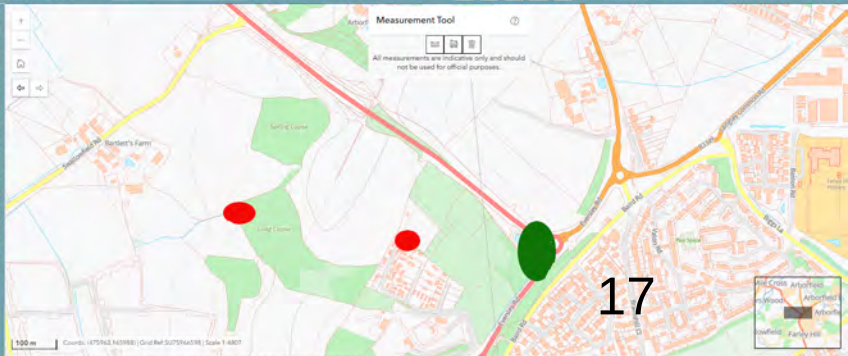
Validity of ecological reports and surveys can become compromised overtime due to being out-of-date. CIEEM Advice note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys (CIEEM, 2019) states, if the age of data is between 12-18 months, “*the report authors should highlight whether they consider it likely to be necessary to update surveys*”. If the age of the data is between 18 months to 3 years an updated survey and report will be required and anything more than 3 years old “*The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated*”.

Date:	24/04/2025	Signed:	NatureSpace
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Measurement Tool



All measurements are indicative only and should not be used for official purposes.



17





Ecological Impact Assessment
Land at Duck's Nest, Arborfield
For

David Wilson Homes (Southern)

Project No.: DWH001-020-010/001/001
September 2025

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Project Number	Report No.
DWH001-020-010	001

Revision No.	Date of Issue	Author	Reviewer	Approver
001	27/09/2024	Alice Samuel	Grace Cousins	Paul Franklin
002	07/06/2025	Amie Humphries	Grace Cousins	
003	29/09/2025	Alice Samuel	Anna Clark	

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1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 David Wilson Homes is submitting a hybrid planning application for a site in Arborfield known as land at Duck's Nest. The application includes a full application for the change of use of land, from agricultural land to provide an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) with details of associated landscaping, tree planting, drainage measures, parking, walking routes and other works associated to the creation of the SANG. In addition, an outline application will be submitted with all matters reserved other than access into the site for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping and all other associated works.
- 1.1.2 Ecological baseline assessments of the proposed development site and surrounding area were undertaken between 2022 and 2025. This included surveys for bats, badger, reptiles, hazel dormouse, birds and great crested newt (GCN). A habitat survey was undertaken using the UK Habitat Classification System (UKHab) and condition of habitats was recorded to enable calculation of a baseline biodiversity metric for the site using the Natural England Statutory Metric. An ecological desk study was undertaken in 2024. An updated site visit was conducted on 27th May 2025, and updated desk study records were requested.
- 1.1.3 The desk study found two statutory designated sites for nature conservation within the study area, these were Longmore Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 1.6km away, and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, 3km from the site. A further 17 non-statutory local wildlife sites are within 2km of the proposed development, the closest of which is 0.07km from the site. The desk study provided results of protected species within 1km, which included schedule 1 birds, reptiles, stag beetle, bats, hedgehog and badger.
- 1.1.4 During the field survey the dominant habitats on site were found to be modified grassland. Other habitats present included hedgerows, other neutral grassland and a small parcel of broadleaved woodland.
- 1.1.5 The site has suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats and nine species of bat were recorded during the activity surveys. Four trees were identified as having potential to support roosting bats, and three trees were identified as requiring further assessment. All trees with potential to support roosting bats are proposed to be retained as part of the development.
- 1.1.6 During reptile surveys, grass snakes and slow worm were recorded to be present. The suitable reptile habitat on site comprises the edge habitats adjacent to the hedgerows and scrub areas on site, with most of this habitat retained as part of the SANG or other landscaping proposals.
- 1.1.7 Forty-one species of bird were recorded on site during the breeding bird surveys. The species recorded on site are considered common and widespread across the country.
- 1.1.8 No hazel dormouse or evidence of hazel dormouse was recorded on site.
- 1.1.9 Three waterbodies adjacent to the site were assessed to have excellent suitability for GCN. The eDNA survey returned a negative result for GCN from P1 and P3 (P2 was dry at the time of the survey), in 2022. However, the site falls within the amber and red risk zones under the NatureSpace District Level Licence.

1.2 Main Recommendations

- 1.2.1 On the basis of these ecological surveys, the following measures are recommended to reduce the likelihood of significant negative effects on features of nature conservation importance:

Detailed Design Stage

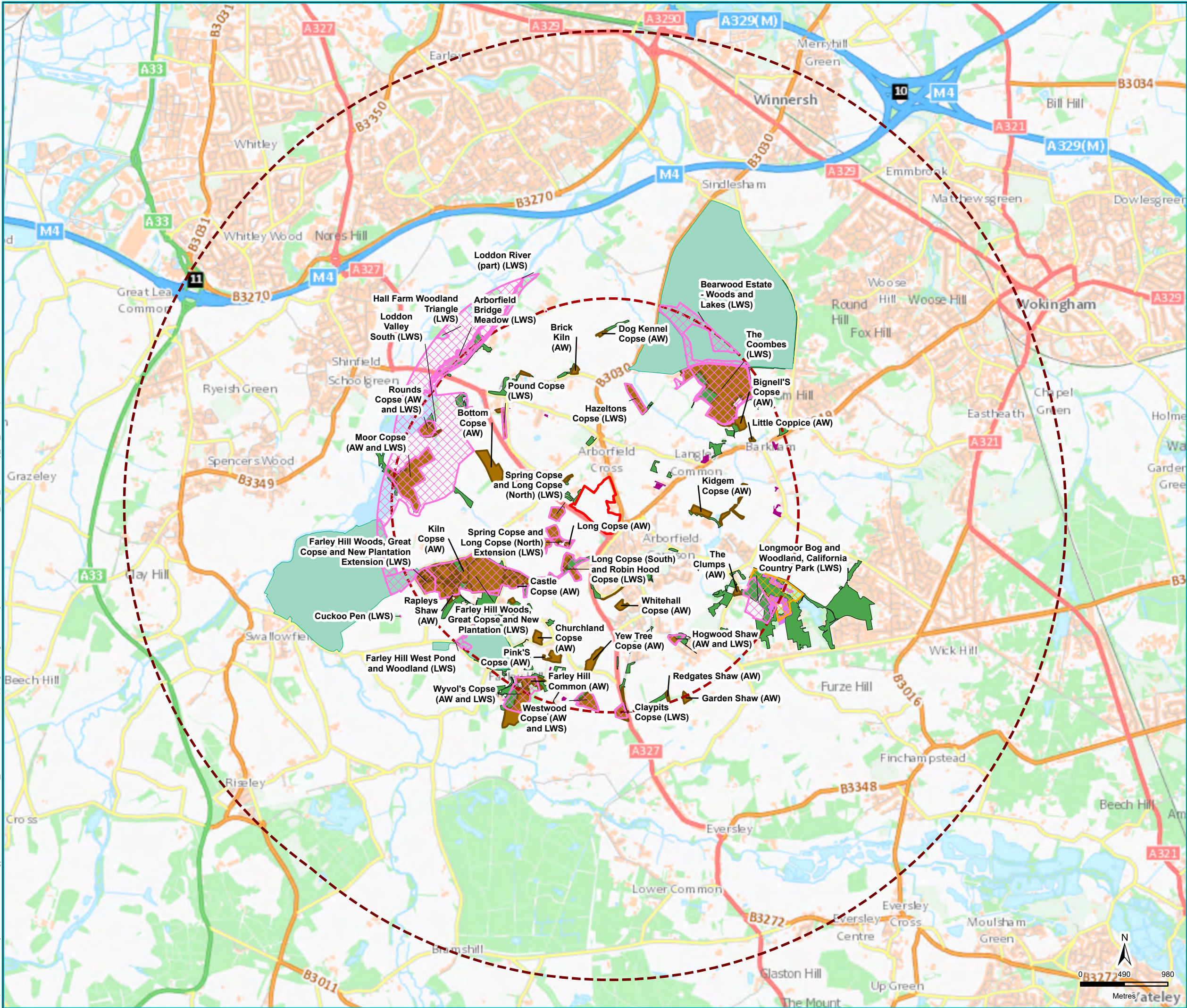
- Production of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, Landscape Environmental Management Plan and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council, ahead of commencement of development.
- An area of SANG will be incorporated into the development proposals in order to mitigate any potential impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA;
- Artificial lighting, including lighting associated with houses and street lighting, should be directional and away from commuting and foraging habitat and any trees with bat potential. Dark zones will be implemented on key habitats;
- Where planting is proposed, a range of native species with different flowering periods should be considered to promote insect (bats primary food source) diversity on site;
- Log and brash piles should be created using removed vegetation for hedgehog with routes established throughout the site to promote connectivity;
- Areas of habitat created as part of the development should be designed to offer nesting opportunities for birds, this can be achieved through the provision of bird boxes and/or the creation and retention of areas of dense woody vegetation such as scrub, woodland or trees;
- The northern boundary of the SANG will not have a fence, and instead the hedgerows will act as a barrier to allow off-leash exercise for dogs.

Construction Phase

- Enquiry submitted to NatureSpace about registering the site under a District Level Licence;
- Install protective fencing to prevent pollution and dust impacting retained priority habitat;
- Collect contaminated water (for example, run-off or water pumped out of excavations) in a system where it can be recycled or treated, such as a settlement tank or lagoon
- Activities involving potential pollutants, such as concrete or fuel, should be carried out in dedicated areas which are designed so that spills, leaks, drips and contaminated run-off can be captured and properly disposed of;
- Protect stockpiles (for example soil, sand, or hardcore) so that materials are not blown or washed away;
- Any excavations should be covered over at night or a suitable means of escape (i.e. a ramp) for mammals provided;
- The use of chemical pesticides and herbicides should be avoided wherever possible;
- Arisings should be removed from site and not stockpiled;

- A mitigation method statement, informed by further surveys closer to the construction date (if necessary) should be produced detailing how reptiles will be protected during the development;
- Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March - September) or as a last resort following a check for nesting birds;
- Vegetation clearance in areas of scrub and grassland should adhere to a two-stage cut following a fingertip search to displace or remove any reptiles from affected areas;
- Hibernacula and refugia should be dismantled by hand by and ECoW to allow hedgehog and reptiles to leave of their own accord;
- Prior to construction, a walkover survey for badger and invasive species should be completed;
- Himalayan balsam should be removed by a specialist contractor; and
- Use of artificial lighting should be directional and avoid illuminating areas of retained vegetation.

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Legend

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
- Ancient Woodland (AW)
- Wood Pasture and Parkland
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Deciduous Woodland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland heathland
- Traditional orchard
- 2km Study Area Buffer
- 5km Study Area Buffer
- Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476108E 166301N

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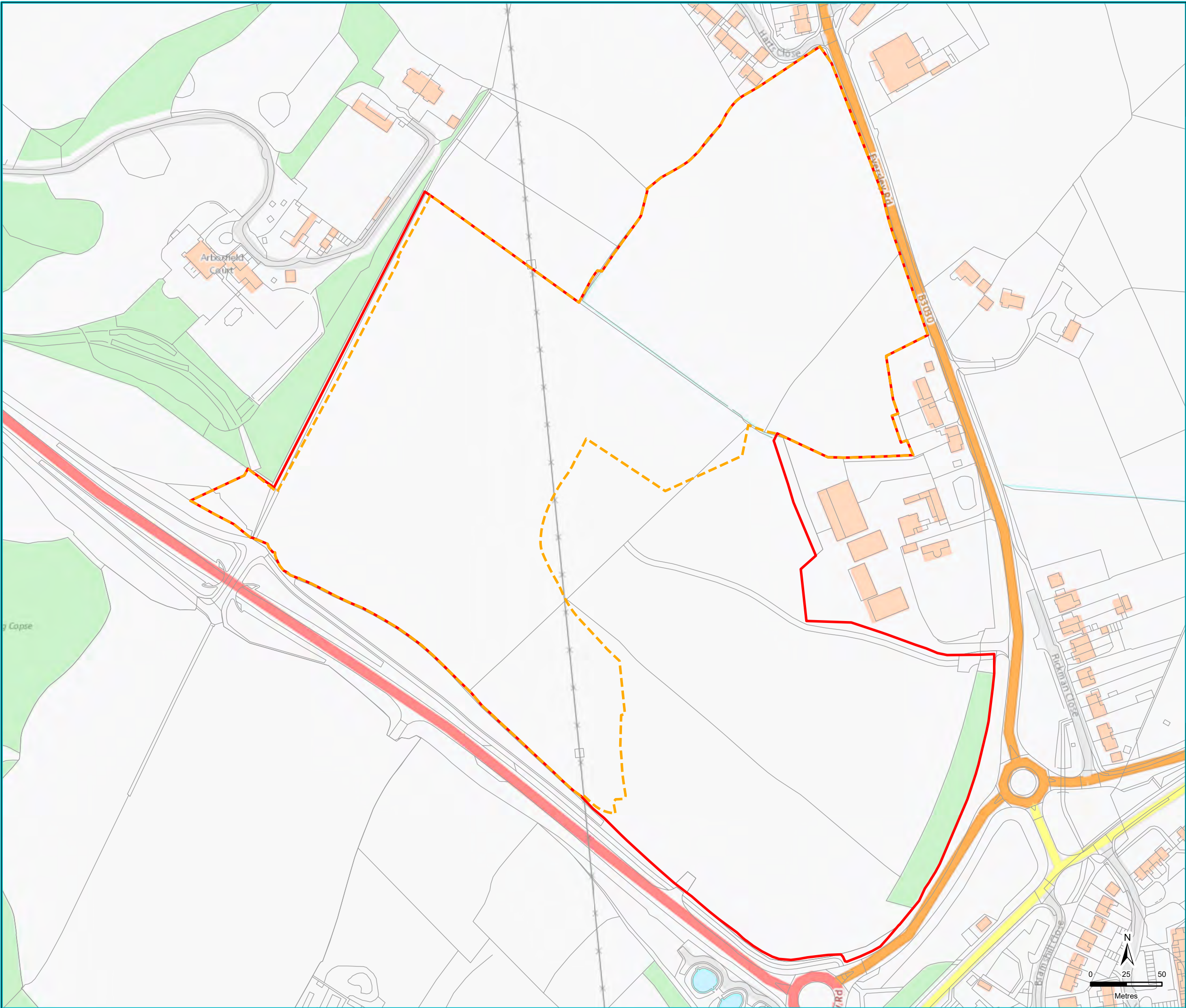
Drawn AS	Checked JB
Date 03/06/2025	Date 03/06/2025

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
1

Figure Title
Site Location, Study Areas
and Desk Study Results
2024

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Legend

-  SANG Boundary
-  Site Boundary

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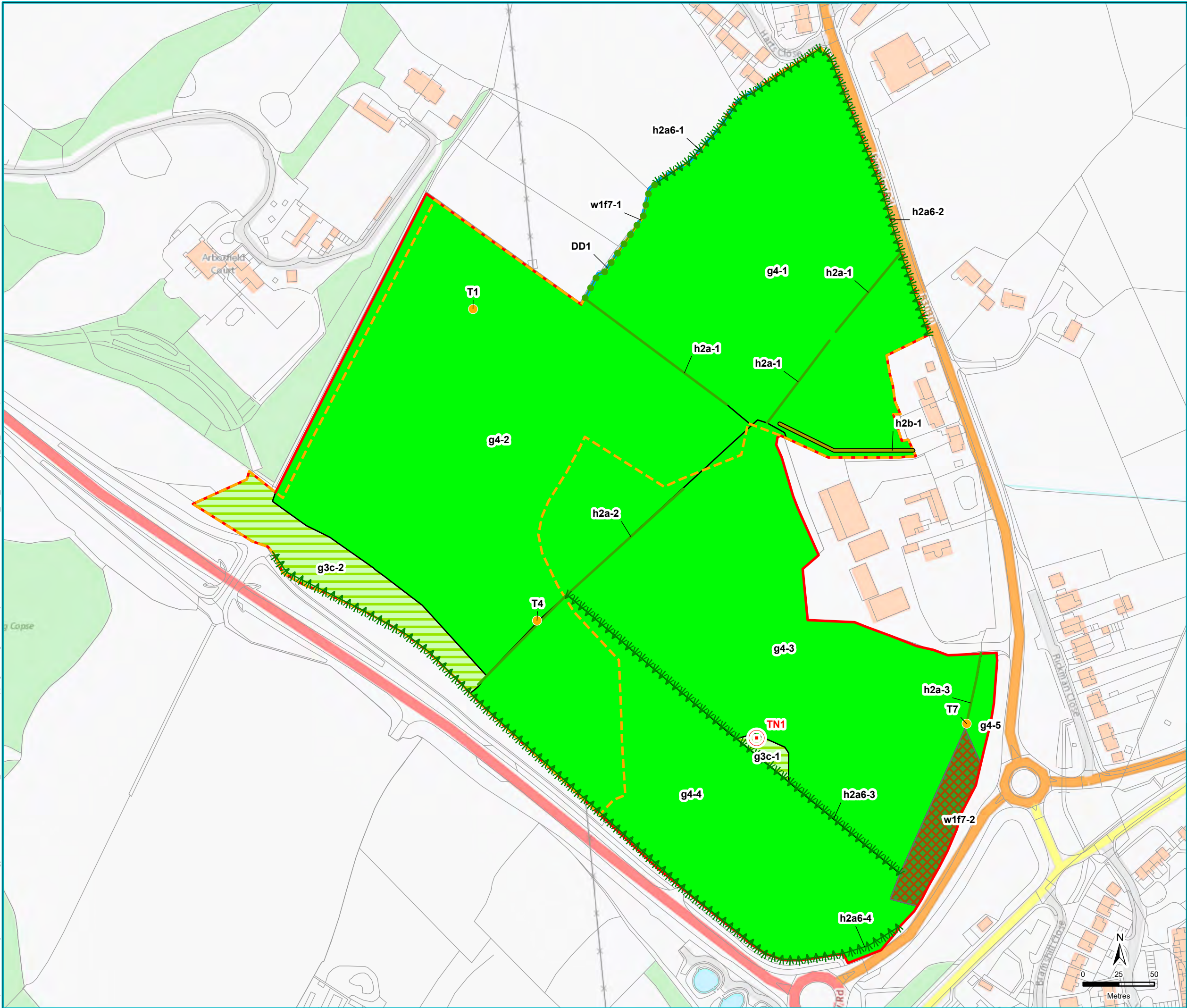
Drawn KC	Checked JB
Date 26/09/2024	Date 26/09/2024

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
2

Figure Title
Development Boundary and
SANG boundary

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- Legend
- Target Note
 - Rural Tree
 - DD - Dry Ditch
 - h2a - Native Hedgerow
 - h2a6 - Other Native Hedgerow
 - h2b - Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow
 - w1f - Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
 - g3c - Other Neutral Grassland
 - g4 - Modified Grassland
 - w1f7 - Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
 - SANG Site Boundary
 - Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476108E 166301N

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KC	AS
Date	Date
09/07/2025	09/07/2025
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
3	
Figure Title	

Extended UK Habitat
Classification Survey Results
2025



Photograph 1:
Parcel g3c-1 located in the south of the site



Photograph 2:
Himalayan balsam located within parcel g3c-1



Photograph 3:
Parcel g3c-2 located in the north west of the site



Photograph 4:
Parcel g4-1 located in the north east of the site

Client	David Wilson Homes	Drawing Ref		DWH001-020-010/001/001		Thomson environmental consultants www.thomsonec.com enquiries@thomsonec.com 31
Figure Number	4	Drawn	AH	Checked	GC	
Figure Title	Photographs of the Site 2025	Date	02/06/2025			



Photograph 5:
Parcel g4-4 located in the south west of the site



Photograph 6:
Hedgerow h2a6-1 which is located in the north east of the site. A dry ditch is associated with the hedge



Photograph 7:
Hedgerow h2a6-3 which runs centrally through the south of the site



Photograph 8:
T1 which is located within grassland g4-2



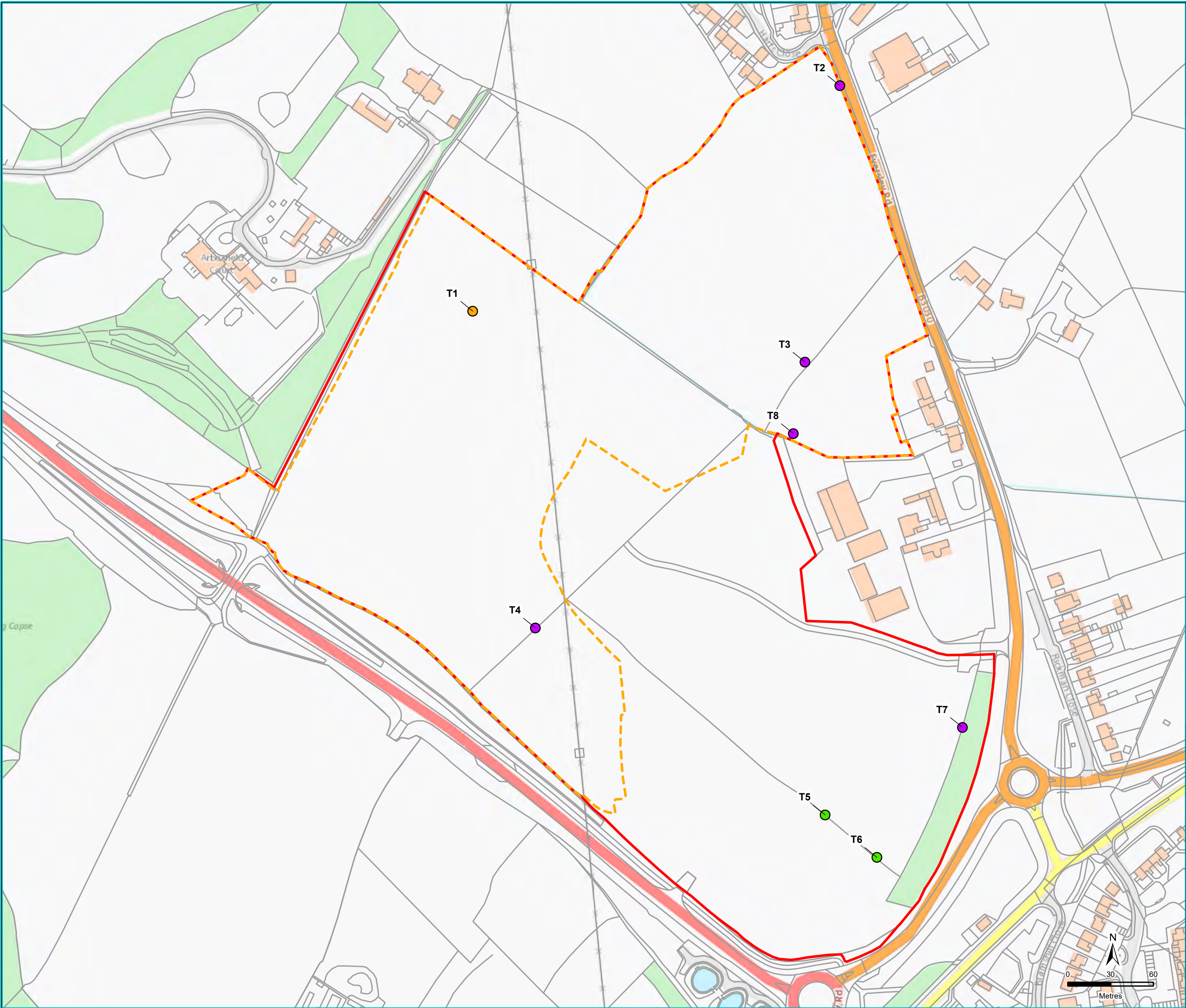
Photograph 9:
A potential roost feature that is located on T1.



Photograph 10:
A mammal run that runs north to south through g4-2

Client	David Wilson Homes		Drawing Ref DWH001-020-010/001/001		Thomson environmental consultants www.thomsonec.com enquiries@thomsonec.com 32
Figure Number	4		Drawn AH	Checked GC	
Figure Title	Photographs of the Site 2025		Date 02/06/2025		

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Legend

Overall Suitability of Tree to Support Roosting Bats

- FAR
- PRF
- PRF-M
- - - SANG Boundary
- - - Site Boundary

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Drawn KC	Checked JB
Date 01/07/2025	Date 01/07/2025

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
5

Figure Title
Ground Level Tree
Assessment Results 2025

Filepath: \\thomson.int\data\Live Projects\Terrestrial Ecology\Guildford\DWH001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\Mapping\Working\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\DWH001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx

Legend

Transect Leg Results

CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Stopping Point Results

SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Static Monitoring Location

Stopping Point

Transect Route

SANG Boundary

Survey Extent

Site Boundary

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KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
6a	
Figure Title	

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 27th April 2022)

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Legend

Transect Leg Results

- N

Nyctalus noctula
- CP

Pipistrellus pipistrellus
- SP

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Stopping Point Results

- N

Nyctalus noctula
- CP

Pipistrellus pipistrellus
- Static Monitoring Location
- Stopping Point
- Transect Route
- SANG Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476032E 166414N

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Drawn	Checked
KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
6b

Figure Title

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 18th May 2022)

Filepath: \\thomson.int\data\Live Projects\Terrestrial Ecology\Guildford\DWH001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\Mapping\Working\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\DWH001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx

Legend

Transect Leg Results

CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Stopping Point Results

N *Nyctalus noctula*

CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Static Monitoring Location

Stopping Point

Transect Route

SANG Boundary

Survey Extent

Site Boundary

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Drawn KC	Checked AS
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Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
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Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
6c

Figure Title

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 13th June 2022)

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Legend

Transect Leg Results

- P. *Pipistrellus* sp.
- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Stopping Point Results

- P. *Pipistrellus* sp.
- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- Static Monitoring Location
- Stopping Point
- Transect Route
- SANG Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476032E 166414N

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KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
6d	
Figure Title	

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 18th July 2022)

Filepath: \\thomson.int\data\Live Projects\Terrestrial Ecology\Guildford\DWH001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\Mapping\Working\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\DWH001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx

Legend

CP

Pipistrellus pipistrellus

SP

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Stopping Point Results

M.

Myotis sp.

CP

Pipistrellus pipistrellus

SP

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Static Monitoring Location

Stopping Point

--

Transect Route

SANG Boundary

Survey Extent

Site Boundary

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KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
6e	

Figure Title

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dawn 19th July 2022)

38

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Legend

Transect Leg Results

- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Stopping Point Results

- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- Static Monitoring Location
- Stopping Point
- Transect Route
- SANG Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Site Boundary

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Drawn KC	Checked AS
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
Client David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number 6f	

Figure Title

Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 15th August 2022)

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Legend

Transect Leg Results

- B

Barbastella barbastellus
- M.

Myotis sp.
- L

Nyctalus leisleri
- N

Nyctalus noctula
- P.

Pipistrellus sp.
- CP

Pipistrellus pipistrellus
- SP

Pipistrellus pygmaeus
- Static Monitoring Location
- Stopping Point
- Transect Route
- SANG Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Site Boundary

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Drawn	Checked
KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
6g

Figure Title
Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 12th September 2022)

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Legend

Transect Leg Results

- L *Nyctalus leisleri*
- P. *Pipistrellus sp.*
- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Stopping Point Results

- CP *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- SP *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Static Monitoring Location

Stopping Point

Transect Route

SANG Boundary

Survey Extent

Site Boundary

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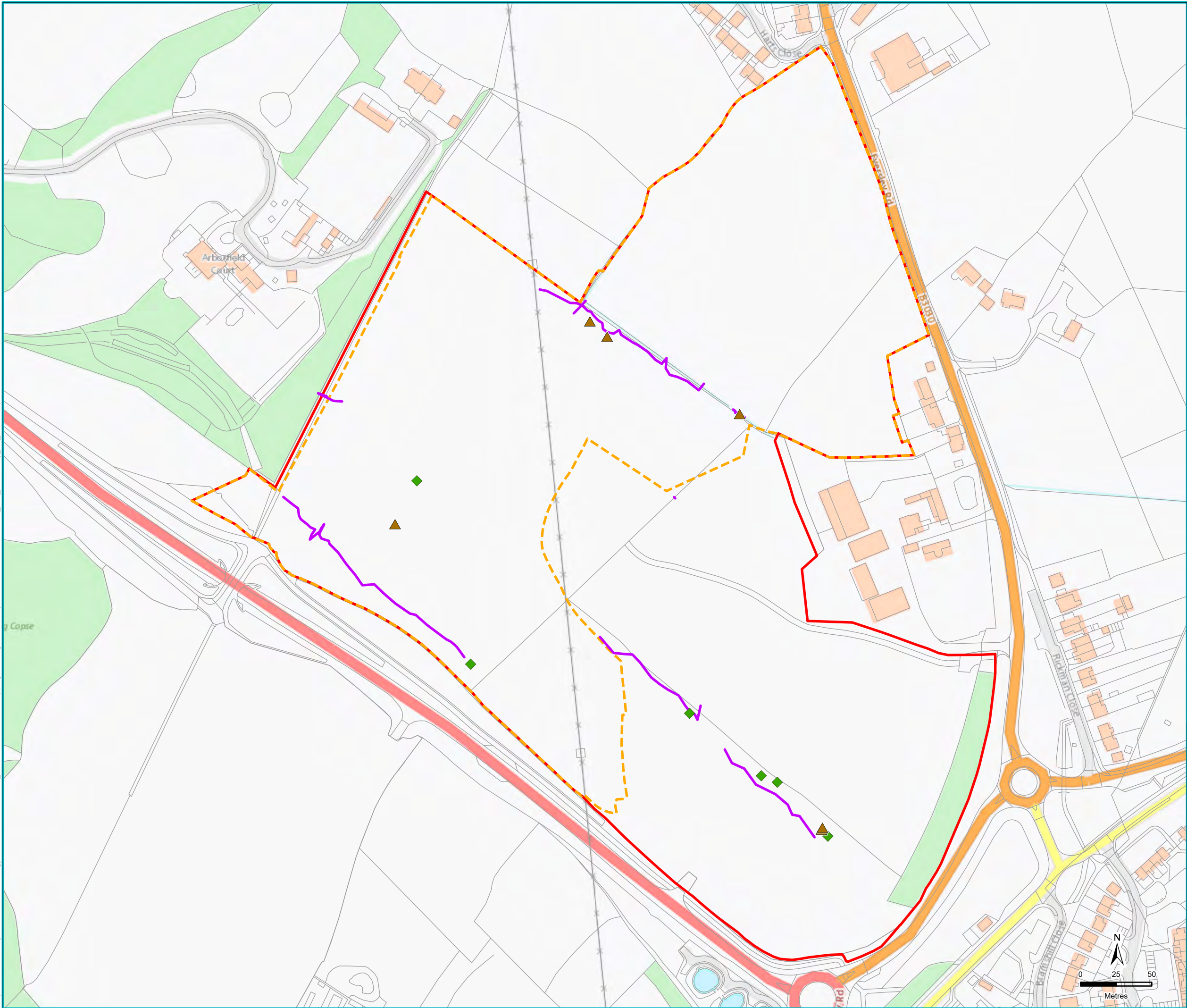
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Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
6h

Figure Title
Bat Activity Transect Results 2022
(Dusk 3rd October 2022)

Filepath: M:\Live Projects\Terrestrial Ecology\Guildford\DWH001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\Mapping\Working\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\DWH001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx



Legend

Badger Sign

- ◆ Snuffle Hole
- ▲ Latrines
- Badger Run
- - - SANG Boundary
- ▭ Site Boundary

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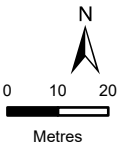
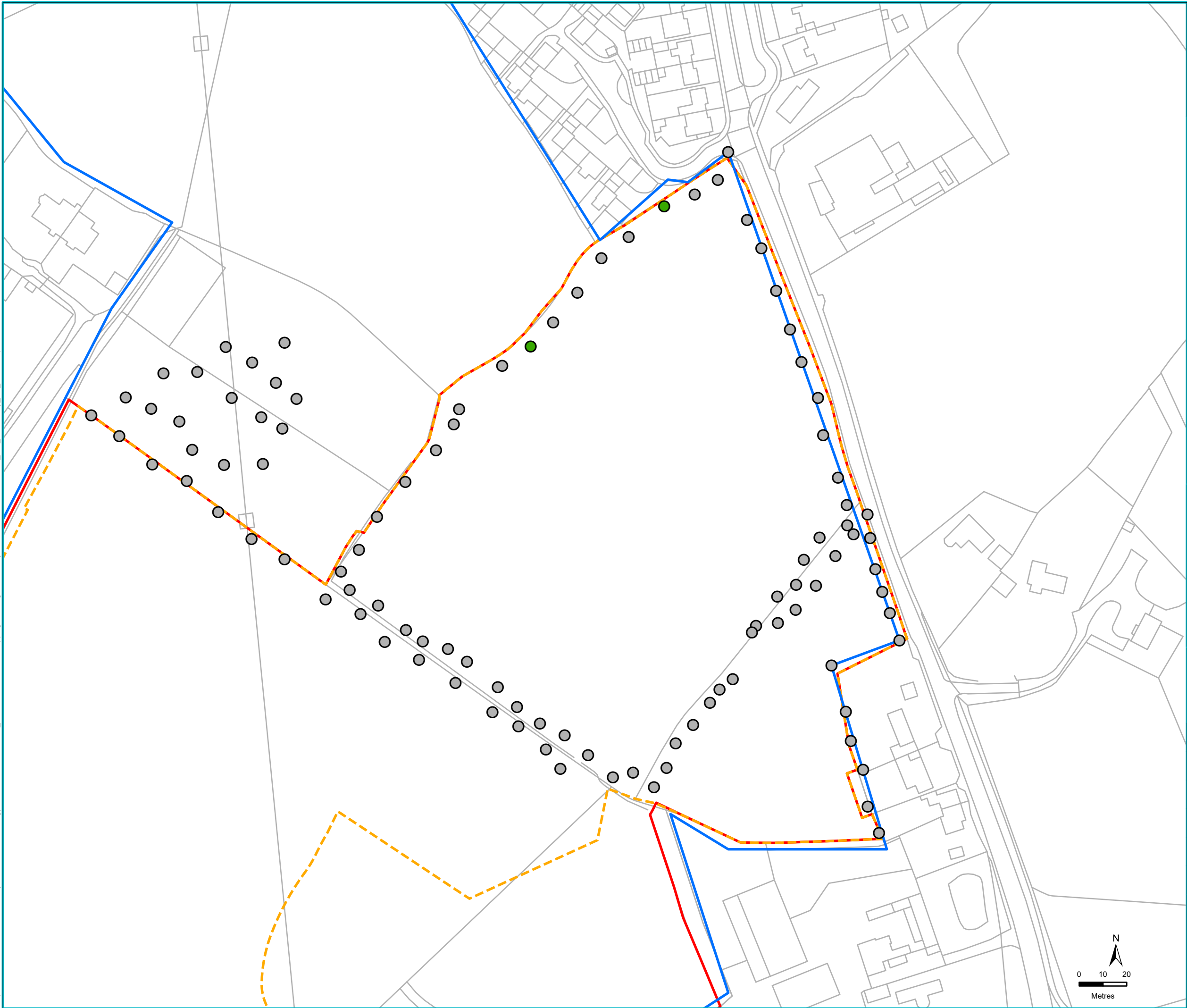
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Client
David Wilson Homes

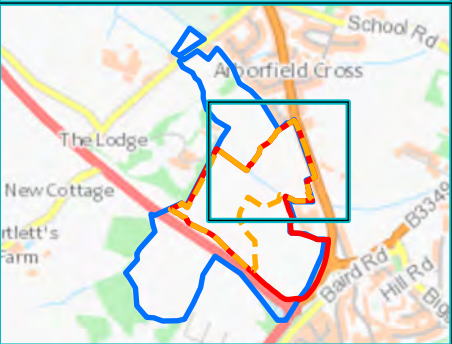
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Figure Title
Badger Survey Results
2025

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- Legend
- Reptile Refugia Check Results**
- No Reptiles Seen
 - Slow Worm
 - Grass Snake
 - SANG Site Boundary
 - Survey Extent
 - Site Boundary



Map Centre Grid Reference: 476210E 166476N

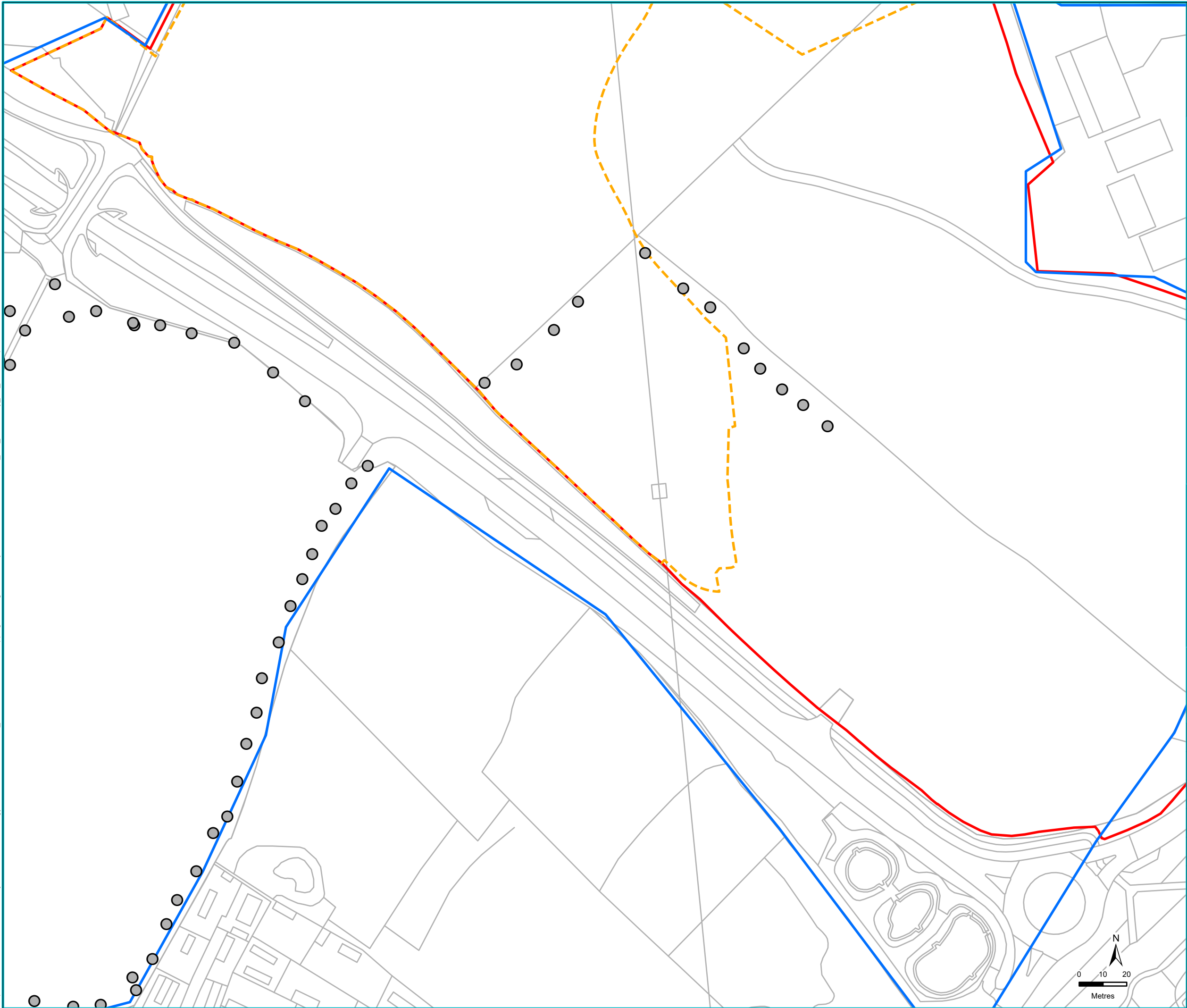
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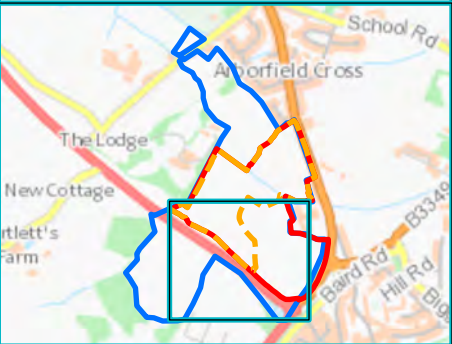
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Drawn	Checked
KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
8a	
Figure Title	

Reptile Survey Results
2022

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- Legend
- Reptile Refugia Check Results**
- No Reptiles Seen
 - Slow Worm
 - Grass Snake
 - ▭ SANG Site Boundary
 - ▭ Survey Extent
 - ▭ Site Boundary



Map Centre Grid Reference: 476070E 166121N

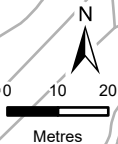
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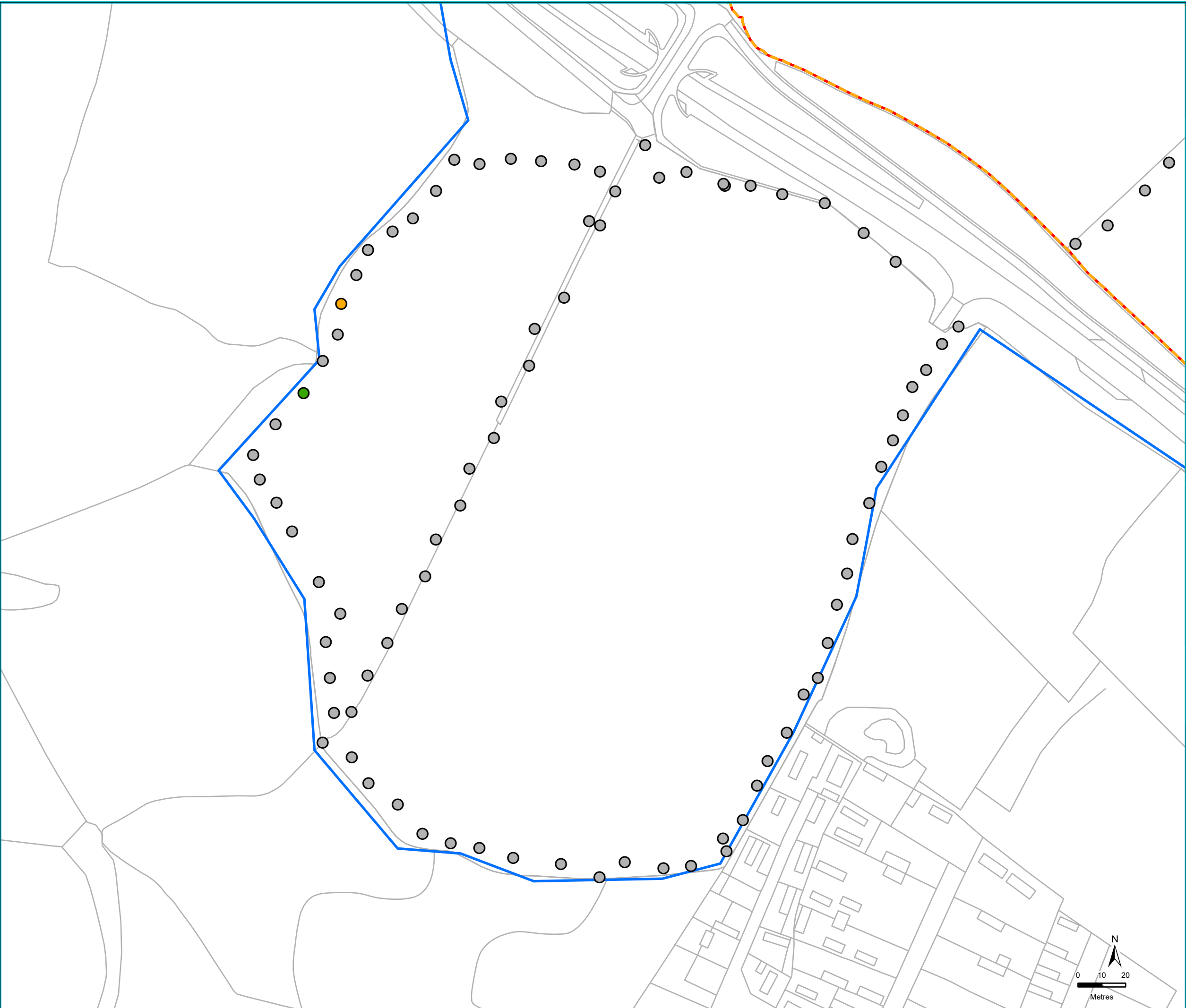
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Drawn	Checked
KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
8b	

Figure Title

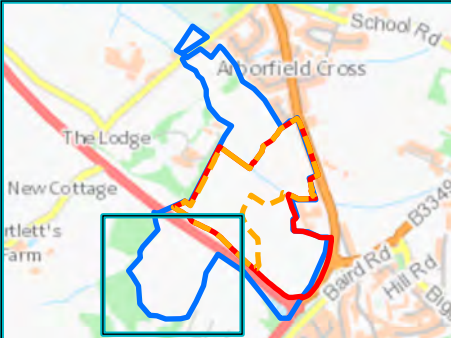
Reptile Survey Results
2022



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- Legend
- Reptile Refugia Check Results**
- No Reptiles Seen
 - Slow Worm
 - Grass Snake
 - SANG Site Boundary
 - Survey Extent
 - Site Boundary



Map Centre Grid Reference: 475821E 166063N

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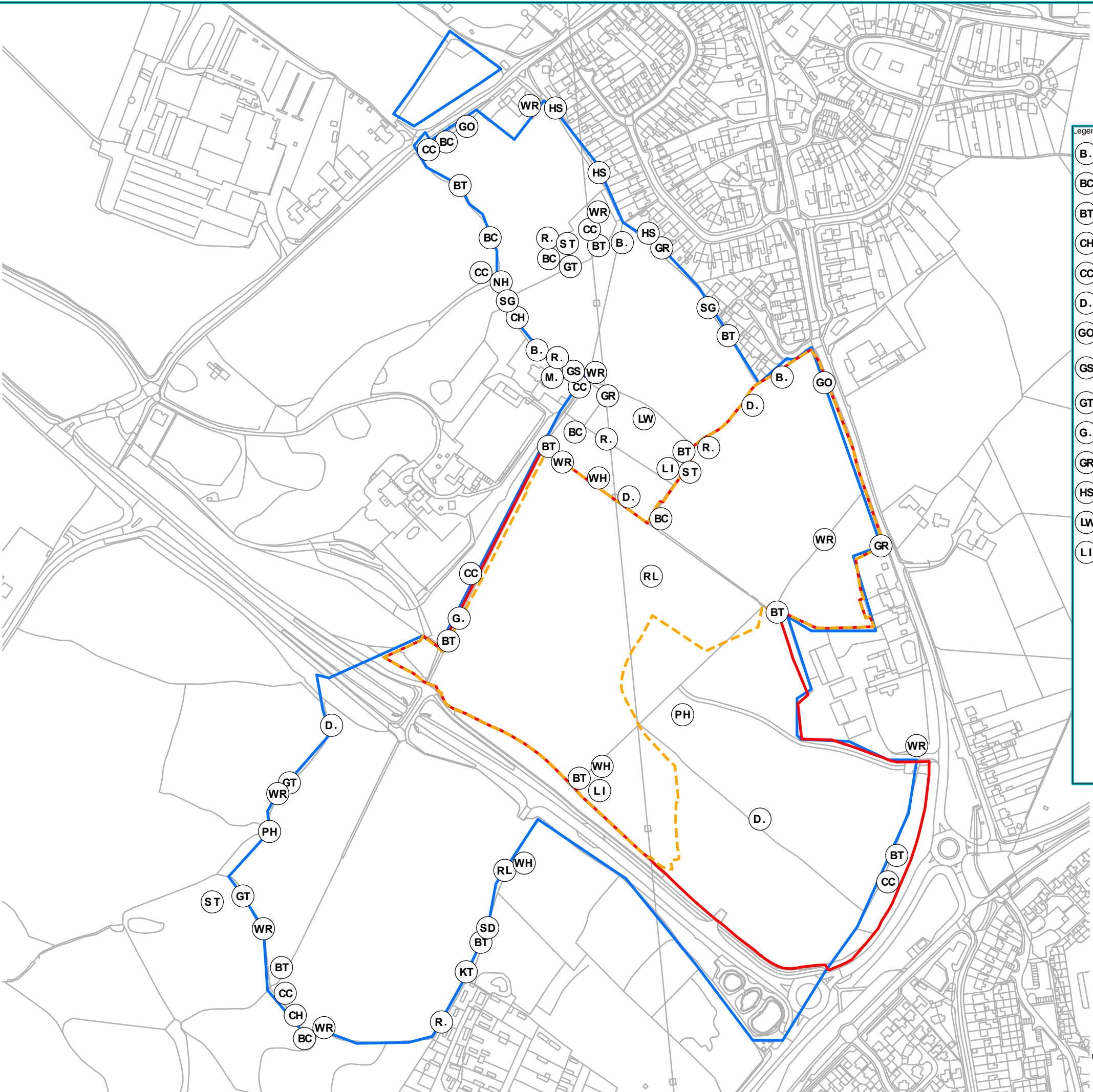
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Drawn	Checked
KC	AS
Date	Date
27/09/2024	27/09/2024
Client	
David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number	
8c	

Figure Title

Reptile Survey Results
2022

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- Legend
- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| B. Blackbird (B.) | M. Mistle Thrush (M.) |
| BC Blackcap (BC) | NH Nuthatch (NH) |
| BT Blue Tit (BT) | PH Pheasant (PH) |
| CH Chaffinch (CH) | KT Red Kite (KT) |
| CC Chiffchaff (CC) | RL Red-legged |
| D. Dunnock (D.) | R. Robin (R.) |
| GO Goldfinch (GO) | ST Song Thrush (ST) |
| GS Great Spotted Woodpecker (GS) | SG Starling (SG) |
| GT Great Tit (GT) | SD Stock Dove (SD) |
| G. Green Woodpecker (G.) | WH Whitethroat (WH) |
| GR Greenfinch (GR) | WR Wren (WR) |
| HS House Sparrow (HS) | SANG Boundary |
| LW Lesser Whitethroat (LW) | Survey Extent |
| LI Linnet (LI) | Site Boundary |

Drawing Ref
DWH001-020/406085/1

Scale at A3
1:4,000

Drawn KC	Checked AS
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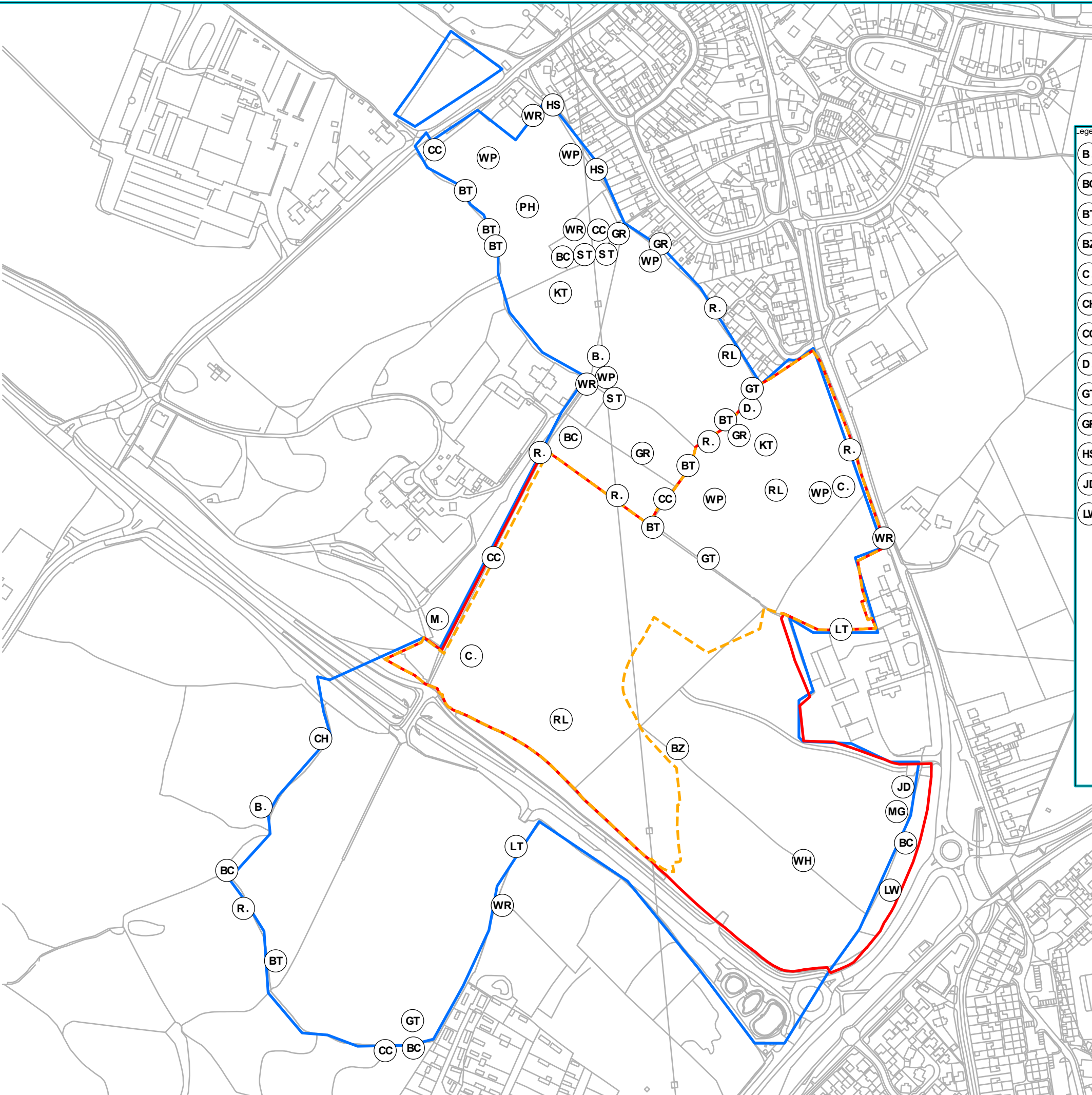
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
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Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
9a

Figure Title
Breeding Bird Survey
Results 2022
(27/04/2022)

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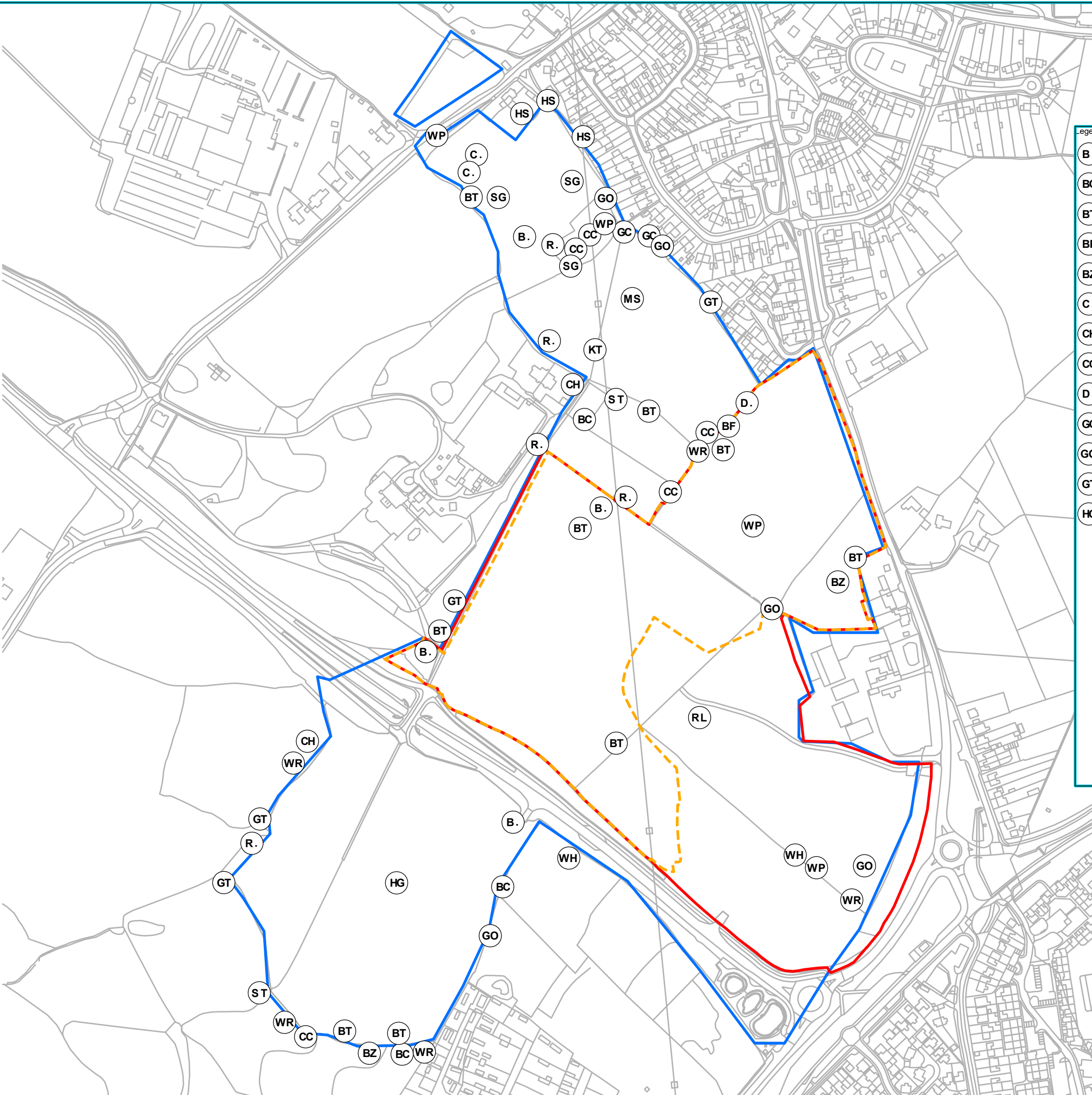
Legend

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 BC	Blackcap (BC)	 MG	Magpie (MG)
 BT	Blue Tit (BT)	 M.	Mistle Thrush (M.)
 BZ	Buzzard (BZ)	 PH	Pheasant (PH)
 C.	Carrion Crow (C.)	 KT	Red Kite (KT)
 CH	Chaffinch (CH)	 RL	Red-legged
 CC	Chiffchaff (CC)	 R.	Robin (R.)
 D.	Dunnock (D.)	 ST	Song Thrush (ST)
 GT	Great Tit (GT)	 WH	Whitethroat (WH)
 GR	Greenfinch (GR)	 WP	Wood Pigeon (WP)
 HS	House Sparrow (HS)	 WR	Wren (WR)
 JD	Jackdaw (JD)		SANG Boundary
 LW	Lesser Whitethroat (LW)		Survey Extent
			Site Boundary

Drawing Ref		DWH001-020/406085/1	
Scale at A3		1:4,000	
Drawn	KC	Checked	AS
Date	27/09/2024	Date	27/09/2024
Client			
David Wilson Homes			
Figure Number		9b	
Figure Title			

Breeding Bird Survey
Results 2022
(12/05/2022)

Filepath: \\thomson.in\\data\\Live Projects\\Terrestrial Ecology\\Guildford\\DWH001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\\Mapping\\Working\\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\\DWH001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx
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Legend	
B.	Blackbird (B.)
BC	Blackcap (BC)
BT	Blue Tit (BT)
BF	Bullfinch (BF)
BZ	Buzzard (BZ)
C.	Carrion Crow (C.)
CH	Chaffinch (CH)
CC	Chiffchaff (CC)
D.	Dunnock (D.)
GC	Goldcrest (GC)
GO	Goldfinch (GO)
GT	Great Tit (GT)
HG	Herring Gull (HG)
HS	House Sparrow (HS)
MS	Mute Swan (MS)
KT	Red Kite (KT)
RL	Red-legged
R.	Robin (R.)
ST	Song Thrush (ST)
SG	Starling (SG)
WH	Whitethroat (WH)
WP	Wood Pigeon (WP)
WR	Wren (WR)
	SANG Boundary
	Survey Extent
	Site Boundary

Drawing Ref
DWH001-020/406085/1

Scale at A3
1:4,000

Drawn KC	Checked AS
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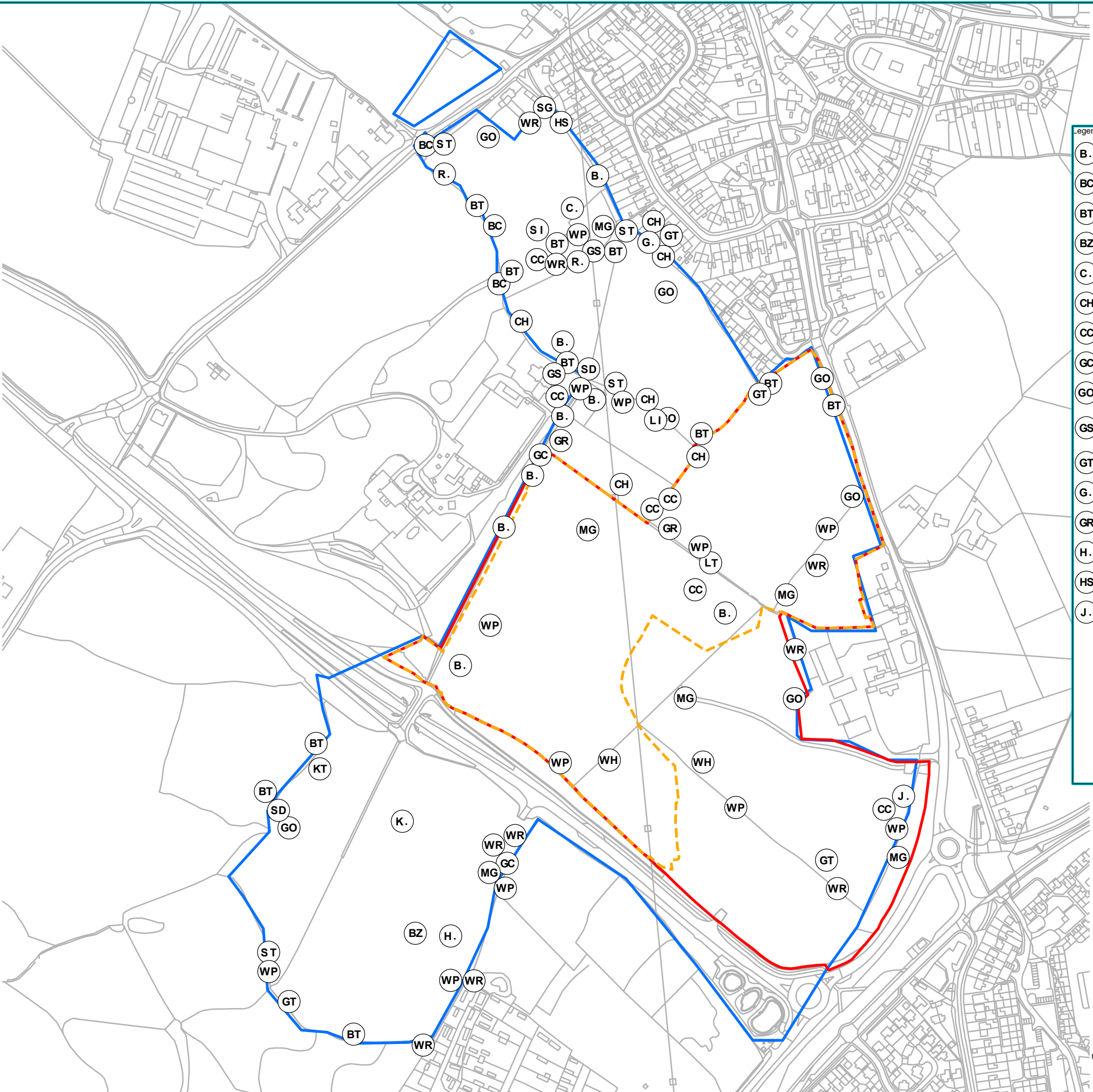
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
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Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
9c

Figure Title
Breeding Bird Survey
Results 2022
(25/05/2022)

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Legend	
B.	Blackbird (B.)
BC	Blackcap (BC)
BT	Blue Tit (BT)
BZ	Buzzard (BZ)
C.	Carrion Crow (C.)
CH	Chaffinch (CH)
CC	Chiffchaff (CC)
GC	Goldcrest (GC)
GO	Goldfinch (GO)
GS	Great Spotted Woodpecker (GS)
GT	Great Tit (GT)
G.	Green Woodpecker (G.)
GR	Greenfinch (GR)
H.	Grey Heron (H.)
HS	House Sparrow (HS)
J.	Jay (J.)
K.	Kestrel (K.)
LI	Linnet (LI)
LT	Long-tailed Tit (LT)
MG	Magpie (MG)
KT	Red Kite (KT)
R.	Robin (R.)
ST	Song Thrush (ST)
SG	Starling (SG)
SD	Stock Dove (SD)
SI	Swift (SI)
WH	Whitethroat (WH)
WP	Wood Pigeon (WP)
WR	Wren (WR)
	SANG Boundary
	Survey Extent
	Site Boundary

Drawing Ref
DWH001-020/406085/1

Scale at A3
1:4,000

Drawn KC	Checked AS
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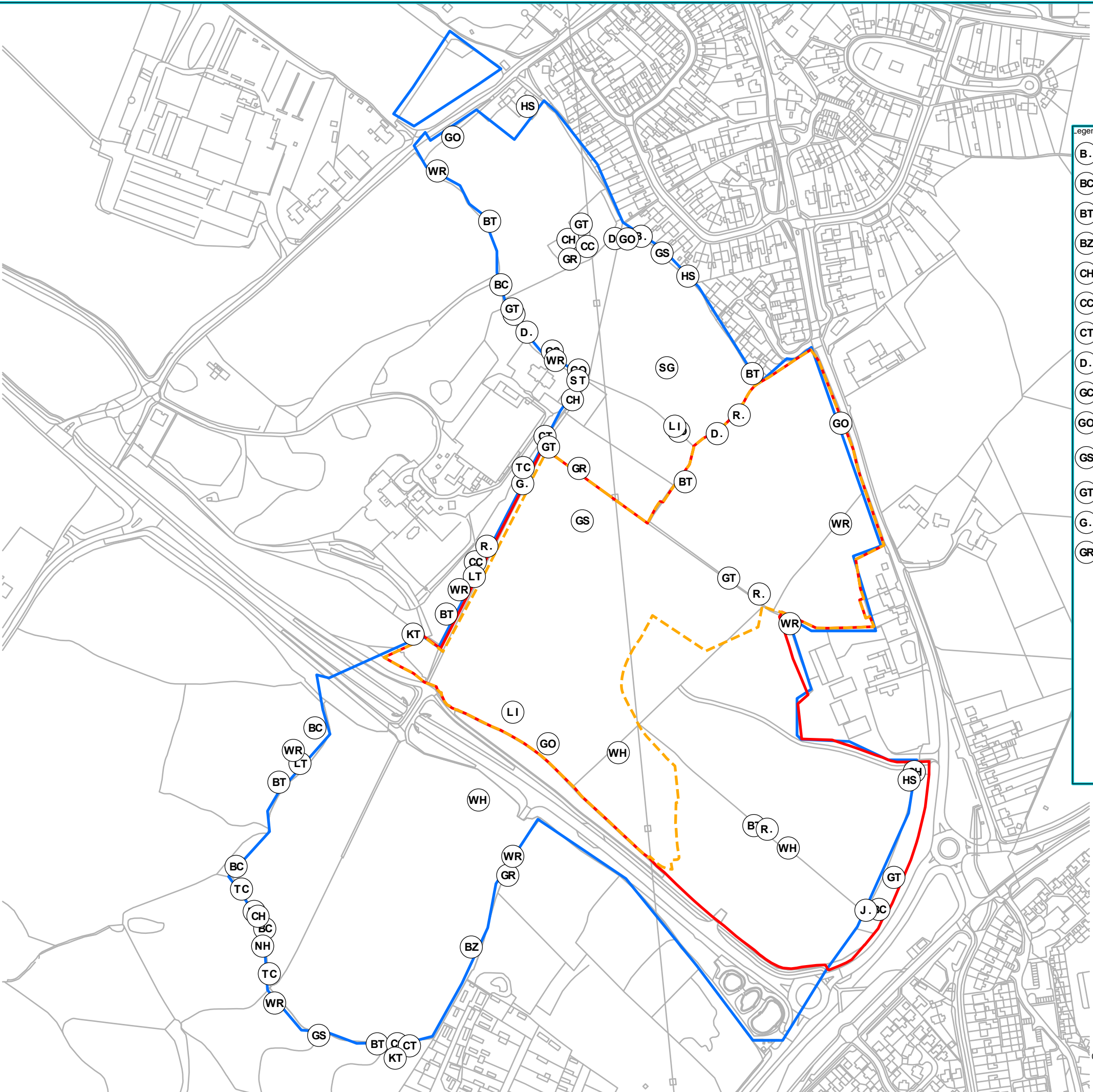
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
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Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
9d

Figure Title
Breeding Bird Survey
Results 2022
(07/06/2022)

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- Legend
- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| B. Blackbird (B.) | HS House Sparrow (HS) |
| BC Blackcap (BC) | J. Jay (J.) |
| BT Blue Tit (BT) | LI Linnet (LI) |
| BZ Buzzard (BZ) | LT Long-tailed Tit (LT) |
| CH Chaffinch (CH) | NH Nuthatch (NH) |
| CC Chiffchaff (CC) | KT Red Kite (KT) |
| CT Coal Tit (CT) | R. Robin (R.) |
| D. Dunnock (D.) | ST Song Thrush (ST) |
| GC Goldcrest (GC) | SG Starling (SG) |
| GO Goldfinch (GO) | TC Treecreeper (TC) |
| GS Great Spotted Woodpecker (GS) | WH Whitethroat (WH) |
| GT Great Tit (GT) | WR Wren (WR) |
| G. Green Woodpecker (G.) | SANG Boundary |
| GR Greenfinch (GR) | Survey Extent |
| | Site Boundary |

Drawing Ref
DWH001-020/406085/1

Scale at A3
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Drawn KC	Checked AS
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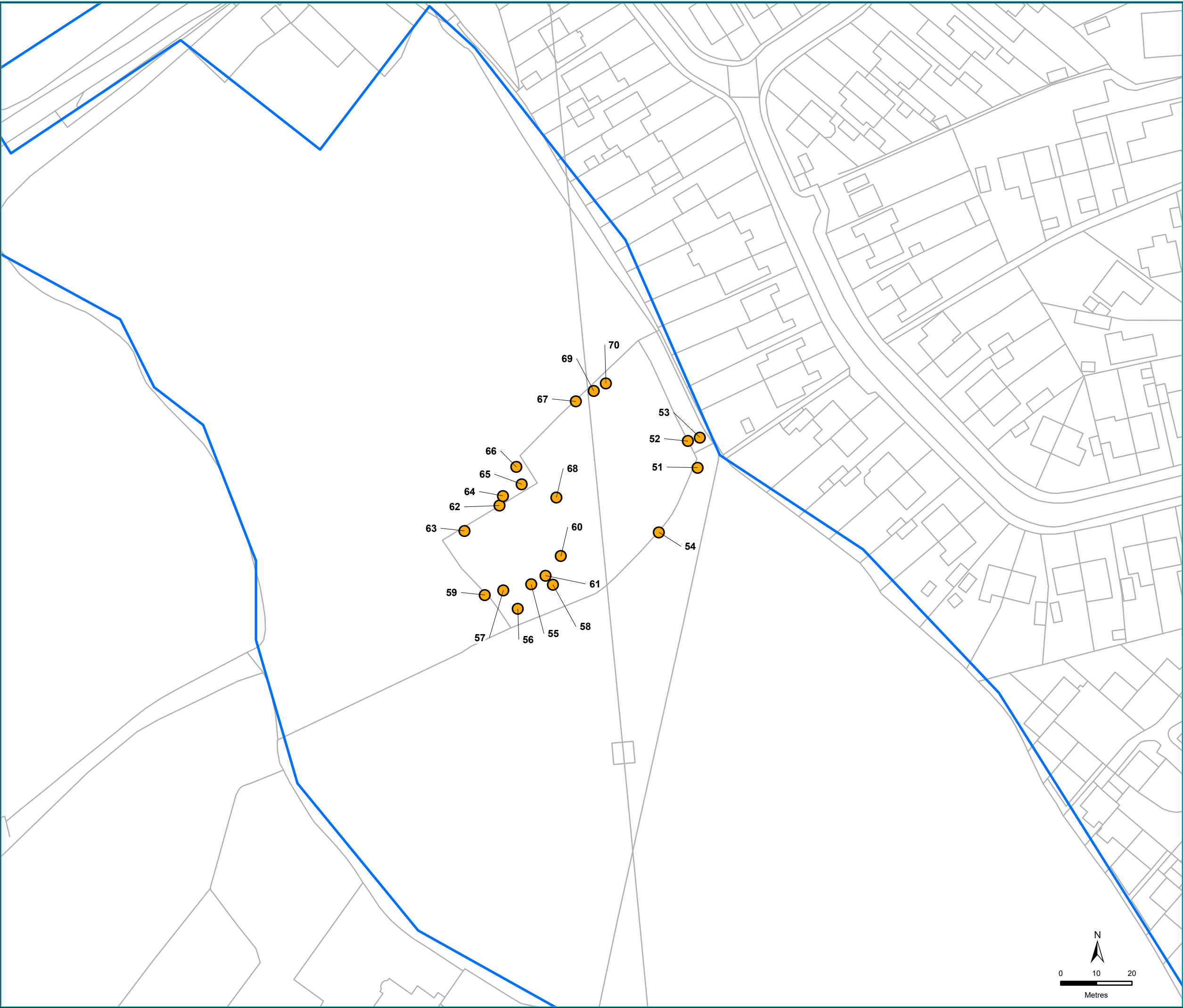
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
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Client
David Wilson Homes

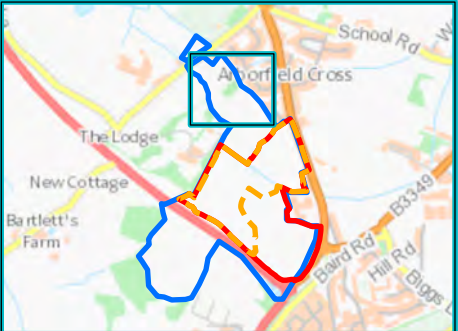
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9e

Figure Title
Breeding Bird Survey
Results 2022
(14/06/2022)

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- Legend
- Dormouse Tube Location
 - SANG Boundary
 - Survey Extent
 - Site Boundary



Map Centre Grid Reference: 476036E 166740N

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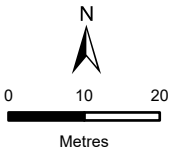
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Drawn KC	Checked AS
Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024

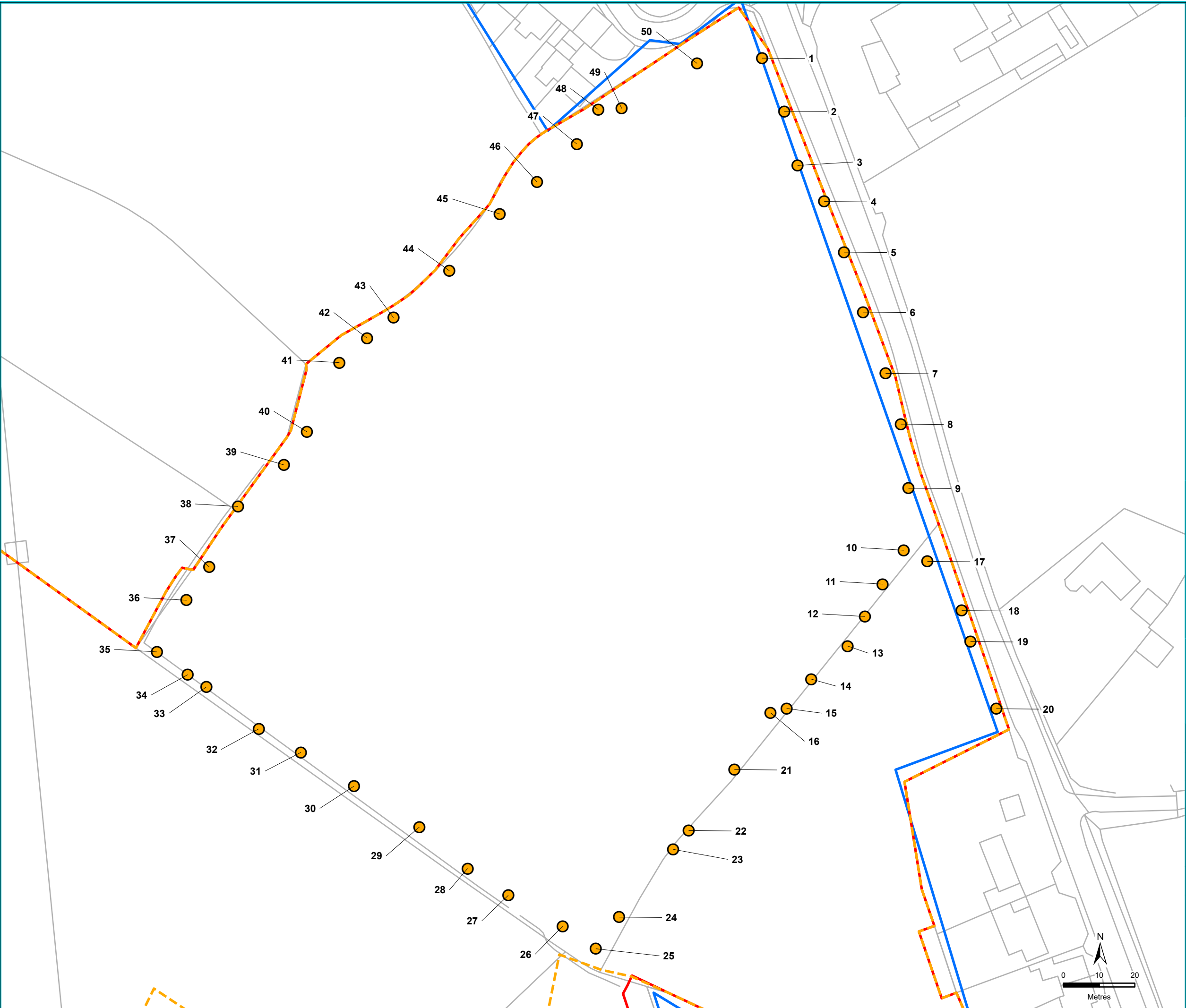
Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
10

Figure Title
Dormouse Survey Results
2022

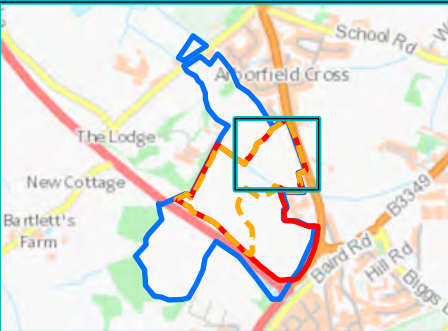


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Legend

- Dormouse Tube Location
- SANG Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Site Boundary



Map Centre Grid Reference: 476225E 166483N

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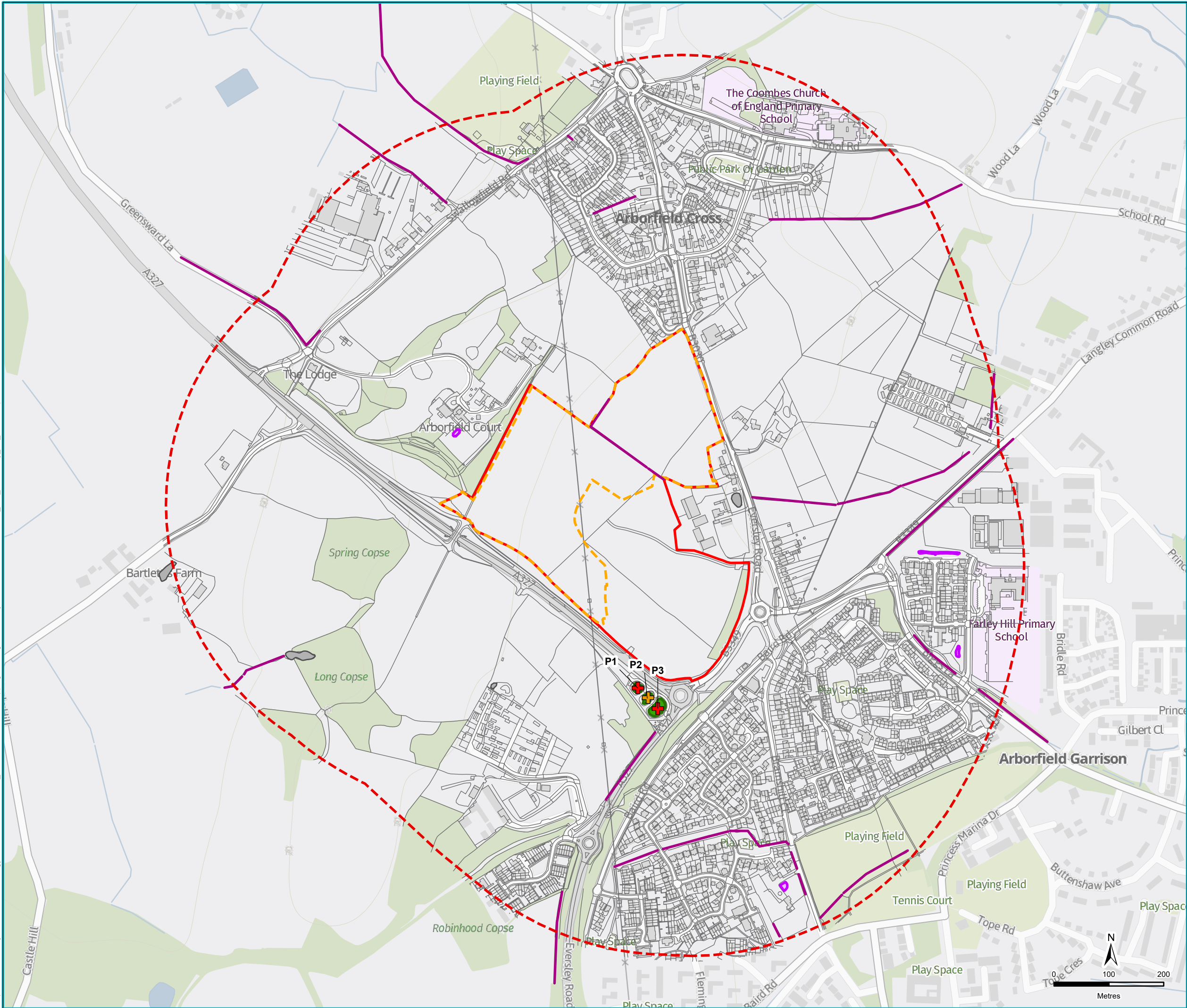
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Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024

Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
10

Figure Title
Dormouse Survey Results
2022

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- Legend
- eDNA Result**
- Negative
 - Waterbody Dry
 - Scoped Out
- HSI Category (Pond Suitability)**
- Excellent
 - Not Surveyed
 - No Access
- 500m Study Area Buffer
- SANG Boundary
- Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476108E 166301N

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Drawing Ref
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Scale at A3
1:6,500

Drawn KC	Checked AS
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Date 30/09/2025	Date 30/09/2025
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Client
David Wilson Homes

Figure Number
11

Figure Title
GCN Survey Results 2024

Filepath: \\thomson.int\data\live\Projects\Terrestrial Ecology\Guildford\DW-H001-020_1 - Duck's Nest farm\Mapping\Working\Desk Study 2024 - Quote 008\DW-H001_020_DeskStudy_AS_180924.aprx
Service Layer Credits: OS Open Background Tile Layer: Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020
World Imagery: Maxar, Microsoft



- Legend
- Overall Suitability of Tree to Support Roosting Bats**
- FAR
 - PRF
 - PRF-M
 - RPAs
 - Key Dark Zones
 - SANG Boundary
 - Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 476108E 166301N
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Every effort has been made to create a map that is as accurate as possible. However, this map is not intended to represent a scaled landscape survey so should not be used to pin-point accurate engineering work or as a basis for detailed site planning.
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Date 27/09/2024	Date 27/09/2024
Client David Wilson Homes	
Figure Number 12	
Figure Title Key Dark Zones	

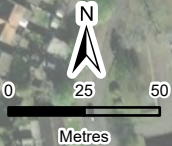


Figure 1: Site Location, Study Area and Desk Study Results 2025

Figure 2: Development Boundary and SANG Boundary

Figure 3: Extended UK Habitat Classification Survey Results 2025

Figure 4: Photographs of the Site 2025

Figure 5: Ground Level Tree Assessment Results 2025

Figure 6: Bat Activity Transect Results 2022

Figure 7: Badger Survey Results 2025

Figure 8: Reptile Survey Results 2022

Figure 9: Breeding Bird Survey Results 2022

Figure 10: Domouse Survey Results 2022

Figure 11: GCN Survey Results

Figure 12: Key Dark Zones

2. Introduction

2.1 Development Background

2.1.1 David Wilson Homes is submitting a hybrid planning application to Wokingham Borough Council for a site known as Duck's Nest, Arborfield. The application comprises of:

- A full application for the change of use of land from agricultural land to provide an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), including the details of associated landscaping, planting, drainage measures, parking, walking routes and other works associated with the creation of the SANG.
- An outline application with all matters reserved other than access into the site for a residential development of up to 135 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping and all other associated works.

2.1.2 The proposals described above are hereafter referred to collectively as 'the development'.

2.1.3 The development will be located on an area of farmland (Grid Reference SU760664), south of Arborfield Cross with the A327 running adjacent to the western boundary. This will hereafter be referred to as 'the site' and is shown on Figure 1 the proposed locations of the residential development and the SANG are shown on Figure 2.

2.2 Ecology Background

2.2.1 David Wilson Homes commissioned Thomson Environmental Consultants in 2022 to undertake a range of ecological assessments of the proposed development site and surrounding area. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken to gather baseline ecological data for the site. The habitat survey was undertaken using the UK Habitat Classification System (UKHab) and condition of habitats was recorded to enable calculation of a baseline biodiversity metric for the site using the Natural England Biodiversity Metric 3.1. Habitat suitability assessments for bats, reptiles and hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) were also undertaken during the field survey, as well as a sign survey for badger (*Meles meles*) (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2022a). Subsequently, surveys for bats, reptiles, birds, hazel dormouse and great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) were conducted.

2.2.2 Thomson Environmental Consultants produced an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) in line with CIEEM guidelines (informed by the results of the above surveys), which was submitted as part of a planning application to Wokingham Borough Council (planning reference 230532) (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2022b). The planning application was ultimately withdrawn, due to non-ecological reasons.

2.2.3 The ecology officer at Wokingham Borough Council provided comments on the proposal, including protected species, ecological permeability of the site, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) (Wokingham Borough Council, 2023). The comments made, have been addressed and where relevant incorporated into this updated EclA.

2.2.4 The survey data is over two years old, and in accordance with the CIEEM guidance note on the lifespan of ecological surveys (CIEEM, 2019), a site visit was conducted in 2024 to determine the validity of the survey data. This survey data was then updated in 2025, these are included in

the Methodology section as '2024 and 2025 Updates', and 2022 data considered valid is outlined in the Methodology section under '2022 Surveys'. Surveys updated in 2024 and 2025 were: ecological desk study, habitat survey, badger survey, bat ground level tree assessments and GCN habitat suitability assessment,

2.3 The Brief and Objectives

2.3.1 David Wilson Homes commissioned Thomson Environmental Consultants on 9th September 2024 to undertake the following:

- A habitat survey of the site, using the UK Habitat Classification methodology (V2), to include an assessment of the potential for any changes in habitats on site to support protected species and species of conservation concern. This walkover to also look for any evidence of badger presence and activity including setts, footprints, hairs and latrines. A condition assessment of each on-site habitat parcel using DEFRA's statutory biodiversity metric methodology in order to collect data to inform Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.
- A ground level inspection of all trees within the red line boundary, with the aim of the survey to estimate (as far as can be achieved from ground level) which trees are suitable for roosting bats,
- An updated Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment of the three ponds that were surveyed in 2022, located in the south of the proposed development site;
- An update of the existing EcIA for the site (report reference: DWH001-020-001/004/002) to include; an updated desk study, as the validity of the previous desk study has expired, the methodology and results of the updated surveys, any information requested from the ecologist from Wokingham Borough Council, during the previous planning application (230532); and any updates to legislation or planning policy.

2.3.2 Also commissioned were updates to the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments for the site, but this is addressed in a separate report (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2024).

2.3.3 Thomson Environmental Consultants were subsequently commissioned on 20th May 2025 to conduct an updated site visit in 2025 to assess if there were any significant changes.

2.3.4 The objective of this report is to identify and describe all potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed development. This is needed in order to set out the mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation and to identify how mitigation measures will be secured; to provide an assessment of the significance of any residual effects; to identify appropriate enhancement measures; and to set out the requirements for post-construction monitoring.

2.4 Surveyors

2.4.1 Details of the dates and surveyors carrying out the various surveys undertaken to inform this report can be found in Appendix 1.

3. Legal and Policy Context

3.1.1 Protected sites, habitats and species, that are relevant to the development are covered by a range of legislation and policy which is described in Table 1.

Table 1: Legislation applicable to the development

Feature		Legislation/Policy
Designated Sites	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected areas for birds in the UK classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) As part of the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) avoidance strategy set out in Core Strategy Policy CP8 of the Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document and Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, any net residential developments within 5km of the site will require a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision. The SANG provision will be at a minimum of 8ha/1000 population (calculated at a rate of 2.4 persons per household).
	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	SSSIs are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) by the relevant nature conservation bodies as areas of special interest for fauna, flora, geological, geomorphological or physiogeographical features.
	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	LNRs are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities.
	Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Biodiversity policy CP7 of Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy states that development "<i>which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and: i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided</i>".
Priority Habitats	Deciduous woodland	

Feature		Legislation/Policy
	Traditional Orchard	These priority habitats are protected under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
	Hedgerows	Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan (2010) policy CP7 states " <i>Development which may harm habitats of principle importance in England for nature conservation, whether directly or indirectly... will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the needs for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance... and mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or appropriate compensation measure to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided</i> ".
Ancient Woodland		Ancient Woodland are an irreplaceable component of biodiversity and an important habitat on the national scale which are covered under Section 41 of the NERC Act.
Species	Bats	All species of bat are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, (as amended) and partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended). Some species of bat are also listed as priority species in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
	Badger	Badgers are protected under The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
	Reptiles	Protected from killing and injury under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended). Priority species in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
	Birds	All birds, their eggs and nests are protected from damage and destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended). Some birds, including kingfisher, are listed on Schedule 1 of this act giving them protection from reckless or intentional disturbance whilst on or near an active nest.
	Dormouse	Fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, (as amended) and partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside

Feature		Legislation/Policy
		Act 1981, (as amended). Priority species under the NERC Act 2006.
	Great crested newt	Fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, (as amended) and partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, (as amended). Priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.
	Himalayan Balsam	Listed under Schedule 2 of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019, which gives effect to EU regulations on the prevention and management of the spread of invasive alien species. It is an offence to ' <i>plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild</i> ' any plant species listed.
All protected species		Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan (2010) - Policy CP3: <i>Planning permission will be granted for developments that... have no detrimental impact upon important ecological features; maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna or flora including protected species.</i>
All priority species		Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan (2010) - Policy CP7: <i>Development which may harm species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, whether directly or indirectly... will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the needs for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance... and mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or appropriate compensation measure to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided</i>
Biodiversity Net Gain		The Environment Act 2021 provides a framework to improve and protect the natural environment and is overseen by the Office for Environmental Protection. One of the provisions of the Act is the mandatory requirement for most new developments to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity. Both onsite and offsite enhancements will need to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years following completion of a development. Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan (2010) states: " <i>Planning permission will be granted for developments that:...maintain or enhance the</i>

Feature	Legislation/Policy
	<i>ability of the site to support fauna or flora including protected species".</i>

4. Methods

2024 and 2025 Surveys

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 An updated desk study was completed, the survey area was defined to cover the site and all land within a 5 km buffer area. Records for Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), SPAs and Ramsar sites were sought for a 5 km study area, with all other designated sites, ancient woodland and priority habitats sought for a 2 km study area. Records for protected species, species of conservation concern and invasive non-native species were sought for a 1 km buffer area. The site location and study areas are shown on Figure 1.

4.1.2 Sources of information were as follows:

- The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)
- Thames Valley Ecological Records Centre

4.1.3 Requests for information were to the Biological Record Centre sent on 11th September 2024 and 20th May 2025 and were received on the same day, and 25th May 2025, respectively.

4.2 UKHab Survey

4.2.1 A survey area was defined as an area that encompassed the red line boundary. The survey area is shown on Figure 2.

4.2.2 A survey using the UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab) (UKHab Ltd, 2023) was conducted throughout the survey area. This is a nationally recognised habitat classification system that is compatible with the Defra statutory metric for calculating biodiversity net gain values (Defra, 2023a).

4.2.3 The UKHab has five hierarchical levels and includes the identification of priority habitats and Annex I habitats as listed under the European Habitats Directive. The five levels are:

- Level 1 - Biomes/major ecosystems (terrestrial, freshwater and coastal);
- Level 2 - Ecosystem types (i.e. woodland, grassland, heathland and scrub);
- Level 3 - Broad Habitats, based on those of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP);
- Level 4 - Habitats, including priority habitats; and
- Level 5 - Habitats, including Annex I habitats.

4.2.4 In addition, non-hierarchical secondary codes were used to provide supplementary information.

4.2.5 During the field survey, the habitats in the survey area were mapped to the highest level possible

4.2.6 Table 2 below shows the meta-data used for this survey.

Table 2: Habitat survey meta-data

Scope and purpose of the survey	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)
Area surveyed	See Figure 2
Edition of UKHab used	UKHab-Professional (V2)
Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU)	25m ² for areas, 5m for linear features
Level of UKHab Primary Hierarchy used	Level 5, where possible
List of Secondary Code groups recorded	All secondary codes
Additional attributes recorded	Habitat condition assessment
Map projection and units	See Figure 2
Date of survey	11 th September 2024 27 th and 28 th May 2025
Organisation and individual undertaking the survey	Jessica Green, Ecological Consultant Jack Wong, Assistant Ecologist Thomson Environmental Consultants
References for any existing datasets that have been used	The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Thames Valley Ecological Records Centre

4.2.7 The dominant and readily identified species of higher plant species from each habitat type within the survey area were recorded and their abundance was assessed on the DAFOR scale:

- D Dominant;
- A Abundant;
- F Frequent;
- O Occasional; and
- R Rare.

4.2.8 These scores represent the abundance within the defined area only and do not reflect national or regional abundances. Plant species nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

4.2.9 Target notes were made for any features which were too small to map but were of particular ecological interest.

- 4.2.10 Any significant changes in habitat were noted, to inform the decision as to the validity of the survey data already available for this site.

4.3 Badger Survey

- 4.3.1 Since badgers are principally nocturnal, the surveyor concentrated on searching for evidence of badgers. The whole of the site boundary was searched; however, survey effort was concentrated on sloping ground within woodland, scrub and along hedgerows, since these are the most likely locations for badger setts.

- 4.3.2 The classification of badger setts used in this survey is based on definitions given in Clark (2007).

- 4.3.3 The survey comprised a search for signs of badger including the following:

- Setts and day nests;
- Paw prints;
- Paths and "squat-marking";
- Latrines, droppings and urine;
- Hairs caught on fences and vegetation;
- Scratching posts;
- Feeding signs and "snuffle-holes" in grassland;
- Broken up wasp nests; and
- Badger bones.

- 4.3.4 When a potential badger sett, consisting of one or more burrow entrances, was encountered, the area was searched for signs of current use by badger.

- 4.3.5 If signs of current use by badger were found the sett was then classified as either a main, annexe, subsidiary or outlier sett based on the number of entrances, apparent level of use and proximity to other setts.

- 4.3.6 Setts were classified as disused if no signs of current use by badger was evident and if the burrow(s) showed evidence of occupancy by other mammal species, such as rabbit and fox, this was recorded.

- 4.3.7 When a sett was found, the location of the sett and each of the entrances was recorded on a mobile mapper. Each of the entrances was then classified as:

- Well-used - entrances clear of debris and vegetation and are obviously well used;
- Partially-used - entrances are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves or twigs across the entrances, these holes could come into regular use with minimal clearance. (note that these holes may or may not show signs of current use by badger); or
- Disused - entrances have not been used for some time, are partially or completely blocked.

4.4 Bat Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

- 4.4.1** Trees within the site boundary were subject to detailed inspection from the ground, systematically visually surveying the tree from all possible aspects, including close to the stem and further from the base (as required). Results were recorded using a GPS enabled mobile mapper, with photographs taken to support results.
- 4.4.2** The survey searched for and recorded any PRFs which could be viewed from the ground. Those which were apparently pointing upwards were included in the assessment, as were seasonally wet features because these factors do not necessarily preclude use without further investigation. Where higher level areas of the tree were viewable from the ground, a high-powered torch was used to search for PRFs.
- 4.4.3** Features searched for included those in **Error! Reference source not found.** defined according to Bat Roosts in Trees, (BTHK, 2018).

Table 3: PRF types that can be exploited by bats and how they form (adapted from Bat Roosts in Trees (BTHK, 2018))

Disease/Decay Formed PRFs	Damaged formed PRFs	Association formed PRFs
woodpecker holes	lightning strikes	Fluting
squirrel holes	hazard beams	ivy
knot holes	subsidence cracks	
pruning cuts	shearing cracks	
tear outs	transverse snaps	
wounds	welds	
cankers	lifting bark	
compression forks	desiccation fissures	
butt rots	frost cracks	

- 4.4.4** All trees with identified PRFs and requiring further assessment were photographed, tagged, numbered and the following information recorded:
- GPS coordinates;
 - UK Habitat Classification (if not recorded previously at the site)
 - species, height, condition (alive, dead etc)
 - approximate diameter at breast height
- 4.4.5** Where PRFs were identified, they were recorded including PRF type, location on tree (stem or limb), height above ground and compass direction on the tree. Any evidence confirming or indicating use of a PRF was also recorded, including:
- GPS coordinates;

- Bat droppings, feeding remains and corpses (with notes made on quantity, freshness and type);
- Dark staining below an access point that may be caused by bat faeces or urine;
- Staining around a hole that may be caused by the natural oils in bat fur; and
- Noises made by bats.

4.4.6 The suitability of potential tree roosting habitat was classified according to the broad categories in **Error! Reference source not found.**, based on the presence or absence of potential roosting features (PRF).

Table 4: Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement (adapted from Collins ed. 2023)

Suitability	Description
None	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further Assessment Required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

4.4.7 For each structure and tree with a PRF, contextual information was also recorded to aid the assessment. This was distance to hedge, distance to woodland, distance to water, potential commuting corridors, potential foraging corridors, setting, surrounding area habitat quality and the level of disturbance.

4.5 Great Crested Newt Methodology

Initial Search

4.5.1 An initial search area was established which encompassed the land within the application site boundary and a 500 m additional buffer.

4.5.2 Ordnance survey maps and aerial photographs were used to identify any potential waterbodies, good quality great crested newt terrestrial habitats and major barriers to dispersal for great crested newts

Screening Stage I - Isolation

4.5.3 All potential waterbodies within the search area which were separated from the application site by a major dispersal barrier were screened out from further assessment and the reason recorded.

Screening Stage II - Suitability

4.5.4 The remaining potential waterbodies were then examined further to determine if they could comprise suitable breeding habitat for great crested newts.

4.5.5 A waterbody was screened out if it was obviously:

- Filled in or dry for at least most of the year;
- A slurry pond;
- A chlorinated swimming pool;
- A fishing lake or pond which is stocked with fish;
- Running water (streams and rivers);
- A lake greater than 2ha in size; or
- Saline.

4.5.6 Subject to permission to access from the landowner, the remaining waterbodies were then subject to an assessment in the field by a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.5.7 The Survey Area was defined as all the waterbodies subject to assessment to assessment in the field following Screening Stage II.

Screening Stage III - Field Assessment

4.5.8 On arrival at each waterbody, it was assessed again to see if it corresponded to any of the waterbody types listed in Screening Stage II. If so, it was screened out of further assessment and the reason was recorded.

Habitat Suitability Assessment

4.5.9 Where access was possible, waterbodies were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) survey (Oldham et al 2000), in 2024.

4.5.10 The surveyor recorded suitability indices (SI) for ten habitat parameters. The SI results enable an HSI score to be calculated. This score gives a quantitative assessment of each waterbody for its suitability to support great crested newts. The indices used are set out below:

- Location (in Britain) - this accommodates the large scale habitat features which affect great crested newts;
 - Water body Area (m²) - great crested newts tend not to occur in small water bodies or large water bodies and more typically occur in fair-sized water bodies, usually greater than 100m², less than 300 m² and over 0.5m deep;
 - Desiccation Rate - (years out of ten that water body dries) great crested newts have to spend a large proportion of the year in water and therefore tend to occur in water bodies that are permanent and present all year round (although occasional drying may be of benefit as it kills fish populations);
 - Water Quality - (subjective assessment) great crested newts tend to occur in nutrient rich waters and the larvae need well aerated water with a number of invertebrates;
 - % Shade - great crested newts tend to occur in largely un-shaded water bodies;
 - Number of waterfowl - large numbers of waterfowl can damage the habitat and cause excessive nutrient enrichment;

- Fish Population - (subjective assessment) great crested newts are vulnerable to fish predation and therefore they tend to avoid water bodies that contain fish;
- Number of water bodies within 1km - great crested newt population persistence depends in part upon the distance separating breeding sites;
- Terrestrial Habitat Quality - great crested newts require more than 0.5ha of suitable and accessible terrestrial habitat for a viable population. The primary requirements for great crested newt terrestrial habitats are: refuge habitat for shelter and over-wintering; foraging opportunities; and connectivity to aid dispersal; and
- % Macrophyte Cover - great crested newts require aquatic vegetation for egg-laying and tend to occur in water bodies with a fair amount of aquatic vegetation.

4.5.11 In addition to the HSI data collected, each water body was photographed and a brief description was made of the pond and its surroundings.

4.5.12 The SI scores (expressed as values between 0 and 1) are used to calculate the HSI of each water body and are determined as a geometric mean using the following equation: $HSI = (SI1 * SI2 * SI3 * SI4 * SI5 * SI6 * SI7 * SI8 * SI9 * SI10)^{1/10}$ The result of this calculation is a single number between 0 and 1. A score of 0 represents a water body considered to be unsuitable for great crested newts, a score of 1 would represent ideal habitat for great crested newts.

4.5.13 A suitability category was assigned to each standing water body based on the HSI score as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Habitat Suitability Index categories

HSI Score	Suitability Category
> 0.80	Excellent
0.70 - 0.79	Good
0.60 - 0.69	Average
0.50 - 0.59	Below Average
< 0.50	Poor

4.5.14 HSI scores are required to enable completion of a Natural England Licence Mitigation Method Statement should great crested newts be found to be present on a site and mitigation is required. However, the HSI score is not a reliable indicator of great crested newt presence or absence (Sellar, 2010). Therefore, waterbodies were not screened out of further survey based on HSI score alone.

2022 Surveys

4.6 Aerial Roost Inspection Methodology

4.6.1 Trees which had previously been identified with the potential to support roosting bats were climbed with the aid of a ladder or ropes. All accessible Preliminary Roost Features (PRF) were inspected by an appropriately licensed and trained ecologist using a torch and endoscope.

- 4.6.2** The search for bats and evidence of bats focused on the areas around and within PRFs, such as:
- Natural crevices and holes;
 - Woodpecker and rot holes;
 - Loose bark, splits and cracks;
 - Bird and bat boxes; and
 - Dense ivy or dense epicormic growth.
- 4.6.3** Any inaccessible or partially accessible cavities that could not be thoroughly inspected were noted.
- 4.6.4** The information recorded for each PRF included a description of the feature, its location including aspect and height above ground level, dimensions, protection from the elements and search for evidence of roosting bats.
- 4.6.5** The location of each tree with a PRF was recorded on a map of the site and photographed.
- 4.6.6** Following the inspection a level of potential was assigned to each tree.

Categorisation of Results

- 4.6.7** In accordance with the guidelines at the time (Collins ed, 2016), each tree was assigned a level of potential to support a bat roost. To ensure that the results presented here are in line with current guidelines (Collins ed, 2023), the confirmed PRFs have been re-classified according to the following categories in **Error! Reference source not found..**

Table 6: Guidelines for assessing the suitability of tree PRFs on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement (adapted from Collins ed 2023)

Suitability	Description
None	No potential space to support roosting bats.
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used for a maternity colony.

4.7 Bat Habitat Assessment

- 4.7.1** A walkover survey was undertaken during which all potential bat roosting, foraging and commuting habitat was identified and evaluated. Examples of potential bat habitat are provided in **Error! Reference source not found..**

Table 7: Bat habitat types

Habitat Type	Examples of habitat
Roosting habitat	Buildings and other built structures, such as old walls; Bridges and culverts; Caves, mines and other underground cavities; and Trees with cavities, cracks and fissures.
Commuting habitat	All hedgerows; Tree lines; Walls; and Water courses, including ditches.
Foraging habitat	All wetland habitats; Woodland; Scrub; Hedgerows and tree lines; Heathland; Species-rich semi- or unimproved pasture or hay meadow; Coarse (unmanaged) grassland; and Other areas of habitat likely to support a rich invertebrate fauna.

4.7.2 The suitability of potential commuting habitat and potential foraging habitat was classified in accordance with **Error! Reference source not found.**, and then an overall assessment of the site was made in accordance with Table 9.

Table 8: Commuting and foraging habitat suitability (adapted from Collins ed 2023)

Suitability for Significant Habitat	Examples for Commuting Habitat	Examples for Foraging Habitat
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour	Highly modified habitats including arable, improved grassland, walls, hard-standing and buildings, small (<1ha) conifer plantations, exposed upland habitats (open moorland and mountains) and exposed coastal habitats (beaches and cliff tops).
Low	Linear feature connected to only low-suitability potential foraging habitat and	Modified habitats or small, isolated areas of semi-natural habitat such as small gardens, isolated broadleaved trees, semi-improved grassland and isolated patches

Suitability for Significant Habitat	Examples for Commuting Habitat	Examples for Foraging Habitat
	greater than 1km from potential roosting habitat.	of scrub, broadleaved woodland, etc of less than 0.1ha, or up to 1ha if very isolated. Conifer plantations. Modified or narrow linear features such as hedgerows comprised of non-native species, gappy or heavily managed farmland hedgerows in large field systems, small watercourses or ditches with few trees and shrubs.
Moderate	Linear feature connected to moderate or high -suitability foraging habitat and greater than 1km from potential roosting habitat.	Medium-sized patches of semi-natural habitats (>0.1ha to 1ha), including wetland, broadleaved woodland, scrub, heathland, species-rich semi- or unimproved pasture or hay meadow, coarse (unmanaged) grassland; and other areas of habitat likely to support a rich invertebrate fauna, and connectivity to other areas of moderate and high suitability foraging habitat, commuting corridors and roosting habitat. Several large gardens. Medium-width, continuous linear features with shrubs and trees including hedgerows with good connectivity to other areas of moderate and high quality foraging habitat, commuting corridors and roosting habitat.
High	Linear feature connected to moderate or high -suitability foraging habitat and less than 1km from potential roosting habitat.	Sheltered and extensive (>1ha individually or including connected high suitability habitat parcels) semi-natural habitats including wetland, broadleaved woodland, scrub, heathland, species-rich semi- or unimproved pasture or hay meadow, coarse (unmanaged) grassland; and other areas of habitat likely to support a rich invertebrate fauna. Small field systems (field size <1ha) of semi- or unimproved and associated hedgerow network. Robust linear features including wide hedgerows and tree lines, woodland shelter belts, well-wooded railways and

Suitability for Significant Habitat	Examples for Commuting Habitat	Examples for Foraging Habitat
		lanes and large watercourses and hedgerows which form part of a dense hedgerow network (field size <1ha).

Table 9: Overall site suitability

Suitability to support significant bat populations	Qualitative Examples	Quantitative
Negligible	The site is intensively farmed arable, highly urban or open moorland with very little habitat of more than low suitability for bats.	>80% negligible suitability foraging habitats
Low	The site is large fields of grazed, improved grassland with well-managed hedgerows and occasional small woodlands.	<80% negligible suitability foraging habitats; AND <40% high suitability foraging habitats; AND Amount of low suitability > moderate + high suitability. OR lacking connectivity to moderate or high roosting and foraging habitat
Moderate	The site is mostly medium-sized fields of arable and improved pasture but with some large unmanaged hedgerows and small woodlands.	<80% negligible suitability foraging habitats; AND <40% high suitability foraging habitats; AND Amount of moderate + high suitability > or = low suitability; AND With connectivity to moderate or high roosting and foraging habitat
High	The site includes large areas of woodlands interspersed with small fields of semi-improved grassland and marshy grassland.	>40% high suitability foraging habitats; AND With connectivity to moderate or high roosting and foraging habitat

4.8 Bat Activity Transects Methodology

- 4.8.1** The survey extent was defined as the site boundary, plus land in the surrounding area that is within David Wilson Homes control. During the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, in 2022, an assessment was made of roosting, commuting, foraging and habitat suitability on the development site. The habitat suitability had not changed in 2024 or 2025, and as such, the 2022 data was still considered valid. This information and the proposed development layout was used to inform the number and location of transects for the bat activity survey. The location of transects was selected to cover as much of the site as possible and focus on areas that could be used by bats for foraging and commuting.
- 4.8.2** The overall habitat was assessed as being of moderate suitability. Survey effort for the activity surveys was determined in accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins ed, 2016). This best practice guidance has now been superseded (Collins ed, 2023), but the survey data is still considered valid as the sufficient survey effort was conducted at the site to understand how bats were using the site and the surrounding area. In accordance with these guidelines, one dusk or dawn survey per month was undertaken, with one dusk and pre-dawn survey undertaken within a 24-hour period. The transects were supplemented by spot counts where the ecologists remained stationary for 5 minutes at pre-determined locations along the route that represented the habitats recorded within the survey area.
- 4.8.3** Dusk surveys began at sunset and ended approximately two to three hours after sunset. Dawn surveys began approximately two hours before sunrise and ended at sunrise. Weather conditions including cloud cover, wind, precipitation, the air temperature at 1m were recorded by the lead surveyor at the start and end of the survey. Table 10 was used to determine whether the conditions were suitable for the activity survey. Any other limitations that could affect bat behaviour were recorded (such as night lighting and excessive high frequency noise).

Table 10: Guidance on weather conditions for bat surveys (based on Slack and Tinsley, 2015)

Conditions	Temperature at dusk or dawn (°C)	Wind Speed (Beaufort windforce scale)	Precipitation
Optimal	>14	0 to 3 (calm to slight wind)	Dry
Acceptable	10-14	4 to 6.5 (moderate to strong breeze)	Light showers to moderate rainfall
Unsuitable	<10	6.5 and above (high wind and stronger)	Heavy rainfall

- 4.8.4** The overall suitability of the conditions is determined by the least suitable of the three parameters.
- 4.8.5** Each transect was walked at a steady pace by a pair of ecologists equipped with an Elekon Bat Logger M and the internal recording function on the Bat Logger was used to record all bat passes.
- 4.8.6** Weather conditions recorded during the survey visits are shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Survey weather conditions and timings

Visit	Survey date	Start time	Finish time	Conditions	Temperature (°C)		Precipitation	Beaufort wind force scale
					Max	Min		
1	27/04/2022 - Dusk	08:24	09:55	Optimal	12	11	Dry	1
2	18/05/2022 - Dusk	08:54	11:04	Acceptable	17	15	Showers	1
3	13/06/2022 - Dusk	09:13	11:21	Optimal	17	14	Dry	0
4	18/07/2022 - Dusk	21:09	10:58	Optimal	27	23	Dry	0
5	19/07/2022 - Dawn	03:03	04:53	Optimal	23	21	Dry	1
6	15/08/2022 -Dusk	20:25	21:55	Optimal	23	22	Dry	1
7	12/09/2022 -Dusk	19:25	21:25	Optimal	20	16	Dry	1
8	04/10/2022 -Dusk	18:58	20:19	Optimal	17	13	Dry	1

4.9 Static Monitoring

4.9.1 In addition to the transect surveys, SM Mini bat detectors were deployed as static monitoring devices. The location of static monitoring devices is presented in Figure 6.

4.9.2 For each transect, two static monitoring locations were selected to sample representative habitat along each transect. At each location, a static monitoring device was deployed seven occasions during the survey season, once per month. On each occasion, the static monitoring device was deployed for a minimum of five consecutive nights, until five nights recording in suitable weather conditions was achieved. The devices were set to commence recording 30 minutes before sunset and ended 30 minutes after sunrise.

4.9.3 The same model of static monitoring device was used across the site with identical settings and yearly calibration taking place to ensure accurate results. The device's microphone was positioned to maximise the amount of bat activity recorded - in particular omnidirectional microphones were used, at heights between 2 to 4m. This was positioned to avoid background ambient noise, electrical interference and solid objects/scrub for instance blocking sound waves and therefore the detection of ultrasonic bat calls.

Definition of a Bat Pass

4.9.4 A pass is defined as an unbroken stream of echolocation calls up to five seconds long, heard as a series of 'clicks, slaps, ticks or warbles' on a bat detector as the bat passes in and out of the detector's range (Barataud, 2002; Barataud & Giosa, 2012, 2014). Where more than one bat was observed, up to a maximum of five bats, the number of bat passes is calculated as below:

$$\text{Bat Pass} = \left(\frac{\text{Bat call sequence}}{5} \right) * \text{Number of each bat species}$$

Data Analysis

- 4.9.5** All bat calls were recorded, and these were analysed using Bat Explorer and Kaleidoscope. Quality assurance was undertaken on 10% of the bat call sound and noise files, and any rare or notable species.
- 4.9.6** The number of passes per species, during the activity transects and at the SM devices was then analysed, and conclusions drawn on the conservation status and impacts on bats using the site.

4.10 Reptile Habitat Assessment

- 4.10.1** Habitat requirements differ for each native species of reptile in the British Isles. Habitat suitability was considered for each of the reptile species that has a native range concurrent with the site location. Suitable habitat was identified and classified as poor, good or exceptional based on the following habitat characteristics, with the classification options for each shown in brackets:

- Habitat type (using UK habitat classification survey methods);
- Vegetation structure (simple, moderate, complex);
- Likely age of the habitat (less than 2 years, greater than 2 years);
- Insolation (sun exposure) (low, medium, high);
- Aspect (North, South, East and West);
- Topography (flat, shallow slope, steep slope, varied);
- Surface geology (sand/gravel, clay, chalk, other);
- Connectivity to nearby suitable habitats (low, medium, high);
- Potential prey abundance (low, medium, high);
- Refuge opportunities (low, medium, high);
- Hibernation site availability (low, medium, high);
- Egg laying site availability (grass snake and sand lizard) (low, medium, high); and
- Disturbance (low, medium, high).

4.11 Reptile Presence/Absence Surveys

- 4.11.1** The survey extent was defined as the site boundary, plus land in the surrounding area that is within David Wilson Homes control, with survey effort concentrated in areas of suitable habitat.
- 4.11.2** In areas of suitable habitat, two survey methods were then used to determine the presence or likely absence of reptiles. These were (i) a visual search for basking reptiles and (ii) the checking of artificial refugia deployed specifically to attract reptiles.

- 4.11.3** Survey visits were undertaken during the active season for reptiles (April, May and June) when weather conditions were most suitable for reptile surveys. This excludes periods of heavy rain, strong wind and temperatures below 9°C and above 20°C (Gent & Gibson, 2003).

Visual Search

- 4.11.4** On eight occasions the survey area was walked around slowly looking for basking reptiles. Any reptiles seen were approached cautiously so as not to disturb them and to allow species identification. Where necessary, binoculars were used to aide identification. The number, species, life stage and location of any reptiles seen were recorded on a map of the survey area using a mobile mapper. Any evidence of reptiles such as sloughed skins was also recorded.

Refugia Search

- 4.11.5** On 27th April 2022, artificial refugia were placed in suitable locations throughout the survey area.
- 4.11.6** The artificial refugia were comprised of 0.5m x 0.5m cuts of roofing felt. The refugia were positioned so that they were in contact with the ground, in areas of suitable habitat and exposed to sunlight. To prevent interference in the survey, the refugia were not placed in areas where there was a high level of public activity. The location of artificial refugia was mapped using mobile mappers.
- 4.11.7** The artificial refugia were then left in place for two weeks before the survey commenced. Subsequently, on seven occasions, a minimum of one week apart, all of the refugia were cautiously checked for reptiles, both on top and underneath. If any reptiles were found, the refuge location, species, life stage and numbers of reptiles were recorded. Any evidence of reptiles such as sloughed skins was also recorded.
- 4.11.8** On days forecast to be hot and sunny, the survey was conducted during the morning or late afternoon, when the temperature beneath the refugia was not too high. On days forecast to be cooler or cloudy, the survey was conducted in mid- to late morning or early to mid- afternoon. The air temperature in the shade was recorded on each survey visit.
- 4.11.9** The artificial refugia were collected up and removed from the site after the end of the final survey.

The peak observation for each species (i.e. the highest number recorded on any one survey visit) were then used, as an indication of the population size class; classified as small, medium or large as per Table 12.

Table 12: Population size estimate

Species	Population Size Class (Density)		
	Small	Medium	Large
Slow worm	<10	10-40	>40
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Adder	<5	5-10	>10

- 4.11.10** The updated walkover survey in 2025 confirmed that the habitat suitability of the site had not significantly changed in 2024 or 2025, and as such, the 2022 data is still considered valid.

4.12 Breeding Birds

- 4.12.1** The survey extent was defined as the site boundary, plus land in the surrounding area that is within David Wilson Homes control. The habitat suitability of the site had not changed significantly between 2022 and 2025, and as such, the data collected in 2022 was considered to still be valid.
- 4.12.2** For territorial and semi-colonial species, the method used in this survey was based on the registration mapping technique, similar to that used in the British Trust for Ornithology's Common Bird Census (Marchant, 1983; Bibby et al, 2000). The registration mapping technique allows the distribution of bird territories across the survey extent to be determined and, subsequently, a count of the number breeding pairs for each species in the survey extent as a whole can be derived. An advantage of this technique is that it allows the relative importance of different parts of the survey extent to be evaluated.
- 4.12.3** For non-territorial species, the territory mapping technique is not appropriate. Instead, peak counts were derived from the survey.
- 4.12.4** The survey area was visited on five occasions in the period 27th April 2022 to 14th June 2022, with at least one week between each visit.
- 4.12.5** On each occasion, the survey extent was walked over following a route that allowed the surveyor to pass within at least 50m of each point. During each walkover, the location and species of all birds encountered (including both those seen and those heard) were recorded on a map using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) species codes. The birds recorded included those observed up to 50m outside the Survey Area. Information was also recorded on bird activity, such as singing or calling (Marchant, 1983).
- 4.12.6** During the survey, notes were also made on the habitat features of particular significance for breeding birds, such as unmanaged hedgerows.

4.13 Dormouse Habitat Assessment

- 4.13.1** The survey extent was defined as the site boundary, plus land in the surrounding area that is within David Wilson Homes control.
- 4.13.2** An assessment of habitat suitability for dormice was made of all potential dormouse habitats in the survey extent. This included all areas of woodland, scrub and hedgerows.
- 4.13.3** Within each area of potentially suitable habitat (or habitat parcel), the following features were recorded:
- Type of habitat (including age of woodland if applicable) and size in hectares;
 - Tree, shrub and climbing species and their abundance on the DAFOR scale;
 - Density of the canopy layer expressed as an average percent cover;
 - Degree of continuity in the shrub layer expressed as an average percent cover;
 - Degree of connectivity with other areas of potential habitat expressed as high, medium or low;
 - Availability of food sources;

- Presence of potential summer and winter nest sites, such as tree holes, deep litter layers, wood piles and tangled woody vegetation;
- Evidence and stocking density, where known, of grazing animals, including deer and livestock;
- Evidence of likely presence of competitors and predators, such as squirrel and cats, respectively; and
- Evidence of woodland management techniques e.g. coppicing.

4.13.4 For each hedgerow, additional habitat information was recorded, including:

- Hedgerow structure (leggy, dense, with trees, without trees, layered);
- Average height and width;
- Type of hedgerow management (flailed, traditional or none); and
- Number of gaps and length of gap as a percentage of the total length of the field boundary.

4.13.5 Each area of potentially suitable habitat was then assessed and assigned a category of negligible, low, medium or high suitability, using the criteria in Table 13 below:

Table 13: Assessment of habitat suitability for dormouse

Category	Examples
Negligible	Annually cut hedgerows in arable landscapes. Small (<5ha) area of woodland which is isolated from others by 500m or more and lacks two or more key features. Woodland or scrub which floods throughout in winter.
Low	Annually cut hedgerows in wooded landscapes. Small (<5ha) area of woodland which is isolated and lacks up to one of the key features*. Moderate (5 - 20ha) or large areas (>20ha) of woodland or scrub which lack two or more of the key features.
Good	Moderate areas of woodland or scrub (5 - 20ha) with all the key features but which are isolated from other areas of high suitability woodland. Large areas of woodland (>20ha) which lack one of the key features. Infrequently cut hedgerows that are relatively isolated but have some connectivity to other areas of suitable dormouse habitat.
Excellent	Small and moderate areas of woodland with all the key features and well connected to other areas of suitable dormouse habitat. Large areas (>20ha) of woodland or scrub with all the key features. Infrequently cut hedgerows either in dense networks or linking areas of high suitability woodland.

Category	Examples
	Large areas (>20ha) of young plantation with good connectivity to other areas of suitable dormouse habitat.

*Key Features for dormouse: (i) mixed vegetation comprising a high proportion of at least three of these species: hazel (*Corylus avellana*), oak (*Quercus* spp.), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*); (ii) a dense shrub layer; (iii) no or relatively open tree canopy (above the shrub layer); (iv) scattered old trees with hollows, dense tangled vegetation, nest boxes or other suitable nest sites, such as dense leaf litter; and (v) tree stumps with cavities at around ground level or other suitable hibernation sites.

4.14 Dormouse Presence/Absence Surveys

4.14.1 In the areas of suitable habitat, a dormouse survey was undertaken to determine the presence or likely absence of dormouse.

Visual Search

4.14.2 A visual and hand search for any natural dormouse nests were made within areas of suitable habitat for dormice on the site. Dormouse summer and breeding nests can be distinguished from other animal nests by a number of key characteristics. They are often about the size of a grapefruit, incorporate strips of honeysuckle bark, shredded bark and green leaves and are spherical and lack an obvious entrance hole. The search was conducted from ground level only and investigated possible features in which they could be made such as tangled vegetation and old birds' nests.

Nest Tube Survey

4.14.3 Nest tubes placed in appropriate places in suitable habitat that may be used by dormice to nest in. Dormouse summer and breeding nests within nest tubes can often be distinguished from other animal nests by a number of key characteristics: (i) they often incorporate strips of honeysuckle bark, or other shredded bark and green leaves and (ii) lack an obvious entrance hole.

4.14.4 Nest tubes constructed from folded corrugated plastic sheeting (approximately 60mmx60mm wide and 250mm long) were used. Each nest tube has a sliding plywood base which also forms the end of the tube and provides a platform extending approximately 50mm from the front of the tube.

4.14.5 The nest tubes were installed on 26th April 2022, one a month before the first survey visit, in order to allow dormice time to find and nest in the tubes before the first survey visit. 70 tubes were installed within the site.

4.14.6 Dormouse nest tubes were fastened to scrub or beneath a horizontal tree branch of sufficient thickness at a height of approximately 1.5m using cable ties. Tubes were positioned with the entrance of the tube orientated towards the centre of the shrub and angled slightly downwards to prevent water collecting within the tube. Each nest tube was given a number and its location recorded on ArcGIS Fieldmaps.

- 4.14.7** The nest tubes were left in situ for the duration of the survey and subsequently removed on completion of the survey, excluding any nest tubes which contained dormice or dormouse nests during the survey as these might still be in use by dormice.
- 4.14.8** All tubes were checked for the presence of dormice or their nests a total of five times between May and September (August and September survey still to be completed).
- 4.14.9** The number of tubes and the timing of the survey met the requirements for a thorough survey (Bright *et al*, 2006). This is defined as a survey in which the combined probability scores from Table 14 below exceed 20 and the survey is conducted over a minimum period of five months.

Table 14: Dormouse detection probability scores (examples).

Month	Score with 50 tubes	Score with 100 tubes	Score with 150 tubes
April	1	2	3
May	4	8	12
June	2	4	6
July	2	4	6
August	5	10	15
September	7	14	21
October	2	4	6
November	2	4	6

- 4.14.10** The updated walkover survey in 2025 confirmed that the habitat suitability of the site had not significantly changed in 2024 or 2025, and as such, the 2022 data is still considered valid.

4.15 Great Crested Newt Methodology

Environmental DNA

- 4.15.1** All standing waterbodies not screened out in earlier assessments, and to which access was permitted, were subject to a presence/ absence survey using the Environmental DNA (eDNA) technique.
- 4.15.2** Environmental DNA is DNA that is collected from the environment in which an organism lives. In aquatic environments, animals shed cellular material into the water via their saliva, urine, faeces and skin cells. This material contains DNA which may persist for several weeks and can be collected through a water sample. The sample can then be analysed to determine the presence or absence of certain species, such as great crested newts, in the water body. It is a more effective technique for detecting the presence of great crested newts than conventional techniques, however, it cannot yet be used to estimate population size.
- 4.15.3** An eDNA sampling kit was used to collect water from the waterbody at the same time as the Habitat Suitability Assessment (HSI) was undertaken.
- 4.15.4** Before collecting samples, the surveyor identified twenty eDNA sample collection points. These were spread out as evenly as possible around the edge of the waterbody without giving cause for the surveyor to enter the water. Samples were then taken from the water in strict accordance

with the published technical advice note (Defra Science and Research Project WC1067) and by suitably trained and experienced licensed great crested newt surveyors.

4.15.5 Samples were then sent to a suitably equipped laboratory for analysis to determine if GCN eDNA was present.

4.15.6 Access was not granted to the off-site waterbodies during the 2025 update, thus an application for a District Level License should be submitted for the project to ensure compliance with legislation.

4.16 Evaluation of Ecological Features and Impact Assessment

4.16.1 The methodology for assessing the impact on the ecological features identified during the surveys is set out in Appendix 2.

5. Baseline Ecological Conditions

5.1 Ecological Desk Study

5.1.1 Responses were received from Thames Valley Ecological Record Centre (TVERC), and remained consistent with the results of 2022, 2024 and 2025.

5.1.2 The site is 3km away from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and 1.6km from Longmoor Bog SSSI and LNR. The development falls within the impact risk zone for recreational pressure for the Thames Basin Heath SPA. Seventeen LWSs occur within 2km of the site, the closest of which is 0.07km from the site. The results are summarised in Appendix 3, and the locations of statutory designated sites and priority habitats are shown on Figure 1.

Ancient Woodland

5.1.3 There are 86 parcels of ancient woodland located within 2km of the site. The closest parcel is 72m west of the site. The locations of all parcels of ancient woodland can be found on Figure 1.

Other Priority Habitats

5.1.4 Six types of priority habitat were identified within the study area. The habitats comprise deciduous woodland, traditional orchard, woodpasture and parkland, lowland heathland, coastal floodplain grazing marsh and lowland fens. The habitats are summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.** and the locations are shown on Figure 1.

Table 15: Priority habitats within the study area

Priority Habitat Type	Distance to Site of Nearest Parcel (km)	Number of parcels within 2km
Deciduous Woodland	Adjacent to site	86
Traditional Orchard	0.43	11
Woodpasture and Parkland	1.25	4
Lowland Heathland	1.71	3
Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh	1.96	2
Lowland Fens	1.98	1

Protected Species and species of conservation concern

5.1.5 Records of protected and priority species were returned in the desk study including ten species of bat and two species of non-flying mammals, one species of invertebrate, one vascular plant species, 44 species of bird including nine species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and three species of reptile. The full results are provided in Appendix 4.

5.2 2024 and 2025 Habitat Survey

5.2.1 The following habitats and flora were identified during the UKHabitat Classification Survey:

- g3c Other neutral grassland;
- g4 Modified grassland;
- h2a Native hedgerow;
- h2a6 Other native hedgerow;
- h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow;
- h3h Mixed scrub;
- Individual trees; and
- w1f7 Lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

5.2.2 These habitats are described below and their distribution is given on Figure 3 with photographs of the site provided on Figure 4. The updated walkover survey in 2025 confirmed that the site had not significantly changed, and the habitats remain the same.

g3c-1 Other Neutral Grassland

5.2.3 A small parcel of abandoned pasture (g3c-1 on Figure 3 and Photograph 1 on Figure 4), which is surrounded by g4-3 and g4-4. Within the parcel is a stand of Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) (TN1 on Figure 3 and Photograph 2 on Figure 4), which is an invasive species. This habitat is within the residential site boundary.

5.2.4 This habitat is in Poor condition as it is not a good representation of its habitat type, the sward height is not varied, and there is more than 5% cover of species indicative of sub-optimal condition and physical damage within the parcel.

g3c-2 (16, 124, 128) Other Neutral Grassland, (Tall Forbs, Anthills, Tall or Tussocky Sward)

5.2.5 This parcel is a road verge (g3c-2 on Figure 3 and Photograph 3 on Figure 4) planted with native tree species, but most of the planted trees have failed. This parcel is part of the BNG commitments of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (planning application number: 172209). There are no woody species in tree growth form, all are small sampling shrubs comprising hazel and oak. Ground flora includes abundant thistle, and frequent ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*). This habitat is within the SANG boundary.

5.2.6 This habitat is in Poor condition as it fails all criteria; it is not a good representation of its habitat type, the sward height is not varied, there is less than 1% bare ground coverage, there is more than 5% scrub and there is more than 5% cover of species indicative of sub-optimal condition and physical damage within the parcel.

g4-1 - Modified Grassland

5.2.7 In the western-most parcel on site is a large pasture of modified grassland (g4-1 on Figure 3 and Photograph 4 on Figure 4), which made up of abundant Yorkshire fog and frequent perennial rye

grass and timothy (*Phleum pratense*) grass. White clover (*Trifolium repens*) is occasional. This parcel is within the SANG boundary.

- 5.2.8 This habitat is in Poor condition as it does not meet the species richness requirement for this habitat type.

g4-2 (128, 204, 521) - Modified Grassland (Tall or Tussocky Sward, Veteran Tree, Unmanaged)

- 5.2.9 In the northeast of the site, there is a parcel of modified grassland (g4-2 on Figure 3), which has not been cut since before this growing season, and therefore lacks a varied sward height. There is a veteran pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) tree (T1 on Figure 2) in the northern corner of the grassland parcel. Perennial rye grass was the dominant species in 2022, but in 2024 this is no longer the case. Instead, cock's foot and Yorkshire fog are abundant, and Timothy grass is frequent. Red and white clover are rare within the parcel. This habitat is within the SANG boundary.
- 5.2.10 The condition of the g4-2 grassland is in Poor condition as it does not meet the species richness requirement for this habitat type and it failed criteria relating to varied sward height and prevalence of bare ground.

g4-3 Modified Grassland

- 5.2.11 In the south of the site is another large parcel of pastoral modified grassland (g4-3 on Figure 3). Perennial rye grass is abundant and cock's foot is rare. Thistle sp. is frequent next to the hedgerow (h2a6-3 on Figure 3). This habitat is within the residential site boundary.
- 5.2.12 This habitat is in Poor condition as it does not meet the species richness requirement for this habitat type.

g4-4 (128, 521) - Modified Grassland (Tall or Tussocky Sward, Unmanaged)

- 5.2.13 In the south of the site, there is a parcel of modified grassland (g4-4 on Figure 3 and Photograph 5 on Figure 4), which is very similar in structure and composition as g4-2, except there is no veteran tree within the parcel.
- 5.2.14 The condition of the g4-4 grassland is Moderate, as it does not meet the species richness requirement for this habitat type and it failed criteria relating to varied sward height and prevalence of bare ground. This parcel lies partly within the SANG boundary and partly within the residential boundary.

g4-5 (108, 516, 801) - Modified Grassland (Frequently Mown, Active Management, Road Verge or Island)

- 5.2.15 In the southeast of the site, there is a grass verge that runs adjacent to the road (g4-5 on Figure 3). The grassland is shortly mown, and is dominated by perennial rye grass and meadow grass (*Poa* sp). This parcel lies within the residential site boundary.
- 5.2.16 This habitat is in Poor condition as it does not meet the species richness requirement for this habitat type.

h2a-1 Native Hedgerow

- 5.2.17** In the east of the site is a thick hedge, with lots of woody species and few substantial gaps (h2a-1 on Figure 3). The hedgerow degrades slightly heading north as the canopy lifts away from the ground and there are two holes punched through for gates. Woody species are made up of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), rose species, blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and bramble. This hedgerow is within the SANG boundary.
- 5.2.18** This hedgerow was assessed as Good condition due to the size and shape of the hedge allowing for a good species richness, connectivity and its infrequent management.

h2a-2 - Native Hedgerow

- 5.2.19** Running east to west, this hedgerow separates g4-3 and g4-4 from g4-2 (h2a-2 on Figure 3). The hedgerow is derelict with mature trees. This hedge is made up of hawthorn and bramble scrub with some gaps and one mature oak tree. This hedgerow lies partly within the SANG boundary and partly within the residential boundary.
- 5.2.20** This parcel is in Poor condition, due to the amount of gaps, physical damage and species suggesting nutrient enrichment.

h2a-3 (116) Native Hedgerow (Flailed Hedgerow)

- 5.2.21** In the southeast of the site is a native hedgerow (h2a-3 on Figure 3), which shows signs of management through flailing. The hedgerow is 2.5 m high and has a species composition of abundant hawthorn and blackthorn, frequent bramble, and occasional hazel. This parcel lies within the residential site boundary.
- 5.2.22** The condition of h2a-3 is Good, as it only fails one criterion, which is C1, as there is disturbed ground at the base of the hedgerow.

h2a6-1 (50) Other Native Hedgerow (Ditch)

- 5.2.23** Along the northern boundary of the grassland parcel g4-1, is a hedgerow which is growing over a dry ditch (h2a6-1 on Figure 3 and Photograph 6 on Figure 4). Oak, elm sp (*Ulmus* sp) and hawthorn are occasional throughout the hedge, with field maple (*Acer campestre*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) rare. This hedgerow is within the SANG boundary.
- 5.2.24** The condition of h2a6-1 is Good, as it only fails one criterion, which is C1, as there is disturbed ground at the base of the hedgerow.

h2a6-2 (11, 116) Other Native Hedgerow (Hedgerow with Trees, Flailed Hedgerow)

- 5.2.25** A roadside hedge (h2a6-2 on Figure 3) separating g4-1 in the east with the B3030, with mature trees backed by single wire fence on field side and flailed on the roadside of the hedge. This species composition is made up of hawthorn, hazel (*Corylus avellana*), elder, oak, ash and blackthorn. This hedgerow is within the SANG boundary.

- 5.2.26** The hedgerow is in Moderate condition, as it fails criteria C1 and C2, as disturbed ground is present over more than 10% of the hedgerow length and nutrient rich perennial vegetation is present over more than 20% of the hedgerow, criterion D2 as there is sign of damage caused by flailing, and criterion E2, as the trees present in the hedgerow are not in good health.

h2a6-3 (11) Other Native Hedgerow (Hedgerow with Trees)

- 5.2.27** A derelict hedge (h2a6-3 on Figure 3 and Photograph 7 on Figure 4) that contains native broadleaves species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, oak which are all occasional throughout the hedge. The parcel is located between g4-3 and g4-4, which falls within the residential site boundary.
- 5.2.28** The condition of h2a6-3 is Good, as it only fails one criterion, which is C2, as nettle coverage is over the 20% threshold.

h2a6-4 Other Native Hedgerow

- 5.2.29** A newly planted hedgerow (h2a6-4 on Figure 4) is present along the western boundary of the site. This hedgerow is part of the BNG commitments of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road. There is abundant hawthorn, frequent black thorn and rose sp (*Rosa* sp), and dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and hazel are occasional. This hedgerow lies partly within the SANG boundary and partly within the residential boundary.
- 5.2.30** The hedgerow is in Moderate condition, as it fails criterion A2 as the hedge is less than 1.5 wide along its length, and criteria B1 and B2, as there are undesirable gaps between the ground and the base of the canopy, and there is a horizontal 'gappiness' to the hedge.

h2b-1 Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow

- 5.2.31** This parcel is present in the south of g4-1, separating the site from a small industrial style unit and comprises a line of cypress trees (*Cupressus* sp) (h2b-1 on Figure 3). This connects to the priority hedgerow h2a-1 on site. This hedgerow is within the SANG boundary.
- 5.2.32** Under the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, condition assessments are not required for this habitat type.

w1f7-1 (33) Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (Line of Trees)

- 5.2.33** There is a line of trees (w1f7-1 on Figure 3) in the northwestern corner of g4-1, which transitions into h2a6-1, Species comprise abundant goat willow (*Salix caprea*), occasional oak, and rare hazel and field maple. This hedgerow is within the SANG boundary.
- 5.2.34** This line of trees is in Moderate condition as it fails criterion D, as there is not an undisturbed strip of natural vegetation at least 6m either side of the hedgerow.

w1f7-2 (521) Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (Unmanaged)

- 5.2.35** At the south of the site is a parcel of woodland (w1f7-2 on Figure 3), where dense, mature scrub has recently succeeded to woodland. As over 25% of the parcel has trees over 5m emerging from the scrub, this parcel has been classified as woodland. Bramble and pedunculate oak are both abundant, with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and hawthorn rare. This parcel of woodland is within the residential site boundary.
- 5.2.36** The woodland is in Moderate condition, with a criteria score of 27. It scored down due to reasons such as the lack of deadwood and veteran trees.

Individual trees

- 5.2.37** Seven individual trees were identified on site, these were comprised of four oak (*Quercus robur*) trees and three ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees.
- 5.2.38** All seven trees are in Good condition.

Fauna

- 5.2.39** The following incidental species or their field signs were recorded during the initial site visit in 2022, and/or the updated walkovers in 2024 and 2025:
- Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) 2022,2024 and 2025;
 - Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) 2022;
 - Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) 2024 and 2025;
 - Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) 2022;
 - Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) 2024;
 - Fallow deer (*Dama dama*) 2022; and
 - Badger (*Meles meles*) signs 2022,2024 and 2025.

5.3 Preliminary Roost Assessment of Trees and Aerial Assessment

- 5.3.1** During the Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA), seven trees were identified with potential to support roosting bats and three trees were identified as needing further assessment. Summary of the results are provided in

5.3.2 Table 16 below and are shown on Figure 5 and Photographs 8 and 9 on Figure 4, with full results provided in Appendix 5.

5.3.3 The results of the aerial roost inspections carried out in 2022 are also shown in

5.3.4 Table 16; with only T1 and T3 aerially inspected.

Table 16: Summary of tree roost assessment results

Tree No.	Tree Description	GLTA Potential	Tree Climbed in 2022	Overall Potential in 2024	Overall Potential in 2025
T1	Veteran pedunculate oak with a potentially hollow trunk.	PRF	Yes - PRFs were present that could support multiple bats	PRF-M	PRF-M
T2	Mature ash covered in dense ivy. The tree is showing signs of ash dieback so there is potential for cracks and wounds to be hidden under the ivy.	FAR	No	FAR	FAR
T3	Mature ash covered in dense ivy. There is evidence of minor ash die back	FAR	Yes - tree assigned negligible potential after aerial inspection.	FAR	FAR
T4	Veteran pedunculate oak with potentially some hollowing to the trunk as water seams are visible, running out of a split in the trunk.	FAR	No	FAR	FAR
T5	Veteran pedunculate oak with some dead, snapped off branches. Dense foliage is potentially covering other suitable roosting features	PRF	No	PRF	PRF
T6	Veteran pedunculate oak with some dead, snapped off branches. Dense foliage is potentially covering other suitable roosting features	PRF	No	PRF	PRF
T7	Mature ash with multiple stems. Dense ivy covers the tree, and there is evidence of minor ash dieback.	FAR	No	PRF	PRF

5.4 Bat Activity Transect and Static Monitoring Results

5.4.1 During the activity transect surveys, the following seven species were recorded within the survey extent, with their distribution shown on Figure 6.

- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*);
- Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*);
- Myotis Sp. (*Myotis Sp.*);
- Common Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*);
- Pipistrelle species (*Pipistrelle sp.*);
- Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*); and

- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

5.4.2 During the static monitoring surveys, eight species of bat were recorded. In addition to those stated in Paragraph 5.4.1, the following bat species were recorded:

- Serotine bat (*Eptesicus serotinus*);
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auratus*); and
- Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*).

5.4.3 A full analysis of the bat transect and static monitoring results can be found in Appendix 6.

5.5 Badger Survey

5.5.1 During the 2024 and 2025 updated survey, badger signs were found within the site boundary, these included six latrines, six snuffle holes, and a series of mammal runs (an example of which is shown on Photograph 10 on Figure 4). The results are summarised in Table 17 below and shown on Figure 7.

Table 17: Badger survey results

Sign Type	Description
Snuffle holes	Six snuffle holes were identified across the site, which indicate that badgers are using the site for foraging.
Latrines	Six latrines were identified across the site. Four of these latrines were adjacent to mammal runs, suggesting use by badger.
Mammal runs	There are a series of mammal runs, across the site, all of which run north to south. It is thought that they are used by multiple species, including badger (Photograph 10).

5.6 Reptile Habitat Assessment

5.6.1 Areas surrounding g4-1, with basking and foraging opportunities. In addition to this g3c-2 running along a line of trees provides good microclimates and varied structure that suits reptiles. The central areas of the grassland fields on site only offer limited suitability for reptiles due to the lack of variety in vegetation structure which therefore offers little shelter or basking opportunities. The updated walkover survey conducted on 27th and 28th May 2025 confirmed that the site had not significantly changed, and the suitability remains the same. The survey data from 2022 is therefore still considered valid, as the recommendations are unlikely to change if the surveys are updated.

5.7 Reptile Results

5.7.1 A low population of grass snake and slow worm was recorded during the reptile surveys. The location of the artificial refugia and survey results are shown on Figure 8.

Table 18: Reptile survey results

Date	Visit Number	Reptiles Present	Location
27/04/2022	Refugia deployment	No	N/A
16/05/2022	1	No	N/A
25/05/2022	2	No	N/A
30/05/2022	3	2 x grass snake 1 x slow worm	One grass snake recorded within SANG boundary One slow worm and one grass snake within survey extent but outside site boundary
06/06/2022	4	No	N/A
13/06/2022	5	1 x grass snake	One grass snake recorded within SANG boundary
21/06/2022	6	No	N/A
27/06/2022	7	No	N/A

5.8 Breeding Bird Results

5.8.1 The results of the breeding bird survey can be found on Figure 9. Forty-one species of bird were recorded within the survey extent during the surveys including one species (red kite) listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 ((as amended)), six species of principle importance as listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act, 2006, seven species on the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC 5) red list and eight species on the BoCC5 amber list.

5.8.2 All the species recorded are common/widespread across the country. The updated walkover survey conducted on 27th and 28th May 2025 confirmed that the site had not significantly changed, and the suitability remains the same. The survey data from 2022 is therefore still considered valid, as the recommendations are unlikely to change if the surveys are updated.

5.9 Dormouse Habitat Assessment

5.9.1 Within the survey extent, three areas were assessed as being suitable for dormice, these are the small area of woodland, north of the site boundary, and on-site, the priority hedgerow h2a-1, other native hedgerow h2a6-1 and h2a6-2, and non-priority hedgerow h2b-1. Following the updated site walkover in 2024 and 2025, it was confirmed that there had been no changes in habitat suitability for dormouse, and therefore the survey data from 2022 is considered valid. As stated in the new dormouse mitigation guidelines (Wells et al., 2025), survey data is valid for five years if there is not a significant change in habitat management on site, and in the surrounding area, there are no new records in the area, and there has been no significant change in habitat quality on the site. The updated walkover survey conducted on 27th and 28th May 2025 confirmed that these conditions have been met, so repeat surveys are not considered necessary at this stage.

5.10 Dormouse Results

5.10.1 No dormice or evidence of dormice was recorded during the surveys, dormouse are therefore considered likely absent from the site. The locations of the dormouse tubes can be found on Figure 10.

5.11 Great Crested Newt Results

5.11.1 Access was only possible to three waterbodies, albeit limited, within 500m of the site (P1, P2 and P3 on Figure 11). Waterbodies P1 - P3 were subject to updated HSI surveys in 2024 with eDNA surveys carried out at P1 and P3 in 2022. No eDNA survey was undertaken at P2, in 2022, as the water level was too low. From the vantage point possible, and as the ponds were already considered to be excellent in 2022, the habitat suitability assessment has remained the same in 2022. The results of the HSI and eDNA survey are shown in Table 19. All three waterbodies were assessed to have excellent suitability for GCN. The eDNA survey returned a negative result for GCN from P1 and P3. It was therefore assumed GCN are also likely absent from P2 in 2022. No eDNA update was conducted in 2024, and access was not granted to the off-site waterbodies during the 2025 update.

Table 19: HSI and eDNA results

Waterbody	P1	P2	P3
Location	Zone A	Zone A	Zone A
Pond Area	238	423	872
Pond Drying	Sometimes Dries	Sometimes Dries	Sometimes Dries
Water Quality	Good	Good	Good
Shade	0%	0%	0%
Water Fowl	Absent	Absent	Absent
Fish	Absent	Absent	Absent

Waterbody	P1	P2	P3
Pond Density	11	11	11
Terrestrial Habitat	Good	Good	Good
Macrophytes	100%	100%	90%
HSI Score	0.849	0.89	0.92
Suitability Category	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
eDNA Result	Negative	N/A	Negative

5.11.2 Access to two of the waterbodies identified for survey in Stage II was possible (these waterbodies are shown in grey on Figure 11).

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

6.1 Designated Sites

Potential Impacts

- 6.1.1 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is located 3.0 km south from site. Due to the distance from site there is unlikely to be any impacts on the SPA during the construction phase of the development. There is potential for the completed development once operational to cause increased levels of recreational pressure, from both dog walkers and non-dog walkers, on the habitats and species that the Thames Basin Heath SPA is designated for.
- 6.1.2 In addition to recreational pressure, the completed development could impact the Thames Basin Heath SPA, through changes in air quality caused by commuting residents along the A327, which runs south to immediately adjacent to the Thames Basin Heath SPA.
- 6.1.3 A full assessment on the impacts of the development on the SPA and relevant mitigation measures, is discussed in the Habitats Regulation Assessment (SLR Consulting, 2024).
- 6.1.4 Longmoor Bog SSSI is located 1.6km from the site, and although there are unlikely to be any impacts on the SSSI during the construction phase of the development, there is potential for the completed development, once operational, to cause increased recreational pressure on the site.
- 6.1.5 The closest LWS (Long Copse (North) and Spring Copse) is 72 m from site and is separated from site by the A327. However, given the proximity to site, the development could have a negative impact on the LWS through construction pollution and recreational pressure following the completion of the development. There are 14 additional LWSs located within 2 km of the site. Due to the distance from site, it is considered unlikely that the development will have an impact on the additional LWSs.

Mitigation and Compensation Measures

- 6.1.6 An area of SANG will be incorporated into the development proposals in order to mitigate any potential impact on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Longmoor Bog SSSI from increased recreational pressure resulting from the development. In addition, a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) tariff will be made, which will be paid per dwelling, for the Thames Basin Heath SPA.
- 6.1.7 The creation of additional accessible natural greenspace provided by the SANG will reduce recreational pressure on existing LWSs in the local area, and therefore, the development is considered unlikely to impact on Long Copse (North) and Spring Copse LWS.
- 6.1.8 Best practice pollution measures, such as Heras fencing with dust sheeting, should be implemented to prevent any contamination of soil or air. This includes prevention of emissions of sediment, dust and chemicals. Further details around these measures will be detailed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.1.9** The proposed SANG complies with the Natural England SANG guidance and the conclusion of Habitat Regulations Assessment (SLR Consulting, 2024) considered that the incorporation of the SANG within the development will be sufficient to mitigate negative impacts to The Thames Basin Heaths SPA and result in no significant negative residual effects on the SPA.

6.2 Ancient Woodland

- 6.2.1** A number of parcels of ancient woodland were recorded in the desk study, the closest of which is 72 m west of the site, which is the Long Copse (North) and Spring Copse LWS. The potential impacts, mitigation measures and significance of residual effect for ancient woodland are considered to be the same as already concluded for Long Copse (North) and Spring Copse LWS.

6.3 Priority Habitats

Potential Impacts

- 6.3.1** The species-rich hedgerow (h2a-1), located in the east of the site, is a habitat of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity. The majority of this hedgerow will be retained although there may be some losses in order to create/widen access points. During the construction phase of the development there may be impacts from pollution and ground compaction in the vicinity of the hedgerow.
- 6.3.2** There are 86 parcels of deciduous woodland within 2 km of the site, the closest of which is directly adjacent to the site. The parcels of deciduous woodland adjacent to site will be separated from construction activities by areas proposed to be SANG or other areas of open space as such it is not anticipated that these areas will be impacted by the development.
- 6.3.3** All other parcels of priority habitat (traditional orchard, lowland heathland, coastal floodplain grazing marsh and lowland fens) are over 400 m from site. Due to the distance to the site, it is considered that the traditional orchard parcels will not be impacted from the development.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.3.4** The development landscaping proposals include the retention of the majority of hedgerows on site with some areas enhanced and the planting of approximately 1 km of additional native hedgerow on site. This results in an overall biodiversity net gain for hedgerows on site (Thomson 2024). Retained hedgerows will be managed and protected during construction including root protection area fencing.
- 6.3.5** Pollution control measures including dust suppression and control of groundwater and surface run-off should be implemented during construction.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.3.6** Any residual pollution following the control measure is likely to be temporary at a local level and is unlikely to significantly affect the priority habitat hedgerows onsite and deciduous woodlands adjacent to the site.

6.4 Bats

Potential Impacts

- 6.4.1** The site provides trees with roosting potential, as well as commuting and foraging habitat for bats. The trees with roost potential will be retained as part of the development but there is potential for disturbance, from construction activities and lighting post development, particularly to T5, T6 and T7 which are in the south of the area proposed for residential development. Should any of these trees require felling or pruning, or should any works likely to disturb bats be required within 10m of these trees, further survey will be required to confirm the presence or likely absence for bat roosts.
- 6.4.2** A range of bat species have been recorded using the site for foraging and commuting particularly the mature hedgerows within and surrounding the site where the highest level of bat activity was recorded. There is potential impacts from disturbance from construction activities and lighting post development.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.4.3** All trees with bat potential are proposed to be retained in the development. If construction works are to be undertaken at night, site lighting should be planned to avoid any light spill towards retained trees with bat potential (in particular), and the hedgerows and lines of trees within and along the perimeter of the site. Works should also be avoided at the times when bats will be leaving and returning to their roost locations from May-August inclusive (sunset - 2hrs after sunset and the 2hrs up to sunrise), in the key dark zones shown on Figure 12.
- 6.4.4** A sympathetic lighting regime should be incorporated into the design of exterior lighting for new homes and any required street lighting. Key dark zones to be maintained are shown on Figure 12. Once lighting plans become available, a bat lighting strategy will be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council.
- 6.4.5** As the majority of the foraging or commuting habitat is being retained or improved there will be no major impacts on how the site is used by bats.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.4.6** Following the implementation of the mitigation measures described above, there could remain a small temporary negative effect caused by disturbance of bats as a result of construction activities. However, this impact will be temporary and is unlikely to be significant due to the retention and improvement of commuting and foraging habitats.
- 6.4.7** The change in use of the site could cause ongoing disturbance to commuting and foraging bats from increased lighting and use of the site. However, following mitigation measures and implementing a sympathetic lighting plan, this impact is unlikely to be significant. In addition, the proposed landscaping will result in enhanced foraging opportunities on site for bats.

6.5 Badger

Potential Impacts

- 6.5.1** Badger activity (latrines, snuffle holes and potential badger runs) were recorded on site but no setts showing signs of current use were identified. The development will retain the majority of commuting corridors (hedgerows) but will result in the loss of some grassland habitat which could be used for foraging and has the potential to result in the loss of badger setts if new setts are created prior to the development. There is potential risk of injury to badgers during construction.
- 6.5.2** As the SANG will require fencing to create a safe space for dogs to be off-lead, this may result in a loss of ecological permeability between badgers and the site. This could result in an impact on badgers due to loss of access to suitable foraging and commuting habitats for badgers.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.5.3** A walkover survey within the site boundary should be carried out a minimum of one month prior to the works to ensure no new setts have been made which could be affected.
- 6.5.4** If mammal burrows require removal to facilitate the works and are not showing signs of current use by badger, the entrances can be dug out carefully by hand under the supervision of an ECoW following a specific Precautionary Method of Works (PMoW). If any active badger setts are identified a licence to close the sett will be required. The licence application would be followed by an exclusion exercise and 21 days of monitoring, which can only take place between July - November.
- 6.5.5** As badger presence was confirmed on site, any excavations during the construction phase should be covered overnight or have a ramp installed to prevent badger and other mammals becoming trapped during the construction phase.
- 6.5.6** To ensure that ecological permeability is maintained for badgers, the northern boundary of the SANG will not have a fence, and the hedgerows will act as a barrier to allow off-leash exercise for dogs. Badger gates will be installed along the remaining fence line perimeter. This will allow ecological permeability between the SANG and the public footpath, to allow for connectivity with the green bridge which has been designed to provide a safe crossing route for badgers.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.5.7** Following mitigation measures, direct impacts on badger are very unlikely. Habitats created as part of the landscaping plan will likely provide better commuting and foraging habitat for badger.

6.6 Invasive Species

Potential Impacts

- 6.6.1 One stand of Himalayan balsam was recorded on site, within the grassland parcel g3c-1. In the absence of mitigation, this invasive species could spread to other areas of the site, and into the local area, where it may dominate important habitats.

Mitigation Measures

- 6.6.2 A walkover survey of the site boundary will be carried out a minimum of one month prior to the works to identify any new evidence of invasive species on the site.
- 6.6.3 The already identified Himalayan balsam will be removed from site by a specialist contractor at an appropriate time of year, before it starts to seed (seeds from mid-July onwards).

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.6.4 Following mitigation measures, it is unlikely that invasive species would have any significant residual effects on the site and on the local area.

6.7 Reptiles

Potential Impacts

- 6.7.1 Throughout the site hedgerows and edge habitats provide suitable habitats for reptiles. A single slow worm and three grass snakes were recorded in May and June 2022 during reptile surveys. The development proposals include the retention and enhancement of the majority of suitable reptile habitat either within the SANG or proposed landscaping, with the areas affected by the residential development unsuitable for reptiles.
- 6.7.2 The habitat on site hasn't changed significantly between 2022 and 2024, and therefore the impacts remain the same for reptiles, as previously identified.
- 6.7.3 There is a risk during construction of reptiles entering the construction area and being killed or injured. The potential impact on reptiles is therefore assessed to be low at a local level.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.7.4 Reptile mitigation/reasonable avoidance measures can be included in a CEMP or separate Reptile Mitigation Method Statement, which will detail how reptiles will be protected during the development. Where suitable habitat for reptiles will be impacted, then reptiles will be trapped and translocated or displaced into suitable receptor habitat.
- 6.7.5 The SANG will have designated footpaths, which will result in areas being undisturbed for wildlife, creating suitable habitat for reptiles to reside.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.7.6 Following the implementation of mitigation, it is unlikely that the project would have any significant residual effects on reptiles. Mitigation will be designed to prevent harm to reptiles and minimise the risk of an offence under the legislation protecting reptiles.

6.8 Breeding Birds

Potential Impacts

- 6.8.1 The vegetation present on site and within the surrounding habitat supports a range common nesting birds. The majority of suitable nesting habitat, comprising hedgerows and scrub within the site and running along the site boundary, will not require removal meaning any impacts on nesting birds will be temporary at a local level.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.8.2 If vegetation clearance is required to facilitate the works, this should be carried out outside of the nesting bird season (March-September). If this is not possible, vegetation clearance must be undertaken following a check for nesting birds by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW), if a birds nest is discovered it must be protected by a suitable buffer until the chicks have fledged or the nest is otherwise no longer active.
- 6.8.3 The landscaping of the SANG will continue to provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the red and amber listed species, recorded as using the site, including the linnet which is less commonly recorded in the Wokingham Borough. Landscaping will include woodland edge planting and scrub.
- 6.8.4 The SANG will have designated footpaths, which will result in areas being undisturbed for wildlife, creating suitable habitat for birds to breed and forage.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.8.5 Following mitigation implementation, significant residual effects or offences under legislation protecting nesting birds are unlikely. The proposed landscaping includes additional lengths of hedgerow, tree and scrub planting which will result in an increase in nesting opportunities on site. The range of habitats proposed will also mean that there will be a range of food sources available to birds through-out the year.

6.9 Dormouse

- 6.9.1 Several areas of habitats and hedgerows were considered suitable for dormouse. However, no dormice or evidence of dormice was recorded during the 2022 surveys, and the habitat had not significantly changed in 2024 or 2025, and therefore they are considered likely absent and the development will not have an impact on dormice.
- 6.9.2 As stated in the new dormouse mitigation guidelines (Wells et al., 2025), survey data is valid for five years if there is not a significant change in habitat management on site, and in the surrounding area, there are no new records in the area, and there has been no significant change in habitat quality on the site. The updated walkover survey conducted on 27th and 28th

May 2025 confirmed that these conditions have been met, so repeat surveys are not considered necessary at this stage.

6.10 Great Crested Newt

Potential Impacts

- 6.10.1** The accessible waterbodies within the survey area tested negative for GCN eDNA, indicating a likely absence of GCN from the site in 2022. However, eDNA surveys were not conducted in 2024 and access was not granted in 2025. The updated walkover survey on 27th and 28th May 2025 confirmed that the habitat on site, nor the suitability of the ponds, has changed significantly, and there were no records for GCN within the desk study. However, it is noted that the site intersects both the red and amber risk zones for great crested newt according to the district licence risk map.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.10.2** An application for a District Level Licence (DLL) should be obtained for the project prior to the development commencing to ensure compliance with legislation. A complete set of survey information is not required if the DLL is used.
- 6.10.3** Landscaping for the SANG and residential development will include hedgerows, Sustainable Urban Drainage System, ponds, tree planting and scrub, all of which will enhance the site for great crested newt.
- 6.10.4** The SANG will have designated footpaths which will result in areas being undisturbed for wildlife, creating suitable habitat for great crested newts to reside.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.10.5** Following mitigation implementation, significant residual effects or offenses under legislation protecting great crested newt are unlikely. Development proposals are likely to increase suitable habitat for great crested newt.

6.11 Hedgehog

Potential Impacts

- 6.11.1** The vegetation present on site and within the surrounding habitat has potential to support hedgehog. The majority of suitable habitat, comprising hedgerows running along the site boundary, will not require removal meaning any impacts on hedgehog will be temporary at a local level.

Mitigation Measures and Compensation

- 6.11.2 If vegetation clearance of scrub or hedgerows or dismantling of log/brush piles is required to facilitate the works, this should be undertaken following a check by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) to identify the presence of hedgehog.
- 6.11.3 Development design should consider the incorporation of a hedgehog highway through residential gardens to maintain connectivity across the site for commuting and foraging hedgehog.
- 6.11.4 The SANG will have designated footpaths, which will result in areas being undisturbed for wildlife, creating suitable habitat for hedgehogs within the SANG.

Significance of Residual Effects

- 6.11.5 Following mitigation implementation, significant residual effects or offenses under legislation protecting hedgehog is unlikely. Development proposals in relation to the SANG are likely to increase suitable habitat foraging and commuting habitat for hedgehog.

7. Enhancement

7.1 Management and Enhancement Plans

7.1.1 A Biodiversity Enhancement Plan will be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council prior to construction, and biodiversity enhancements shall be provided at a rate of at least one feature per dwelling. Types of feature, appropriate to benefit different species groups, are indicated below and further details will be provided in the biodiversity enhancement plan.

7.1.2 A Landscape and Environmental Management Plan will be produced, and submitted to Wokingham Borough Council prior to construction commencing, which will outline how the biodiversity net gain habitat objectives and how the habitats will be maintained to achieve these.

7.2 Biodiversity Net Gain

7.2.1 Assessment of the current development proposals indicate that the development will result in a biodiversity net gain for both habitats and hedgerows (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2024) and will therefore be compliant with the requirements of policy and legislation relating to biodiversity net gain.

7.3 Bats

7.3.1 To enhance the site for roosting bats, bat bricks and/or boxes should be incorporated into the development proposals on buildings and retained trees. Examples of these could include:

- For crevice dwelling bats, Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box, or similar, positioned externally above 3m from the ground on south or east facing walls on new buildings.
- For larger bats, 2FN Schwegler or similar, positioned on a similar aspect as described above.

7.3.2 Where planting is proposed, a range of native species with different flowering periods should be considered to promote insect (bats primary food source) diversity on site.

7.4 Reptiles

7.4.1 Additional reptile enhancements such as hibernacula and egg laying heaps for grass snake can be included in the detailed landscaping plans at the detailed design/reserved matters application and within the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.

7.5 Birds

7.5.1 Areas of habitat created as part of the development should be designed to offer nesting opportunities for birds, especially song thrush, this can be achieved through the provision of bird boxes and/or the creation and retention of areas of dense woody vegetation comprising native scrub, woodland and fruiting trees.

7.5.2 As an example, Schwegler 16 Swift Box or Schwegler 16S Swift Box (with Starling Barrier) or similar could be incorporated into some of the new builds above 5m from the ground without obstruction.

7.6 Hedgehog

7.6.1 Log and brash piles should be created using removed vegetation for hedgehog with routes established throughout the site to promote connectivity.

8. Monitoring

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

- 8.1.1** Monitoring of the implementation and delivery of the SANG should be undertaken, to ensure that the SANG is functioning as proposed in the Habitats Regulation Assessment (SLR Consulting, 2024).

Bat Activity Surveys

- 8.1.2** Activity transects should be undertaken to establish how bats are using the site post development, and to ensure that the key dark zones are being implemented. Surveys should be carried out between May and October in accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins ed, 2023).

Reptile Surveys

- 8.1.3** Although not the primary goal of the SANG, it will have a role to play in adding biodiversity value to the area, if managed accordingly.
- 8.1.4** Reptile surveys should be repeated post development on the SANG. Surveys would consist of placement of artificial refugia, checked on seven occasions between mid-March to early October. Surveys should be undertaken in suitable weather conditions, excluding periods of heavy rain, strong wind and temperatures below 9°C and above 20°C (Gent & Gibson, 2003). with June, July and October being suboptimal months dependant on weather.

9. Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan

Table 20: Ecological constraints and opportunities plan

Feature	Description/ Name of Feature	Construction or Operational Phase	Potential Ecological Impact	Mitigation (e.g., avoidance, enhancement)	Additional Surveys, Licences, Consents, Ecological Supervision or Reporting Required	Timing Constraints
Designated Sites	Thames Basin Heath SPA	Operational	Recreational pressure	An area of suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG) will be incorporated into the development proposals, and SAMM payments to be made.	The proposal needs to be approved by Natural England.	The SANG needs to be operational before the development becomes operational.
Ancient Woodland	Ancient Woodland	Construction	Pollution	Pollution prevention guidelines will be followed which may include Heras fencing with dust sheeting.	N/A	N/A
Priority Habitat	Deciduous Woodland and Hedgerows	Construction	Pollution	Pollution prevention guidelines will be followed which may include Heras fencing with dust sheeting around the root protection areas of retained hedgerows.	N/A	N/A
Species	Bats	Construction	Disturbance. Works have potential to disturb foraging and commuting bats in the area.	Lighting should be directional and away from any hedgerows and trees retained on site. Trees with roosting potential should be protected and retained. Retention of commuting and foraging habitat for bats.	N/A	Works should not be undertaken in the peak times for bat emergence/return to roost.

Feature	Description/ Name of Feature	Construction or Operational Phase	Potential Ecological Impact	Mitigation (e.g., avoidance, enhancement)	Additional Surveys, Licences, Consents, Ecological Supervision or Reporting Required	Timing Constraints
				Incorporation of bat boxes into development design.		
		Operation	Disturbance by lighting.	Key dark zones enforced across the site	N/A	N/A
	Badger	Construction	There are currently no active badger setts the site but signs of badger activity were identified during the PEA, which means badger do use the site for foraging and commuting may become trapped in excavations resulting in mortalities and/or injuries.	Any excavations should be covered over at night or a suitable means of escape (i.e. a ramp) for mammals provided.	Pre-construction check three months prior to works commencing to ascertain the location of any new sett entrances. A licence from Natural England may be required for works within 30 metres of a badger sett entrance.	30 working days to process species licence (not including timeframe for preparing licence documents). Closure of setts can only take place between 1 st July and 30 th November.
		Operation	Loss of ecological permeability	The northern boundary of the SANG will not have a fence, and the hedgerows will act as a barrier to allow off-leash exercise for dogs instead. This will allow badgers to move freely through the site.	N/A	N/A

Feature	Description/ Name of Feature	Construction or Operational Phase	Potential Ecological Impact	Mitigation (e.g., avoidance, enhancement)	Additional Surveys, Licences, Consents, Ecological Supervision or Reporting Required	Timing Constraints
				The development proposals are likely to provide increased habitat for badger and other small mammals.		
	Reptiles	Construction	Species injuries and mortalities. Potential for reptiles within the works area. Vegetation clearance have the potential to kill or injure reptiles.	A detailed mitigation method statement, informed by further surveys closer to the construction date (if necessary) should be produced detailing how reptiles will be protected during the development.	Ecological Clerk of Works to conduct a pre works check for reptiles.	Vegetation clearance of habitat suitable for reptiles should be completed inside the active season for reptiles. March-October.
	Breeding Birds	Construction	Disturbance, species mortalities and injury. Vegetation clearance could impact nesting birds.	Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March - September) or as a last resort following a check for nesting birds at least 24 hours prior to clearance.	ECoW to check for nesting birds, any active nests to remain in situ with a suitable buffer until the nest is no longer active or the young have fledged.	Nesting bird season - March - September.
	Great Crested Newt	Construction	Disturbance, species mortalities and injury. Loss of suitable terrestrial habitat.	An application for a District Level Licence (DLL) should be obtained for the project prior to the development commencing to ensure compliance with legislation.	An application for a District Level Licence (DLL) should be obtained for the project prior to the development commencing to ensure compliance with legislation.	Any mitigation required by NatureSpace Mitigation Guidelines, will need to be conducted during the GCN active season March-October.

Feature	Description/ Name of Feature	Construction or Operational Phase	Potential Ecological Impact	Mitigation (e.g., avoidance, enhancement)	Additional Surveys, Licences, Consents, Ecological Supervision or Reporting Required	Timing Constraints
	Hedgehog	Construction	Disturbance, species mortalities and injury. Vegetation clearance could impact hibernating hedgehogs.	Excavations should be covered at night, or provide an escape ramp to allow trapped hedgehogs to leave of their own accord. Hibernacula and refugia should be dismantled by hand by and ECoW to allow hedgehogs to leave of their own accord.	Ecological Clerk of Works to conduct a pre works check for hedgehogs.	Hedgehog hibernation season: October - April.
		Operation	Loss of ecological permeability in residential area	Design should consider connectivity of habitats. Hedgehog highways linking residential gardens could be implemented into design. Log and brash piles should be created using removed vegetation for hedgehog with routes established throughout the site to promote connectivity.	N/A	N/A
	Invasive Species	Construction	Spread of invasive species on site, and into local area	Removal of Himalayan balsam from site, by a specialist contractor.	Pre-construction check prior to works commencing to ascertain the location of any new invasive species on site	Before main seeding season (seeding starts mid-July).

10. Conclusions

- 10.1.1** Following a baseline ecological assessment of the site, ecological features have been identified that could be adversely impacted by the proposed development in the absence of mitigation.
- 10.1.2** In the absence of mitigation there is a likely significant affect on internationally important designated sites for nature conservation. This has been assessed in detail within the HRA and can be adequately mitigated by the creation of SANG and payment of a SAMM tariff.
- 10.1.3** Adverse impacts on non-statutory designated sites, ancient woodland and important habitats outside of the site boundary will be avoided by the implementation of pollution control measures that will be detailed in a CEMP.
- 10.1.4** Important habitats for nature conservation within the site boundary will be retained where possible and habitat creation within the SANG will enable the proposal to generate a biodiversity net gain.
- 10.1.5** Following the implementation of avoidance and mitigation measures the development will not result in a significant negative impact on protected species or species of conservation concern.
- 10.1.6** A Construction Environmental Management Plan, a Landscape Environmental Management Plan and a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan will be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council, prior to commencement of development.

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Appendix 1: Surveyors

2025 Surveys

The updated PEA, GLTA, HSI assessments and badger walkover was carried out on 27th and 28th May 2025, during suitable weather by Assistant Ecologist Jack Wong who holds a Natural England GCN licence (2024-12357-CL08-GCN) and Assistant Ecologist Charlie Badland.

2024 Surveys

The updated PEA, GLTA, HSI assessments and badger walkover was carried out on 11th September 2024, during suitable weather by Ecological Consultant Jessica Green BSc (Hons) who holds a Natural England GCN licence (2021-51495-CLS-CLS) and Natural England Level 1 bat licence (2022-10684-CL17-BAT) and Assistant Ecologist Paul Schofield who also holds a Natural England GCN licence (2024-12193-CL08-GCN).

2022 Surveys

The PEA, bat roost inspection and badger surveys were carried out on 11th April 2022 by Ecological Consultant Gary Price ACIEEM, who holds a Natural England level 1 bat licence (licence number: 2021-51197-CLS-CLS), a level 1 great crested newt licence (licence number 2019-40922-CLS-CLS), and a level 1 dormouse licence (licence number 2019-42623-CLS-CLS) and Ecological Consultant Hannah Frame BSc (Hons) ACIEEM who holds a level 1 great crested licence (Licence number: 2020-46398-CLS-CLS).

The aerial roost inspections of trees were carried out on 26th May 2022 by Ecological Consultants Gary Price ACIEEM and Hannah Frame BSc (Hons) ACIEEM. Gary holds a Natural England level 1 Class bat licence and was accredited by Senior Ecological Consultant Joseph Salkeld, who holds a Natural England level 2 bat licence (2019-43538-CLS-CLS), to use an endoscope.

Bat transect surveys and static monitoring were carried out between 27th April 2022 and 10th October 2022. A full list of surveyors and dates can be found in Table 21.

Table 21: Bat activity transects dates and surveyors

Bat Activity Transects		
Date	Surveyor	Role
28/04/22	Dan Riva	Assistant Ecologist
	Katie Ewers	Assistant Ecologist
19/05/22	Oliver Smith	Assistant Ecologist
	Abi Perry	Assistant Ecologist
14/06/22	Joshua Hecken	Assistant Ecologist

Bat Activity Transects		
Date	Surveyor	Role
	Katie Ewers	Assistant Ecologist
18/07/22 & 19/07/22	Alex Walker	Assistant Ecologist
	Clare Spooner	Assistant Ecologist
15/08/22	Beth Lewis	Assistant Ecologist
	Jess Sweeney	Assistant Ecologist
12/09/22	William Hirst	Assistant Ecologist
	David Mahers	Assistant Ecologist
04/10/22	Jake Purchase	Assistant Ecologist
	Josh Hecken	Assistant Ecologist

Reptile surveys were undertaken on seven occasions throughout May and June 2022. A list of surveyors and survey dates can be found in Table 22.

Table 22: Reptile survey dates and surveyors

Reptile Surveys		
Date	Visit Number	Surveyor
27/04/2022	Refugia deployment	Gary Price and Abigail Perry
16/05/2022	1	Frances Bennett
25/05/2022	2	Alex Walker
30/05/2022	3	Katherine Ewers
06/06/2022	4	Katherine Ewers
13/06/2022	5	Frances Bennett
21/06/2022	6	Alex Walker
27/06/2022	7	Frances Bennett

Breeding bird surveys were undertaken on five occasions between April and June 2022. A full list of dates and surveyors can be found in Table 23.

Table 23: Breeding bird survey dates and surveyors

Date	Surveyor
27/04/2022	Jonathan Scragg
10/05/2022	Warren Packer
25/05/2022	Warren Packer
07/06/2022	Alice Samuel & Oliver Smith
14/06/2022	Jonathan Scragg & Abigail Perry

Dormouse surveys were undertaken on five occasions between April and September 2022. A full list of dates and surveyors and their licence number can be found in Table 24.

Table 24: Dormouse survey dates and surveyors

Date	Surveyor	Licence Number
26/04/2022 (Tube Deployment)	Gary Price & Abigail Perry	2019-42623-CLS-CLS
24/05/2022	Gary Price	2019-42623-CLS-CLS
20/06/2022	Alex Walker	Accredited by Kate Taylor - 2016-21211-CLS-CLS
25/07/2022	Gary Price	2019-42623-CLS-CLS
22/08/2022	Gary Price & Charlotte Epps	2019-42623-CLS-CLS
26/09/2022 including tube collection	Gary Price & Felicity Andruszko	2019-42623-CLS-CLS

Great crested newt (GCN) environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys to identify presence/likely absence were undertaken on 24th June 2022 by Ecological Consultant Jessica Green BSc (Hons) who holds a Natural England GCN licence (2021-51495-CLS-CLS), MSc and Assistant Ecologist Joshua Hecken BSc who also Natural England GCN licence (2022-10707-CL08-GCN).

Appendix 2: Assessment Methodology

Legal and Planning Policy Context

The relevant legal and policy context is identified as follows:

Features

Designated Sites

The location of the site is compared to the distribution of sites with a statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designation using information derived from the desk study. Consideration is given to designated sites that could be affected directly or indirectly by the proposed development.

Habitats outside Designated Sites

The habitats known to occur on the site are compared to those which receive some protection, in law or policy, outside of designated sites. These include hedgerows, uncultivated land and seminatural areas; national priority habitats and local priority habitats listed as requiring action in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Ancient Woodland

The ancient woodland inventory is checked to determine whether any known ancient woodland occurs either on the site or nearby.

Protected Species

The species known to occur on the site as a result of the desk study and UK Habitat Classification survey are compared to those listed in nature conservation legislation i.e. the WCA 1981, ((as amended)) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

In addition, the species known to occur on the site as a result of the desk study and Phase 1 habitat survey are compared to those listed in animal welfare legislation, i.e. the Badgers Act 1992 and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

Priority Species

The species known to occur on the site are compared to those listed as priority species in the relevant country or those requiring action in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Other Species of Conservation Concern

The species known to occur on the site are compared with other nature conservation listings, such as red data books.

Invasive Plant Species

The species of plant present on the site are compared to those listed in the WCA 1981, ((as amended)).

Relevant Legislation and Policy

If any of the above are found to occur on or near the site and are likely to be affected by the development in any way, the relevant legislation and planning policy (including national, regional, county and borough policies) is listed and summarised in the table.

Nature Conservation Value

CIEEM Geographic Scale

The value of the designated sites, habitats and species populations present on the site are then determined on a geographic scale (based on CIEEM, 2018). The scale is as follows:

- International and European
- National
- Regional
- Metropolitan, County, vice-county or other local authority-wide area
- Local

In arriving at a level of value for an ecological receptor, the criteria set out below are used.

Designated Sites

The highest level of site designated on the basis that an assessment of intrinsic nature conservation has already been carried out using the same or similar criteria as that given below for habitats and species.

Habitats

The table below sets out the criteria used for evaluating habitats. The criteria are based on Ratcliffe (1977), Annex III of the Habitats Directive and a review of criteria used for the designation of Local sites, many of which are reiterated in CIEEM (2016).

Each habitat identified during the survey is evaluated against these criteria. Reference is made to published lists of habitats of conservation concern to help establish the degree to which a habitat is rare or threatened, however, presence on such a list is not a criteria used in the evaluation.

Level	Criteria	Explanation
Primary	Size	Semi-natural habitats tend to be highly fragmented and the value of the habitat usually increases with its size, because large areas of a habitat will generally support more species and, being more resilient to external influences, is more likely to retain its value in the future.
	Proportion of total	Areas of a habitat that represents a large proportion of the total with a given geographic area are generally of higher nature conservation value than areas of a habitat that are a small proportion of the total for a given geographic area.
	Diversity	The diversity of species in a habitat is mainly influenced by habitat type, size, structure, age and management. The diversity of species supported by a given habitat strongly influences its value with habitats showing high species

Level	Criteria	Explanation
		diversity generally being of higher value than a habitat of the same type with low species diversity. However, it is recognised that some habitats naturally have low species diversity.
	Naturalness/ Quality	Truly natural habitats, unmodified by man, are rare in Britain, and nature conservation deals largely with semi-natural habitats. Those semi-natural habitats that exhibit a level of quality marked by a lack of features which indicate gross or recent human modification are generally more highly valued than highly and recently modified habitats.
	Rarity	Rare semi-natural habitats are of higher value for their own sake and because they are likely to support rare and uncommon species. The general principle is that the rarer the habitat, the greater the value for nature conservation. Rarity is related to the frequency of occurrence at all geographic levels on the IEEM scale.
	Fragility	Fragility reflects the degree of sensitivity of habitats, communities and species to environmental change. Because of their vulnerability, fragile habitats are generally of higher nature conservation value than those that are more resilient to change.
	Level of threat	A habitat which is undergoing a rapid decline in either extent or quality is assigned a higher value than a habitat which is more stable.
Secondary	Recorded History	The extent to which a site has been used for scientific study and research is a factor of some importance, with those sites having a long recorded history being of more value than others.
	Position	Habitats that have an ecological link with adjacent areas of important semi-natural habitat may have more value than is apparent when considering the habitat in isolation.
	Potential	Certain sites could, through appropriate management or natural change, develop a greater nature conservation interest. Potential value is assessed separately from current value.
	Intrinsic Appeal	Some habitats are of greater appeal than others, which can be taken into account when arriving at a level of value.
	Re-creatability	Some habitats can be readily re-created, such as ponds, while others, such as ancient woodland can not. The degree to which a habitat can be re-created can influence its value, with those more readily re-created being of lower value than those that are hard or impossible to re-create.

Level	Criteria	Explanation
	Amenity	Some areas of habitat are more important to local people than others. This may be a function of accessibility in rural areas or scarcity in urban areas, but habitats used and valued by local people may have more value than is apparent when considering more biological factors.

Species

The table below sets out the criteria used for evaluating the populations of species present on the site. The criteria are again based on Ratcliffe (1977) and Annex III of the Habitats Directive and also the IUCN criteria categories and criteria.

Populations of a species recorded during the survey are assessed against the following criteria. Where further investigation is required to establish population size, an estimate is made based on the likely maximum that the habitat can support, to provide a preliminary indication of nature conservation value. As with habitats, reference is made to published lists of species of conservation concern to help establish the degree to which a species is rare or threatened, however, presence on such a list is not a criteria used in the evaluation.

Level	Criteria	Explanation
Primary	Rarity	A population of a species that is rare in a given area is important because the loss of, or damage to, the population may threaten the survival of the species in that area. This criterion may be extended to include distinct races of a species, as well as the species itself. Endemic and near endemic species have a special status as, by definition, they are globally rare even though they may be relatively common where they occur.
	Proportion of total	A population of a species that represents a significant proportion of the total population in a given area could be more important than smaller populations because the loss of a large population is particularly likely to threaten the survival of the species in that area. Large populations also tend to be more robust and may provide a source for the colonisation of other sites.
	Level of threat	A population of a species which is undergoing a rapid decline is assigned a higher value than a population of a species which is more stable. In determining the level of threat, reference is made to the criteria published by the IUCN.
	Native Status	Non-native species, especially recent introductions, are generally regarded as having low or negligible nature conservation value, even if they are rare or threatened in the UK. The presence of some non-native species may even detract from the conservation status of the site. However, certain ancient

Level	Criteria	Explanation
		introductions are given higher status, particularly rare arable weeds, than other introduced plant species.
Secondary	History of Presence	Long-established populations of species which depend on long periods of traditional management, require long established habitats or are otherwise known to have been present at a particular site for many years may be assigned higher values than newly established populations or populations of species which readily colonise new sites.
	Importance for fauna	Some species of plants provide an important resource for fauna, either in terms of the general diversity of species or numbers of individuals supported, or in providing a particular resource to a specialist, dependent species of fauna. Such plants may be assigned higher value than others even if they are just as common and widespread.
	Links to other populations/ degree of fragmentation	Small populations of a species may be of more importance because than is apparent from the population size because they form a link or potential link to other populations of the same species, and reduce the negative effects of isolation.
	Cultural interest/aesthetic appeal	Some species of plant could be important to local people either because there is a cultural connection e.g. wild daffodil in Wales or because they have aesthetic appeal e.g. bee orchid. Populations of such species may be more highly valued than others that are similarly abundant.
	Economic	Some species of plant could be important to local people because they provide an economic benefit e.g. by encouraging tourism or use as a commercial crop.

Use of Primary and Secondary Criteria

The primary criteria are considered at each geographic scale so that, for example, a small population of a native species that is rare in the county but relatively common in the region and stable could be considered important at the county level. Once a rough level of value is derived from the primary criteria, the secondary criteria are considered and may lead to a slight increase or decrease in the level of value assigned to a given population.

Preliminary Impact Assessment

Consideration is given to whether and how the development could affect each of the features identified during the desk study and Phase 1 survey. The assessment is very much a preliminary exercise, designed to inform early stages in the development process, for example, site selection, development design, master planning and avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures that may be required. Re-appraisal of the impacts will be required if there are design changes and when further information is obtained in later stages of the assessment process.

Identification of Potential Further Ecological Issues

Further ecological issues are those which cannot be resolved during preliminary ecological appraisal for any reason, including the following:

- The development is near a designated site and consultation with the relevant regulator is required in order to determine whether further assessment is required;
- Suitable habitat is present on or near the site for a protected species/species of conservation concern and specialist survey techniques are required for their detection;
- Suitable habitat is present on or near the site for a protected species/species of conservation concern and the extended Phase 1 habitat survey was not undertaken at a suitable time of year for their detection;
- A protected species/species of conservation concern was found on or near the site but further information on population size or distribution is required in order to resolve any legal and planning policy issues (such as obtaining licences) or make a reliable assessment of nature conservation value; and
- Discussion of issues raised by 3rd parties, e.g. reports of protected species from the site by local people, may also be discussed under this heading.

The desk study is used as a guide to the protected species/species of conservation in the local area, however, the list is not taken to be exhaustive and it is borne in mind that some species may longer occur in the locality.

No attempt is made to evaluate the importance of the site for species not yet confirmed to be on or near the site, nor to discuss the implications for the development if the species were to be found on the site.

References

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Ratcliffe (1977) A Nature Conservation Review, Cambridge University Press.

Appendix 3: Desk Study - Designated Sites

Site Designation	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Distance to site (km)	Description
National Sites (SPA, SSSI)				
Longmoor Bog SSSI and LNR	SU781653	14.0	1.60	Area of wet woodland and heath and is part of the California Country Park. Designated for valley mire, wet woodland and wet heathland habitats that support notable bird and invertebrate assemblages. Bird species include woodcock (<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>), great spotted woodpecker (<i>Dendrocopos major</i>), green woodpecker (<i>Picus viridis</i>), treecreeper (<i>Certhia familiaris</i>), tree pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>). Invertebrates associated with wet habitats include bog bush cricket (<i>Metrioptera brachyptera</i>) silver-studded blue butterfly (<i>Plebejus argus</i>) and an assemblage of dragonflies.
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	SU909556	8400.0	2.99	Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) one of the most important natural areas in the southeast, as such additional protection is given to it. The site supports important breeding populations of nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>) and Dartford warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>).
County and Local Sites (SINCs, LWS, etc)				
Long Copse (North) and Spring Copse LWS	SU756660	4.5	0.07	This Local Wildlife Site supports two habitats of principal importance; lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland. Long Copse (North) consists of two almost continuous areas of semi-natural ancient woodland, with Spring Copse lying

Site Designation	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Distance to site (km)	Description
				to the north of the woodland areas.
Long Copse (South) & Robin Hood Copse LWS	SU760655	5.6	0.35	A parcel of woodland that has a canopy dominated by ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>), alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) and birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), with a hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) coppice present in Robin Hood Copse.
Hazeltons Copse LWS	SU765674	2.6	0.79	Hazelton Copse, located towards the north-east of Arborfield Copse, is a Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (Section 41 Habitat of principal importance), which is marked on the ancient woodland inventory as ancient semi-natural woodland.
Farley Hill Woods, Great Copse, New Plantation	SU746558	34.5	0.90	This site is largely ancient woodland with extensive semi-natural areas and some parts replanted with conifers. There are also areas of more recent woodland and mixed plantation. Great Copse has gullies and pools with wet alder dominated woodland. The semi-natural stands are dominated by ash, oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and birch.
Pound Copse LWS	SU751972	1.1	1.03	This site is a small area of ancient woodland which is owned by the parish council. The site has been classified as National Vegetation Classification types W8 ash-fled maple-dog's mercury woodland and W10 oak-bracken- bramble woodland.
The Coombes LWS	SU775676	33.4	1.23	The Coombes consists of an area of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland that varies in its structure and species throughout. The canopy is predominately oak and silver birch with an

Site Designation	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Distance to site (km)	Description
				understorey of rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>), hawthorn (<i>Crataegua monogyna</i>), hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>), holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) and in areas, dense rhododendron sp. (<i>rhododendron sp.</i>)
Hogwood Shaw LWS	SU770648	1.3	1.31	This site is a small area of woodland with a small pond. The north-eastern section is dominated by oak. The south-western section is largely hazel coppice and there is a small area of Norway spruce (<i>Picea abies</i>) in the south.
Bearwood Estate	SU776686	135.7	1.52	An extensive area of established broadleaved woodland with a large lake. The lake and woods attract a good variety of birds.
Longmoor Woodland and Bog, California Country Park LWS	SU779652	12.3	1.59	This is the part of California Country Park that lies outside the Longmoor Bog SSSI.
Moor Copse LWS	SU740666	12.8	1.60	This site is ancient woodland. The site has been modified by the planting of sweet chestnut throughout the much of the site. Otherwise the canopy is dominated by oak and ash with frequent hazel coppice in the understorey.
Rounds Copse LWS	SU742715	2.4	1.72	This site is a small area of ancient woodland. The north east of the wood has hazel coppice with hawthorn but no standard trees
Westwood Copse LWS	SU760641	3.7	1.73	This ancient woodland is an area of neglected coppice woodland that is quite open in the south east corner. There are two small ponds near the western side and also a flush area.

Site Designation	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Distance to site (km)	Description
Wyvol's Copse LWS	SU752639	14.6	1.78	Ancient woodland that has been converted to conifer plantation but large areas are now being restored to broad-leaved woodland. The field layer of the woodland includes records for 30 ancient woodland indicator plants.
Claypits Copse LWS	SU764640	1.6	1.90	This site is a small area of oak dominated woodland. There are a number of old yew (<i>Taxus baccata</i>) trees and one old crab apple (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>) in the site.
River Loddon (part) LWS	SU72006527 - SU78837866	1.6	1.9	A 17km 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 (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) and a variety of dragonflies and damselflies are also found along its length.
Arborfield Bridge Meadows	SU746680	4.5	1.93	This is an eyot within the River Loddon, with a few man-made channels and is predominantly an area of wet woodland with widespread mature hybrid crack-willow, dense common sallow and some mature weeping willow. Riparian margins contain some fen species.
Hall Farm Woodland Triangle LWS	SU7439868207	0.76	1.95	An area of broadleaf wet woodland. An abundance of fallen dead wood and horizontal branches of willows adds

Site Designation	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Distance to site (km)	Description
				to structural diversity of the wood, which supports fungi, as well as a range of mosses and lichens.

Appendix 4: Desk Study - Protected Species and Species of Conservation Concern

Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat ¹ Regulations	WCA ²	SPI ³	BOCC ⁴	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	England Red List Status ⁵	No. of records	Distance from site (km)	Source
Birds										
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		Schedule 1					1	< 1 km	TVERC
Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				Amber			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		Schedule 1		Red			7	< 1 km	TVERC
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>		Schedule 1					13	< 1 km	TVERC
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓	Amber			6	< 1 km	TVERC
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			✓	Red			2	< 1 km	TVERC
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			✓	Amber			10	< 1 km	TVERC
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		Schedule 1		Red			3	< 1 km	TVERC
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				Amber			3	< 1 km	TVERC
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		Schedule 1		Amber			3	< 1 km	TVERC
Grey partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>			✓	Red			3	< 1 km	TVERC
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		Schedule 1		Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
House martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>				Red			1	< 1 km	TVERC

¹ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended

² Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended

³ Species of Principal Importance within the relevant country of the United Kingdom

⁴ Birds of Conservation Concern 5: the status of all regularly occurring birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021)

⁵ Near Threatened (NT), Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CE) in England

Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat ¹ Regulations	WCA ²	SPI ³	BOCC ⁴	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	England Red List Status ⁵	No. of records	Distance from site (km)	Source
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓	Red			8	< 1 km	TVERC
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓	Red			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		Schedule 1					1	< 1 km	TVERC
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				Amber			9	< 1 km	TVERC
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				Amber			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				Red			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>				Red			2	< 1 km	TVERC
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		Schedule 1					10	< 1 km	TVERC
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		Schedule 1		Amber			4	< 1 km	TVERC
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			✓	Amber			3	< 1 km	TVERC
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			✓	Red			6	< 1 km	TVERC
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓	Amber			15	< 1 km	TVERC
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				Amber			4	< 1 km	TVERC
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓	Red			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓	Red			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>				Amber			2	< 1 km	TVERC

Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat ¹ Regulations	WCA ²	SPI ³	BOCC ⁴	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	England Red List Status ⁵	No. of records	Distance from site (km)	Source
Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				Amber			6	< 1 km	TVERC
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				Amber			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>				Amber			5	< 1 km	TVERC
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>				Amber			2	< 1 km	TVERC
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>				Amber			14	< 1 km	TVERC
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				Amber			13	< 1 km	TVERC
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			✓	Red			1	< 1 km	TVERC
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓	Red			10	< 1 km	TVERC
Vascular Plant										
Common wood sorrel	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>						NT	1	< 1 km	TVERC
Terrestrial Invertebrate										
Stag beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>		Schedule 5 (sale only)	✓				31	< 1 km	TVERC
Mammals										
Brown long-eared	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5	✓				48	< 1 km	TVERC
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					137	< 1 km	TVERC
Daubenton's	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					1	< 1 km	TVERC
Leisler's	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					6	< 1 km	TVERC
Myotis sp	<i>Myotis</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					31	< 1 km	TVERC
Nathusius's pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					7	< 1 km	TVERC
Natterer's	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					6	< 1 km	TVERC
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5	✓				49	< 1 km	TVERC
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5					27	< 1 km	TVERC

Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat ¹ Regulations	WCA ²	SPI ³	BOCC ⁴	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	England Red List Status ⁵	No. of records	Distance from site (km)	Source
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5	✓				75	< 1 km	TVERC
Barbastelle	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	Schedule 2	Schedule 5	✓				1	< 1 km	TVERC
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>					✓		70	< 1 km	TVERC
Western European hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>			✓				13	< 1 km	TVERC
Reptiles										
Barred grass snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>		Schedule 5*	✓				6	< 1 km	TVERC
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>		Schedule 5*	✓				4	< 1 km	TVERC
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>		Schedule 5*	✓				5	< 1 km	TVERC

* Protected from intentional killing, injuring and selling only

Appendix 5: Ground Level Tree Assessment and Aerial Inspection Results

Tree	Species	Height (m)	DBH (m)	Age class	Condition	Distance to hedgerow (m)	Distance to woodland (m)	Distance to water (m)	Potential commuting corridors?	Potential foraging corridors	Setting	Habitat quality of surrounding area	Level of baseline disturbance	Tree Climbed in 2022	Overall potential (of tree)
T1	Pedunculate oak; <i>Quercus robur</i>	18	1.8	Veteran / Senescing	Good Health	<200m	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Negligible	Yes - PRFs were present that could support multiple bats	PRF-M
T2	Ash; <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	14	0.6	Mature	Poor Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	High	No	FAR
T3	Ash	16	0.8	Mature	Poor Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Low	Yes - tree assigned negligible potential after aerial inspection	FAR

Tree	Species	Height (m)	DBH (m)	Age class	Condition	Distance to hedgerow (m)	Distance to woodland (m)	Distance to water (m)	Potential commuting corridors?	Potential foraging corridors	Setting	Habitat quality of surrounding area	Level of baseline disturbance	Tree Climbed in 2022	Overall potential (of tree)
T4	Pedunculate oak	16	1.2	Veteran / Senescing	Good Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Negligible	No	FAR
T5	Pedunculate oak	22	1.3	Veteran / Senescing	Good Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Low	No	PRF
T6	Pedunculate oak	20	1.4	Veteran / Senescing	Good Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Low	No	PRF
T7	Ash	12	0.4	Mature	Good Health	In Hedgerow	>400m	>400m	Yes	Yes	Rural	High	Low	No	PRF

Appendix 6: Static Monitoring Bat Survey Data

Transects

Survey effort for the activity surveys was determined in accordance with good practice guidelines (Collins ed, 2016). This best practice guidance has now been superseded (Collins ed, 2023), but the survey data is still considered valid as the sufficient survey effort was conducted at the site to understand how bats were using the site and the surrounding area.

Table 25 shows the breakdown of the number of passes of each species recorded during the bat activity transects undertaken during 2022. Table 26 shows the total number of passes per species and per visit.

Peak levels of bat activity was recorded during visit 2 with a total of 62 passes of these 69% (43) were passes by common pipistrelle. Overall across all the transect visits passes by pipistrelle bats accounted for nearly 87% of all passes recorded (common pipistrelle - 159 (69.7%), soprano pipistrelle - 34 (14.9%), pipistrelle sp. - 5 (2.2%)). Common and soprano pipistrelles were recorded on every visit. Common pipistrelle was the most frequently recorded bat on all visits apart from visit 1 and visit 8. On visit 2 the soprano pipistrelle was most frequently recorded and visit 8 2 passes of each of common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle were recorded. Noctule bats were third most frequently recorded species with 23 passes recorded (10.1%) with 18 of these passes being recorded on visit 2. Noctule bats were also recorded on visits 3 and 7. A total of four passes from the species group myotis sp. were recorded across visits 1 and 3, one pass from Leisler's bat was recorded on visit 7 and two passes from barbastelle were recorded on visit 7.

Transect leg 3 was the leg where across all eight survey visits the most bat activity was recorded (95 passes (41.6%)). Three species and two species groups were recorded on this leg (common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, pipistrelle sp. and myotis sp.). On five of the eight visits the highest level of activity was recorded on transect leg 2 (visit 1 - 7 passes, visit 3 - 29 passes, visit 4 - 12 passes, visit 5 - 7 passes, visit 8 - 2 passes) during visit 2 and 6 the highest level of activity was recorded on transect leg 2 (22 and 3 passes) and on visit 7 the highest level of activity was recorded on transect leg 1 (30 passes).

Table 25: Number of passes per species recorded during the bat activity transects

Transect Results	Species	Visit 1 27/04/ 2022	Visit 2 18/05/ 2022	Visit 3 13/06/ 2022	Visit 4 18/07/ 2022	Visit 5 19/07/ 2022	Visit 6 15/08/ 2022	Visit 7 12/09/ 2022	Visit 8 03/10/ 2022
Stopping point 1	P pip			2		1			
	Myotis sp					1			
	N noc			2					
Leg 1	P pip		2	5				16	
	Myotis sp							1	
	N noc		4					3	
	Pip sp							1	

Transect Results	Species	Visit 1 27/04/ 2022	Visit 2 18/05/ 2022	Visit 3 13/06/ 2022	Visit 4 18/07/ 2022	Visit 5 19/07/ 2022	Visit 6 15/08/ 2022	Visit 7 12/09/ 2022	Visit 8 03/10/ 2022
	P pyg			1		1		9	
Stopping point 2	P pip		6		1		1		
	Nnoc		6						
	P pyg	2							
Leg 2	P pip		19			4	2	4	
	N noc		2						
	P pyg		1			1	1		1
Stopping point 3	P pip		1	11		1			
	Pip sp				1				
	P pyg					5			
Leg 3	P pip	1	15	27	10	6	1	14	2
	Myotis sp							1	
	N noc		6						
	Pip sp				1				
	P pyg	6		2	1	1	1		
Stopping point 4	P pip			5		1			
	P pyg								1
Leg 4	B bar							2	
	P pip							1	
	N lei							1	
	Myotis sp							1	
	Pip sp				1			1	

Table 26: Total passes by species and visit

Species	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 5	Visit 6	Visit 7	Visit 8	Total
B bar	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
P pip	1	43	50	11	13	4	35	2	159
N lei	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Myotis sp	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	4
N noc	0	18	2	0	0	0	3	0	23
Pip sp	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	5

P pyg	8	1	3	1	8	2	9	2	34
Total	9	62	55	15	22	6	55	4	228

Static Monitoring

Table 27 and Table 28 show the results of the static monitoring surveys with the data broken down by date. Table 29 shows the nightly weather conditions during the static monitoring surveys. The static monitoring device at SM1 failed to record during visit 1 (April) and only recorded on two nights during visit 2 (May). The data collected through the rest of the season and the second static monitoring device which did record, combined with the transect data still allows for an assessment of how bats use the site.

At both static monitoring locations common pipistrelle was the most frequently recorded species accounting for 69.21% (3438) of passes at SM1 and 90.69% (11223) of passes at SM2. The second most frequently recorded species at both locations was soprano pipistrelle (SM1 29.53%/1467 passes and SM2 7.57%/937 passes). Common pipistrelle was the most frequently recorded species at both locations on all visits except visit 4 at SM1 when soprano pipistrelle was the most frequently recorded species. Soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle were recorded on all visits at both locations. Noctule bats were recorded on all visits at both locations except visit 1 at SM2. Brown long-eared bats were recorded on all visits except visit 1 (SM malfunction) and 2 at SM1 and all but visit 4 at SM2. Serotine bats were recorded on visits 2, 3 and 4 at SM1 and visits 3, 4 and 5 at SM2; the species group Myotis sp. were recorded on visits 6 and 7 at SM1 and visits 3, 5, 6 and 7 at SM2; Leisler's bat were recorded on visits 3 and 4 at SM1 and visits 3 and 6 at SM2; Nathusius' pipistrelle was recorded on visit 4 at SM1 and visits 2 and 3 at SM2.

Overall higher levels of activity were higher at SM2 than SM1 (SM1 - 4967 passes, SM2 - 12375 passes). SM2 had higher levels of activity than SM1 on all visits except visit 4 and the highest level of activity was recorded on visit 2 (4067 passes). The highest level of activity at SM1 was recorded during visit 4 (2115 passes). The peak level of activity at SM1 was recorded on 14th September 2022 with a total of 849 passes (815 passes of common pipistrelle, 33 passes of soprano pipistrelle and 1 myotis sp. pass). The peak activity at SM2 was recorded on 21st May 2022 with 1386 passes (1356 common pipistrelle passes, 6 soprano pipistrelle passes, 6 nathusius pipistrelle passes, 3 brown long-eared bat passes and 15 noctule passes).

Table 27: Number of passes per species at SM1

	Date	Number Passes/Species								Total
		E ser	Myotis sp	N leis	N noc	P aur	P nat	P pip	P pyg	
Visit 1 (SM malfunction)	27/04/2022									N/A
	28/04/2022									N/A
	29/04/2022									N/A
	30/04/2022									N/A
Visit 2	18/05/2022	2			2			53	9	66
	19/05/2022							80	4	84

	Date	Number Passes/Species								
		E ser	Myoti s sp	N leis	N noc	P aur	P nat	P pip	P pyg	Total
	SM Malfunction									N/A
	SM Malfunction									N/A
Visit 3	13/06/2022							93	7	100
	14/06/2022	1				1		274	9	285
	15/06/2022			1		3		85	6	95
	16/06/2022				1			201	15	217
Visit 4	19/07/2023				1			28	101	130
	20/07/2023	1				1		67	52	121
	21/07/2023			1			1	227	263	492
	22/07/2023							223	430	653
	23/07/2023				6			194	251	451
	24/07/2023							125	143	268
Visit 5	16/08/2022							9	6	15
	17/08/2022				1			96	9	106
	18/08/2022				2	1		52	7	62
	19/08/2022				1			28	10	39
	20/08/2022							11	9	20
	21/08/2022							6	2	8
Visit 6	12/09/2022				16			86	6	108
	13/09/2022		1		1	4		108	43	157
	14/09/2022		1					815	33	849
	15/09/2022		2			1		533	21	557
	16/09/2022					1		3		4
Visit 7	04/10/2022				1			4	7	12
	05/10/2022			1		3		27	11	42
	06/10/2022				1			2	3	6
	07/10/2022		1	1				5	10	17
	08/10/2022							3		3
Total		4	5	4	33	15	1	3438	1467	4967

Table 28: Number of passes per species at SM2

	Date	Number Passes/Species								Total
		E ser	Myotis sp	N leis	N noc	P aur	P nat	P pip	P pyg	
Visit 1	27/04/2022							40	3	43
	28/04/2022							217	11	228
	29/04/2022							103	4	107
	30/04/2022							317	32	349
Visit 2	18/05/2022				4		11	304	19	338
	19/05/2022						7	519	5	531
	20/05/2022				14	1	7	1337	8	1367
	21/05/2022				15	3	6	1356	6	1386
	22/05/2022				20		5	414	6	445
Visit 3	13/06/2022						7	224	4	235
	14/06/2022				1	1	9	361	19	391
	15/06/2022			1	1		2	475	6	485
	16/06/2022	1	1					289	12	303
	17/06/2022			2	2	1	4	310	6	325
Visit 4	19/07/2022	1						72	3	130
	20/07/2022				7			643	35	121
	21/07/2022							581	26	492
	22/07/2022							105	1	653
Visit 5	15/08/2022							12		12
	16/08/2022				4			246	15	265
	17/08/2022		1					422	17	440
	18/08/2022	2	2		8	1		560	35	608
	19/08/2022							15	9	24
Visit 6	12/09/2022		23		12	4		283	163	485
	13/09/2022		8		2	4		523	170	707
	14/09/2022		25	2	4	7		197	58	293
	15/09/2022		24		2	5		138	36	205
Visit 7	03/10/2022		1			1		67	23	92
	04/10/2022				5	1		523	67	596
	05/10/2022				5			173	59	237
	06/10/2022		1		3	1		251	49	305
	07/10/2022					1		146	30	177
Total		4	86	5	109	31	58	11223	937	12375

Table 29: Weather conditions during the static monitoring

	Date	Sunset time	Sunrise time (following day)	Temp sunset (°C)	Min Temp (°C)	Rainfall (mm)	Wind
Visit 1	27/04/2022	20:19	05:41	12	7	0	<10mph
	28/04/2022	20:21	05:39	10	2	0	<10mph
	29/04/2022	20:23	05:37	10	-2	0	<5mph
	30/04/2022	20:24	05:35	12	8	0	<5mph
	01/05/2022	20:26	05:33	10	8	0	<5mph
Visit 2	18/05/2022	20:53	05:06	17	13	0	<10mph
	19/05/2022	20:54	05:04	13	11	0	<5mph
	20/05/2022	20:56	05:03	13	9	0	<10mph
	21/05/2022	20:57	05:02	12	7	0	<5mph
	22/05/2022	20:58	05:01	13	9	0	<5mph
Visit 3	13/06/2022	21:20	04:46	15	7	0	<10mph
	14/06/2022	21:21	04:45	16	6	0	<5mph
	15/06/2022	21:22	04:45	18	11	0	<5mph
	16/06/2022	21:22	04:45	19	14	0	<5mph
	17/06/2022	21:23	04:45	21	15	0	<5mph
Visit 4	19/07/2022	21:09	05:10	25	18	0	<15mph
	20/07/2022	21:08	05:11	20	13	0	<10mph
	21/07/2022	21:07	05:12	20	16	0	<10mph
	22/07/2022	21:06	05:14	19	14	0	<5mph
	23/07/2022	21:04	05:15	19	17	0	<10mph
	24/07/2022	21:03	05:17	19	17	0	<10mph
Visit 5	15/08/2022	20:25	05:50	25	17	0	<10mph
	16/08/2022	20:24	05:52	21	13	0	<5mph
	17/08/2022	20:22	05:53	18	17	0	<5mph
	18/08/2022	20:19	05:55	21	18	0	<10mph
	19/08/2022	20:17	05:56	20	12	0	<5mph
	20/08/2022	20:15	05:58	20	13	0	<10mph
	21/08/2022	20:13	06:00	20	11	0	<10mph
Visit 6	12/09/2022	19:25	06:35	22	15	0	<5mph
	13/09/2022	19:22	06:36	16	15	6.1	<10mph
	14/09/2022	19:20	06:38	19	10	0	<10mph

	Date	Sunset time	Sunrise time (following day)	Temp sunset (°C)	Min Temp (°C)	Rainfall (mm)	Wind
	15/09/2022	19:18	06:39	15	7	0	<10mph
	16/09/2022	19:15	06:41	15	3	0	<5mph
Visit 7	03/10/2022	18:37	07:08	15	12	0	<5mph
	04/10/2022	18:34	07:10	16	16	0	<20mph
	05/10/2022	18:32	07:12	14	6	0	<15mph
	06/10/2022	18:30	07:13	16	12	0	<15mph
	07/10/2022	18:27	07:15	16	7	0	<10mph
	08/10/2022	18:25	07:17	15	2	0	<5mph

Conservation status and impacts on bats using the site

In both the transects and the static monitoring surveys common pipistrelle was the most frequently recorded bat 69.7% activity during the transects and 84.5% of activity during the static monitoring. Common pipistrelle is the second most common species of bat in Britain with an estimated population size of 3.04 million (Mathews *et al.*, 2018). They are widespread and known to breed across Berkshire (Andrews, 2021).

Soprano pipistrelle was the second most frequently recorded species during the transects and static monitoring (14.9% of activity on the transects and 13.9% of activity recorded during the static monitoring). Soprano pipistrelle is one of the most common species of bat in Britain with an estimated population size of 4.6 million (Mathews *et al.*, 2018) and are known to utilise a wide variety of habitats. They are widespread and known to breed across Berkshire occurring in all districts. Within the county they have been associated with habitats close to water (Andrews, 2021).

Nathusius' pipistrelle was not recorded during the transects but was recorded at both locations during the static monitoring (0.3% of total SM activity). Nationally there have been 2689 captures of Nathusius' pipistrelle. It is unknown if they breed in Berkshire but they are considered to be widespread across the county (Andrews, 2021).

In addition to the above 2.2% of activity recorded during the transect surveys was from Pipistrelle species that could not be identified to species level.

Noctule activity accounted for 10.1% of activity on the transect and 0.8% of activity during the static monitoring. There is an estimated population of 565,000 in Britain (Mathews *et al.*, 2018). They are known to breed in Berkshire and have a distribution heavily biased to the centre of the county around the area which includes Wokingham (Andrews, 2021).

Brown long-eared bat was not recorded during the transects but accounted for 0.3% of the SM activity. Brown long-eared bats have a wide distribution in Britain with a population estimated at 943,000 (Mathews *et al.*, 2018). They are known to breed in Berkshire and are widespread across the county (Andrews, 2021).

One pass of Leisler's bat was recorded during the transects 0.4% of activity and accounted for 0.05% of activity recorded during the static monitoring. Leisler's bat have a patchy distribution across southern England with a population estimated to be 24,000 - 40,000 (Mathews et al., 2018). There are no records of Leisler's bat breeding in Berkshire but there are acoustic records mostly from the centre of the county including Wokingham (Andrews, 2021).

Serotine bats were only recorded in the static monitoring and account for 0.04% of activity. Nationally serotine is restricted to southern England and parts of Wales with a population estimated at 136,000 (Mathews et al., 2018). Serotine is known to breed in Berkshire and is widespread across the county (Andrews, 2021).

The species group "Myotis sp." comprises six different resident Myotis species found in the UK. To reliably identify these to species level they need to be caught and identified in hand. Of the Myotis species five are known to be present in Berkshire (Natter's Bat, Daubenton's bat, Bechstein's bat, Whiskered bat, and Brandt's bat). Overall Myotis activity accounted for 1.8% of activity during the transects and 0.5% of activity during the static monitoring. Of the Myotis species present in Berkshire the most common are Natterer's bat and Daubenton's bat both of which are known to breed and are widespread across the county (Andrews, 2021) and have populations in Britain of >400,000 (Natterer's bat) and >1 million (Daubenton's bat) (Mathews et al., 2018). Whiskered bats are not known in the Wokingham (Andrews, 2021), Bechstein's bat have only been recorded at one site in Remenham in Berkshire (Andrews, 2021) and there are only three contemporary records of Brandt's bat in Berkshire none of which are from the Arborfield area (Andrews, 2021) it is therefore considered unlikely that these three species were recorded during the surveys.

The majority of habitat features (such as the mature scrub and hedgerows withing the site) that bats were recorded using during the surveys are proposed to be retained and suitable commuting and foraging habitat for bats is proposed in the form of tree, scrub, hedgerow and grassland creation within the landscaping plans. Key dark zones for bats are shown on Figure 12.

Across the site and survey area the majority of bat activity was recorded in the area which is proposed to become Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Whilst the SANG will be used by residents of the new development and from the surrounding area for recreational purposes, including dog walking, the SANG will not contain street lighting and therefore will be unlikely to be used for recreation at night when bats are active and therefore bats will continue to use this area for commuting and foraging. Some habitat enhancement measures proposed both within the SANG and development area including areas of woodland, scrub, pond and grassland creation will enhance the foraging opportunities on the site. Within the development area the majority of commuting features such as hedgerows and lines of trees will be retained which will ensure the continuation of commuting pathways around the site.

Given the majority of bat species using the site are widespread within the UK and Berkshire the site is considered to have local importance to bats. The majority of habitats impacted by the development are of limited suitability for bats (modified grassland) and within the proposed landscaping areas will be enhanced. There is also opportunity within the detailed design of the housing areas to include measures to enhance the roosting habitat on site through the provision of bat bricks/boxes. It is therefore concluded that the development will have a neutral impact on bats using the site.

- Andrews, C. (2021). Review of the Status of Bats in Berkshire 2020. A report by CA Ecology on Behalf of Wokingham Borough Council.
- Mathews, F., Kubasiewicz, L. M., Gurnell, J., Harrower, C. A., Macdonald, R. A. & Shore, R.F. 2018. A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals. A report by the

Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage, Peterborough, Natural England.

Guidance

Great crested newts: advice for making planning decisions

How to assess a planning application when there are great crested newts on or near a proposed development site.

From: **Natural England** ([/government/organisations/natural-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england))

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Applies to England

Contents

- How GCN are protected
- District level licensing schemes for GCN
- When to ask for a survey
- Assess the effect of development on GCN
- Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures
- Site management and monitoring

This is Natural England's 'standing advice' for great crested newts (GCN). It is a material planning consideration for local planning authorities (LPAs). You should take this advice into account when making planning decisions. It forms part of a [collection of standing advice for protected species](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#standing-advice-for-protected-species) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications#standing-advice-for-protected-species>).

You should read this guidance alongside [protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-and-development-advice-for-local-planning-authorities) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-and-development-advice-for-local-planning-authorities>).

Following this advice:

- avoids the need for you to consult on the negative effects of planning applications on GCN in most cases
- helps you make decisions on development proposals

You may need a qualified ecologist to advise you on the planning application and supporting evidence. You can find one using either the:

- [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environment Management \(CIEEM\) directory](https://cieem.net/i-need/finding-a-consultant/) (<https://cieem.net/i-need/finding-a-consultant/>)
- [Environmental Data Services directory](https://www.endsdirectory.com/) (<https://www.endsdirectory.com/>)

How GCN are protected

GCN are European protected species (EPS) protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture them
- deliberately destroy their eggs
- damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places (including when GCN are not present)
- possess, control or transport them (or any part, alive or dead)
- sell, exchange or offer for sale or exchange

It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb them while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection
- obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection
- possess or transport them (or any part, alive or dead)
- sell, offer, or publish an advert to sell them

GCN are included on the list of [species of principle importance in England](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england>) under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

You need to consider the conservation of GCN as part of your planning decision. Find out more about your [biodiversity duty](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>).

The developer must comply with the legal protection of GCN.

The developer may need a [GCN mitigation licence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>)

[licence](#)) to carry out their proposal.

You can find further guidance on surveys, mitigation, management and monitoring for GCN in the:

- [Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook \(https://www.froglife.org/info-advice/our-publications/great-crested-newt-conservation-handbook/\)](https://www.froglife.org/info-advice/our-publications/great-crested-newt-conservation-handbook/) published on the Froglife website
- [Great crested newt mitigation guidelines \(https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140605121141/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/810429?category=30014\)](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140605121141/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/810429?category=30014) published on the Natural England evidence catalogue

These documents may not be accessible to assistive technology.

District level licensing schemes for GCN

District level licensing (DLL) is an alternative approach to traditional [mitigation licences \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence\)](#) to develop sites which could affect GCN.

It aims to increase numbers of GCN by providing new or better habitats in targeted areas to benefit their wider population.

DLL is a simpler, quicker process for developers than applying for a mitigation licence. If there is a DLL scheme in the area, developers can simply apply for a DLL licence and pay for compensation ponds.

Read [Great crested newts: district level licensing schemes for local planning authorities \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-district-level-licensing-for-local-planning-authorities\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-district-level-licensing-for-local-planning-authorities) for guidance on how to make planning decisions for development proposals using DLL.

If a DLL scheme is not available or the developer chooses not to use it, you should follow the guidance in this standing advice when assessing planning applications.

When to ask for a survey

If the developer has chosen not to use a DLL where one exists, you should ask them for a survey if any of the following criteria apply:

- distribution and historical records suggest GCN may be present - you can [search the National Biodiversity Network Atlas \(https://nbnatlas.org/\)](https://nbnatlas.org/) by species and location
- there's a suitable water body such as a pond or ditch within 500 metres (m) of the development, even if it only holds water for some of the year

- the development site includes refuges, such as log piles, rubble, grassland, scrub, woodland or hedgerows within 500m of suitable aquatic habitats (static or slow moving water bodies)

Surveys of water bodies within 250m of the development are usually sufficient. Developers may need to increase this to 500m if there are no obvious barriers to GCN dispersing into the wider environment.

Absence of a record does not mean there are no GCN. It could mean there is no survey data available for that location.

Survey work can include:

- presence or absence surveys, which can include eDNA sampling
- population size surveys of water bodies
- terrestrial and aquatic habitat surveys

Survey data provided by the developer should be no older than 4 survey seasons. The data must reflect the status of the development site. If the development proposal is predicted to have a negative effect on GCN, it's important to ask for recent data to make sure it's accurate.

Surveys should also meet industry standards, unless you have sufficient information to assess the application without this data, in line with [licensing policy 4](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/european-protected-species-policies-for-mitigation-licences#policy-4-alternative-sources-of-evidence-to-reduce-standard-survey-requirements) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/european-protected-species-policies-for-mitigation-licences#policy-4-alternative-sources-of-evidence-to-reduce-standard-survey-requirements>). This allows for developers to propose worst-case scenario compensation in certain circumstances.

You must check if the ecologist holds the appropriate and up-to-date survey licence to carry out surveys for GCN. CIEEM publishes:

- [competencies required for species surveys](https://cieem.net/resource/competencies-for-species-surveys) (<https://cieem.net/resource/competencies-for-species-survey-css/>)
- advice on the [valid age of ecological reports and surveys](https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf) (<https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>)

Assess the effect of development on GCN

Developers should submit information with their planning application on how their development proposal avoids or mitigates harm to GCN.

If a development site is not in a DLL scheme, developers should submit qualitative and quantitative information with their planning application on how their development proposal avoids or mitigates harm to GCN.

If there's likely to be a negative effect on GCN, you should consider these factors to assess the development site's importance:

- the number of GCN populations and their size

- the nature of the population - for example, if the development site includes a breeding water body or is connected to other important populations
- how important the development site is to the local and national GCN population, for example how near it is to a [site of special scientific interest \(SSSI\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-public-body-responsibilities) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-public-body-responsibilities>) where GCN is a listed species

Use this table to see what impact development would have on GCN and their habitat.

Level of impact	GCN habitat affected by development
Normally high impact	breeding ponds
	terrestrial habitat within 50m of ponds
	isolation caused by fragmentation of the habitat
Normally high to medium impact	non-breeding ponds occupied by GCN
	terrestrial habitat 50m to 250m from ponds
Normally medium impact	partial or temporary destruction or change to the habitat
	post-development interference, such as pollution or the introduction of fish
Normally low impact	temporary disturbance
	terrestrial habitat further than 250m from ponds

When you assess the planning application, you must look at other GCN habitats within 500m because GCN move and are unlikely to stay in one place.

The location of ponds for GCN is important because GCN ponds can be lost or their value greatly reduced by:

- public access to the pond
- introduction of fish or non-native plants to the pond
- pollution
- lack of access for maintenance and management
- fragmentation and lack of connectivity with suitable habitat nearby

Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures

Where possible development proposals should avoid negative effects on GCN. Where this is not possible, the developer will need to include adequate mitigation or, as a last resort, compensation measures in their development proposal to allow you to make a planning decision.

Mitigation measures could include:

- leaving ponds in place
- leaving or enhance the surrounding habitat
- providing additional shelters for winter hibernation
- connecting habitats that are suitable for GCN

If the developer cannot avoid destroying a GCN breeding pond, they should compensate for this by:

- replacing the lost pond with at least 2 new high quality ponds of the same area or more on the development site
- making sure the new ponds are ready for GCN before the old pond is destroyed - this is likely to take at least one full growing season
- safeguarding or replacing other ponds which may be used by GCN within 500m - the developer will need an [EPS mitigation licence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>) to do this

For more information on mitigation plans and compensation measures, read [Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>).

Planning and licence conditions

If the developer has chosen not to use a DLL where one exists and their activities are likely to affect GCN, the developer must apply for a [GCN mitigation licence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>). You may also need to add mitigation or compensation strategies as a condition of planning permission.

Before you can grant planning permission, you must:

- work with the relevant ecologist to make sure these conditions do not conflict with the requirements of a GCN mitigation licence
- be confident that Natural England will issue a licence – read section 4 of [Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>)

You do not need to consult Natural England on the wording or discharge (approval) of any conditions you impose on a development proposal. Natural England is unable to provide advice on this.

Natural England will not generally issue a licence until planning conditions relating to protected species have been discharged. This applies to conditions that are intended to be and capable of being discharged before development begins.

Natural England will only confirm if you need a licence when the development proposal is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Enhance biodiversity

To meet your [biodiversity duty \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity), you should suggest ways for the developer to:

- create new or enhanced habitats on the development site
- achieve improvements in biodiversity through good design
- follow other relevant plans and strategies for nature

Site management and monitoring

For development sites not in a DLL scheme, you should consider the need for site monitoring and management. These measures are likely to be needed by protected species licences.

A site management plan could include:

- aquatic vegetation management in ponds
- clearance of shading tree or scrub cover around pond margins
- desilting and clearance of leaf-fall
- mowing, cutting or grazing of grassland
- woodland and scrub management
- measures to prevent the public and dogs from disturbing the ponds

A maintenance plan should deal with:

- the effects of introducing fish to the pond
- pond leakage
- risk of pollution runoff from new surroundings
- dumping of rubbish
- fires or other damage
- damage to fences
- tunnel silting or blockage
- damage to interpretation boards

The plan should monitor GCN and their habitats, including ponds, during and after development. It should include carrying out management works to habitats and additional survey work to check that mitigation measures are working as intended, followed by remedial work if needed.

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