



HYDE NURSERY NEW ROAD RUSCOMBE

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EcIA)

WESTBOURNE GROUP

DEVELOPMENTS | INTERIORS | PRIVATE RESIDENCIES

Written By:	MJRS
Checked By:	LD
Date:	01/10/26
Document File Ref:	WEST25321_EcIA_Rev D
Revision:	D
Date of last revision:	20/10/26
Revised by:	MJRS

QUALITY ASSURANCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (2nd Edition, December 2017).

The facts stated in this report are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, and any opinions expressed are held genuinely and in accordance with the accepted standards of the profession. ACD Environmental Ltd is a CIEEM Registered Practice.

Client:	Westbourne Homes
Site/job:	Hyde Nursery, New Road, Ruscombe
Author:	Matthew Simmons ACIEEM
Technical review:	Lisa Durrant MCIEEM

CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2	INTRODUCTION	3
3	PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION	5
4	METHODOLOGY	13
5	BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS	17
6	SCHEME DESIGN	30
7	ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES	31
8	BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN	34
9	CONCLUSIONS	37
	APPENDIX 1: BASELINE HABITAT MAP (BNG)	38
	APPENDIX 2: UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SURVEY MAP (JULY 2026)	39
	APPENDIX 3: HABITAT CREATION PLAN	40
	APPENDIX 4: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS	41
	APPENDIX 5: FIELD SURVEY METHODOLOGY	42
	APPENDIX 6: BIODIVERSITY METRIC METHODOLOGY	47

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of report	To assess the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development at a parcel of land known as Hyde Nursery, New Road, Ruscombe , hereafter referred to as 'the Application Site, clearly identifying any potential effects on important ecological features (including designated sites or protected species), making design recommendations, and detailing any mitigation and/or compensation measures that would be required and how these could be secured. The report also details how the proposed development could achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.
Description of proposed development	Full planning permission is being sought for the demolition of all existing buildings and subsequent construction of 18 residential units and associated hard and soft landscaping.
Brief description of the Site	The Application Site comprises the site of a former plant nursery west of New Road, Ruscombe, Reading. Habitats on site comprise sparsely vegetated urban land (bramble scrub for the purpose of BNG), Developed land; sealed surface, numerous buildings, numerous greenhouses and some pockets of woodland and associated scrub. The large village Twyford lies immediately to the west with the wider landscape to the east consisting of open farmland with pockets of woodland and traditional orchard. A number of ponds are present within 500m of the Application Site some of which have confirmed presence of great crested newt (GCN) <i>Triturus cristatus</i> from historic surveys. The Application Site falls within a red zone for GCN under NatureSpace's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) map.
Designated nature conservation sites	The Application Site is situated within the Impact Risk Zone of Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Consultation with Natural England is not considered necessary given the nature and scale of the proposed development.
Key habitats	The most important habitats present within the Application Site comprise the woodland and associated scrub. There are several waste piles that provide suitable habitat for reptiles and amphibians.
Key species	The Application Site has the potential to support invertebrates, reptiles, nesting birds, roosting and foraging/commuting bats, badger and other mammals.

Potential impacts & mitigation/compensation measures	Clearance works to any areas of the greenhouses, ruderal vegetation, waste piles, scrub and woodland within the Application Site will be carried out under the supervision of an ecologist to ensure reptiles and amphibians are not harmed. The Application Site should be entered into NatureSpace's District Level Licencing Scheme and all clearance works undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. All measures should be outline within a Precautionary Woking Method Statement (PWMS). Clearance of suitable bird nesting habitat including the scattered trees and bramble scrub will need to take place outside of the nesting bird season or following a check for nesting birds by an ecologist. A sensitive lighting scheme will be required to avoid impacts on commuting and foraging bats. A bat roost of brown long eared bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i> has been confirmed by emergence surveys carried out by AA Environmental. As such bat licence will need to be sort from Natural England prior to the demolition of the dwelling. Further details are provided within the Supplementary Bat Report ¹
Enhancements	The proposed development will lead to a -31.74% loss in habitat units and a 155.10% gain in hedgerow units. The proposals will involve the creation of a number of urban trees. Species rich native hedgerow is to be created at the Application Site alongside ornamental planting. Habitat creation and enhancement measures and long-term management and monitoring will be outlined in a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) report. Specific enhancements for protected species should include incorporating bat and bird boxes into the structure of the new buildings, installing bat and bird boxes on retained mature trees and creating hibernacula for reptiles, great crested newt and invertebrates.
Conclusions	Provided the measures outlined within this report are followed, the proposals will be in accordance with the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategies and the NPPF.

¹ Supplementary Bat Report, AA Environmental (2026)

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. This report provides an assessment of the ecological effects of the proposed development of an area of land known as Hyde Nursery, New Road, Ruscombe (see **Image 1**). The principal author of this report is Matthew Simmons. The client is Westbourne Homes.

Background

- 2.2. The Application Site comprises a parcel of land west of New Road, Ruscombe. It is understood to be a former plant nursery. The Application Site is predominantly comprised of a number of disused buildings and greenhouses. An access track leads into the site off New Road. Three areas of woodland are present on site, the main extent of which is located in the west of the Application Site. Habitats directly surrounding the greenhouses/buildings comprise sparsely vegetated urban land with a number of scattered trees. This is thought to have been bramble scrub prior to clearance that appears to have taken place a number of times between 2020 and 2026. An area of woodland in the west of Application Site also appears to have been removed. This is known as degradation in BNG and the baseline will revert to what was likely present pre-clearance for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

Competence

- 2.3. This report has been written by Matthew Simmons. Matthew has five years' experience working in ecological consultancy and has undertaken a wide variety of surveys for habitats and protected species. He is also an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM).
- 2.4. A Technical Review of this report has been undertaken in line with ACD Environmental Ltd's Quality Assurance procedures. The Technical Review was undertaken by Lisa Durrant. Lisa is a Senior Ecologist at ACD Environmental Ltd. She has 15 years' experience in ecological consultancy and holds Natural England Class License for bats (Level 2), great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*, and barn owl *Tyto alba*. She is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM).

Purpose of the report

2.5. The purpose of this Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) is as follows:

- To identify and describe all potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed development
- To set out the mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation and relevant planning policy, and to address any potentially significant ecological effects
- To identify how mitigation measures will/could be secured
- To identify any significant residual ecological effects and set out any compensation measures proposed to address these
- To identify appropriate enhancement measures in order to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain
- To set out the requirements for post-construction monitoring



Image 1: Application Site location and approximate site boundary shown in red. Map data (2017):
Google. Imagery (2017): Getmapping plc

3 PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Legislation

3.1. The following pieces of legislation are of specific relevance to this assessment:

- The Environment Act 2021². This piece of legislation is of relevance because all planning permissions granted in England are mandated to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain from 12th February 2024 (unless exemptions apply and small sites were mandated on 2nd April 2024, neither of which are applicable to the Application Site).
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019³. This piece of legislation is of relevance because the Application Site supports great crested newt, a European Protected Species (EPS).
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁴ (as amended, including by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This piece of legislation is relevant because the Application Site is within the zone of influence of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is protected in England under this Act.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006⁵. Section 41 includes lists of habitats and species recognised as of 'principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity. Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 requires all public bodies to have regard for biodiversity conservation when carrying out their function. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty'.

3.2. The following pieces of legislation have been considered, but are not considered to be of specific relevance in this case:

- Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (no badger setts are present within the Application Site or sufficiently close to be affected)
- Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (there are no hedgerows within the Application Site or sufficiently close to be affected / the Regulations do not apply to the

² Great Britain. Environmental Act 2021 [online]. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>

³ Great Britain. *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019* No.579 [online]. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111179512/contents>

⁴ Great Britain. *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* [online]. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>

⁵ Great Britain. *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* [online]. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

hedgerows in this context)

- Water Framework Directive 2000. (there are no water features onsite and/or considerations in terms of groundwater).

Environment Act 2021

- 3.3. In accordance with the Environment Act 2021, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will apply from January 2024 for developments in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless exempt. It will apply to small sites from April 2024.
- 3.4. Schedule 7A of the Act makes provision for grants of planning permission in England to be subject to a condition, to secure that the 'biodiversity gain objective' is met.
- 3.5. The 'biodiversity gain objective' is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage.
- 3.6. The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of—
- (a) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
 - (b) the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and
 - (c) the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
- 3.7. The relevant percentage is 10%, but the Secretary of State may by regulations amend this paragraph so as to change the relevant percentage.
- 3.8. The biodiversity value of any habitat or habitat enhancement are to its value as calculated in accordance with the 'Biodiversity Metric'.
- 3.9. Every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition in sub-paragraph (2), which states that the development may not be begun unless:
- (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority
 - (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

- 3.10. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will have to approve a biodiversity net gain plan for development work before it can start.

Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2026⁶

- 3.11. Policies N1-N4 and N6 of the NPPF relate to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'.

- 3.12. Policy N1 of the NPPF states the following:

1. *"Development plans should safeguard and enhance the natural environment, and reflect the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, by using Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Protected Landscape Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans, National Forest Strategies, Community Forest Plans and other relevant evidence at the most appropriate level to:*
 - a. *Set out the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and areas of importance for their landscape, geodiversity or biodiversity value in the plan area, and identify other features which require particular consideration in managing development due to their environmental value such as chalk streams;*
 - b. *Identify opportunities for the conservation, enhancement and recovery of landscapes, sensitive waterbodies, habitats and priority or threatened species, including through habitat restoration, the use of nature-based solutions, and the creation and strengthening of ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures (including opportunities which exist at a catchment or landscape scale across plan boundaries);*

⁶ HM Government. *National Planning Policy Framework August 2026*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a8334c03bd75b81e2329ac4/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

- c. *Steer the location of development, including through site allocations, in ways which utilise land of least environmental value where that would be consistent with other policies in this Framework. This should include limiting the scale and extent of development within Protected Landscapes, avoiding the use of higher quality agricultural land where land of poorer quality is available and avoiding and minimising harm to designated sites of importance for nature. Areas which could become of particular importance for nature identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be taken into account as opportunities to integrate development with environmental restoration, but should not necessarily preclude the allocation of land for development; and*
 - d. *Set out standards for green infrastructure provision, in a way which complements and/or incorporates those for recreational land (as set out in policy HC1). These should draw upon Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards for England, tailored as necessary to local circumstances.*
2. *Development plans should only set local standards for biodiversity net gain which are in excess of the statutory net gain requirement where this is for specific site allocations, and is fully justified and deliverable. Local standards should not extend to categories of development which are exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain."*

3.13. Policy N2 of the NPPF states the following:

- 1. *"To contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery, development proposals should:*
- a. *Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside, and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced (including through requirements for biodiversity net gain where these apply);*
- b. *Take into account the quality of agricultural land (including that classified as best and most versatile agricultural land, and its grade), and if significant development of agricultural land is necessary, use areas of poorer quality land where possible;*
- c. *Take suitable opportunities to connect to and strengthen ecological networks that extend beyond the site, drawing on the measures proposed by Local Nature Recovery Strategies, National Forest Strategies and Community Forest Plans, where present, and other relevant assessments;*
- d. *Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation*

- value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well-designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings;*
- e. Use green infrastructure provided as part of the scheme and nature-based solutions to secure multiple benefits: such as for biodiversity; surface water and pollution management (including maintaining flow rates and water quality); climate change mitigation and adaptation, and recreation;*
 - f. Minimise any adverse impacts on biodiversity and include features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Development proposals should incorporate integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks) into their construction unless there are compelling technical reasons which prevent their use, or would make them ineffective; and*
 - g. Ensure that green infrastructure and other features to support nature are located and designed to minimise risk of future failure, and that appropriate measures are in place for any necessary long-term management.*
- 2. If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then the development should be refused.*
- 3. Development proposals may incorporate biodiversity enhancements which exceed the statutory objective for biodiversity net gain, but this should only be a requirement where it 90 is set out in up-to-date development plan policies for specific site allocations. Decisionmakers should not give weight to other development plan policies which require biodiversity gains which go beyond the statutory framework, including where a policy requires gains for development proposals which are exempt.”*

3.14. Policy N3 of the NPPF states the following:

- 1. “In recognition of the benefits which trees can provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the character and quality of the built environment, development proposals should:*
 - a. Make new streets tree-lined (unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate in specific streets), and incorporate trees in other suitable locations, such as in parks and through the provision of community orchards;*

- b. Ensure that the selection of species and their placement is compatible with highways and other infrastructure requirements and the needs of different users of public spaces; and will be effective in helping to adapt to the effects of climate change and delivering other environmental benefits. Suitable arboricultural advice should be sought, and proposals discussed with highways and trees officers where necessary, so that the right trees are planted in the right places; and*
- c. Make provision for the long-term maintenance of both existing and newly-planted trees which form part of the development.”*

3.15. Policy N4 of the NPPF states the following:

- 1. “Development proposals within Protected Landscapes should be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the Protected Landscape. Substantial weight should be placed on the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these areas, and to conserving and enhancing wildlife and cultural heritage in National Parks and the Broads.*
- 2. Proposals for major development within Protected Landscapes should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. To inform a decision about whether exceptional circumstances exist, consideration of such proposals should include an assessment of:*
 - a. The need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations such as maintaining a sufficient supply of minerals, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
 - b. The cost of, and scope for, developing outside the Protected Landscape, or meeting the need for the development in some other way; and*
 - c. Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which it could be moderated.*
- 3. Where, exceptionally, proposals for major development are approved within Protected Landscapes, steps should be taken to mitigate potential adverse impacts on their special qualities and statutory purposes, including on features such as tranquillity and dark skies.*
- 4. Development proposals within the setting of Protected Landscapes should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the Protected Landscape.”*

3.16. Policy N6 of the NPPF states the following:

1. *To support the conservation of important habitats, species and sites of geodiversity value, development proposals affecting:*
 - a. *A site of international importance, which for the purpose of this policy is a habitats site, should be refused unless:*
 - i. *An appropriate assessment has concluded that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site (either individually or in combination with other developments), or the proposal can satisfy the derogation tests; and/or*
 - ii. *The impact of development on the relevant protected features of the protected site is being addressed through an Environmental Delivery Plan which has been made and the developer has committed to paying the nature restoration levy.*
 - b. *A site of national importance, which for the purpose of this policy is one designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, should only be supported if:*
 - i. *There would be no adverse effect (either individually or in combination with other developments) on the site's features of special scientific interest; or*
 - ii. *The benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both the likely impact on the features of special scientific interest, and any broader impact on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest; or*
 - iii. *The impact of development on the relevant protected feature of the protected site is being addressed through an Environmental Delivery Plan which has been made and the developer has committed to paying the nature restoration levy.*
 - c. *A site of local importance, which for the purpose of this policy is one designated as a Local Nature Reserve or identified as a local wildlife site, local geological site or equivalent in the development plan, should only be supported if:*
 - i. *There would not be a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site; or*
 - ii. *The benefits of development in the location proposed clearly outweigh the likely impact on the features which make the site valuable for nature conservation.*
2. *Irrespective of a site's status in nature conservation terms, development proposals which would entail the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.*

3. *This policy applies to development on land inside or outside a designated area, if it would have an impact on the identified biodiversity or geodiversity value of the area concerned.”*

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 29 January 2010)⁷

3.17. Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) states the following:

‘Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.

Development:

- a) Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or,*
- b) Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or*
- c) That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and:*
 - i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts or;*
 - ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided*

Policy CP8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area states the following:

“Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.”

⁷ Wokingham Borough Council (2010). *Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document*). Adopted 29 January 2010.

4 METHODOLOGY

Scope of assessment

- 4.1. The EcIA focuses on 'important ecological features', i.e. those which are considered to be of relevance to the decision-making process and could be affected by the proposed development. Important ecological features include protected species, habitats/species of 'principal importance' for biodiversity conservation (i.e. Section 41 habitats/species⁸), birds of conservation concern⁹, and invasive non-native plant species¹⁰.

Zone of influence

- 4.2. The 'zone of influence' (ZOI) is the area over which important ecological features (on-site or off-site) may be affected as a result of the proposed development and associated activities. The ZOI can vary for different ecological features, depending on their sensitivity to environmental change.
- 4.3. The ZOI for statutory designated sites has been informed by Natural England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones¹¹ (SSSI IRZs). IRZs define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts. This has been determined as part of the desk study, as discussed below. In this case it is clear that the Application Site is within the IRZ of Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI however, the type of development proposed is not considered likely to impact the SSSI and therefore Natural England does not need to be consulted specifically on this matter.

Desk Study

- 4.4. The following information was requested from Thame Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) for a search area of 2km around the Application Site boundary

⁸ Section 41 (41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, which came into force on 1st October 2006, requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

⁹ Red list species are those that are globally threatened, whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years (i.e. by more than 50% in 25 years), or which have declined historically and not recovered. Amber list species are those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years (by more than 25% but less than 50% in 25 years), those whose population has declined historically but recovered recently, rare species (<300 breeding pairs or <900 wintering individuals), those with internationally important populations in the UK, those with localised populations, and those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe. Species that meet none of these criteria are Green-listed.

¹⁰ Invasive non-native plants (Section 14) on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

¹¹ Natural England (June 2019). Natural England's Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (For use by Local Planning Authorities to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites and determine when to consult Natural England).

- Legally protected and notable species records;
- Statutory designated sites; and
- Non-statutory designated sites

4.5. The data search was requested on 18th June 2026 and received on 19th June 2026.

4.6. The MAGIC website¹² was used to carry out a 10km data search for SSSIs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) with an IRZ that falls within the Application Site, in June 2026.

Field surveys

4.7. A summary of ecological field surveys is provided in Table 2. Descriptions of full survey methods are provided in Appendix 5

Table 1: Field surveys

Survey	Surveyor/s	Survey date/s	Study Area	Relevant guidelines
Combined UK Habitat Classification Survey and Preliminary Roost Assessment PRA	Matthew Simmons/Jake Cranston	9 th July 2026	Red line boundary	UKHab Ltd (2023) ¹³ Collins (2023) ¹⁴
Bat Emergence Surveys	AA Environmental Ltd	3 rd August, 27 th August, 21 st September 2026	Red line boundary	Collins (2023)

¹² Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside [online]. Available at: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

¹³ UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <http://www.ukhab.org>)

¹⁴ Collins, J (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)

Limitations

- 4.8. There were no limitations to the survey undertaken by ACD Environmental in July 2026.

Assessment methodology

- 4.9. The habitats and species evaluations and likely effects are made with reference to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment¹⁵.
- 4.10. The importance of ecological features has been assessed by carrying out a suite of specialist surveys (Table 2) to determine whether protected species/habitats, and/or species/habitats of conservation concern are present in the Application Site or its ZOI, then comparing their status at the international/national/county/regional/local scale, through the use of available contextual information, to establish the importance of those features in a geographical context.
- 4.11. The overall effect of the proposed development on a given feature has been predicted, considering the baseline data collected through desk study and field survey, and the various impacts expected to occur. An assessment has then been made as to whether the effect on each important ecological feature is likely to be significant or not.
- 4.12. Significance is the weight that should be attached to effects when decisions are made. For the purpose of EclA, a likely significant effect is an effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for important ecological features (which could be species populations/groups of species, habitats, or a designated site), or for biodiversity in general. Effects have been considered significant at a wide range of scales, from national to local.
- 4.13. A sequential process has been adopted to avoid/mitigate, and if required, compensate for significant negative ecological effects. This is referred to as the 'Mitigation Hierarchy'. Avoidance includes measures to change the design of the proposed development to avoid an impact occurring. Mitigation includes measures to avoid or reduce the negative impacts of the proposed development. Compensation addresses significant negative residual effects (those likely to occur after avoidance and mitigation have been considered). It is this objective of compensation, and not its location, that distinguishes compensation from 'mitigation'.
- 4.14. In EclA, it is only essential to assess and report significant residual effects that remain after mitigation measures have been taken into account. However, the potential significant effects without mitigation as well as the residual significant effects following mitigation have been

¹⁵ CIEEM (2019). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal, Version 1.3. updated September 2024. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

presented where the mitigation proposed is experimental, unproven or controversial and/or to demonstrate the importance of securing the measures proposed through planning conditions or obligations.

Valuation

4.15. The value of important ecological features (sites, habitats and species) is assigned according to their scale of importance using the following terms:

- International importance – ecological features of international importance such as SPAs and SACs, and/or sites that support internationally-important populations of species.
- National importance – ecological features of national importance such as SSSIs, features which meet the criteria for designation as a SSSI, and/or sites that support nationally-important populations of certain species.
- Regional importance – ecological features of regional importance, such as a species population that is of importance at a scale greater than the County, but does not meet the criteria for National Importance
- County importance – ecological features of county-scale importance, including features that have been designated as local wildlife sites, or meet the criteria for designation as a local wildlife site, and/or county-important populations of species
- Local importance – ecological features of local importance, including habitats or species populations listed as being of nature conservation importance (e.g. S41, local BAP, or listed in local planning policy) which are not considered to be of County importance by virtue of the quality, size/number, rarity, the extent to which they are threatened throughout their range, or to their rate of decline.

Precautionary principle

4.16. The evaluation of significant effects is based on the results of the ecological surveys carried out in the Application Site and other available evidence. In cases of reasonable doubt, where it is not possible to robustly justify a conclusion of no significant effect, a significant effect is assumed. Where uncertainty exists, it has been duly acknowledged.

5 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Context

- 5.1. The Application Site comprises a parcel of land adjacent to New Road, Ruscombe. Habitats on site comprise a mixture of sparsely vegetated land, buildings and associated hardstanding. Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved is present in the west of the site. Other woodland - broadleaved is present immediately south of building B9 in the north east of the Application Site. Numerous urban trees are present across the Application Site. The wider landscape consists of the large village of Twyford to the west and open countryside with pockets of woodland to the east. A number of ponds are thought to be present within 500m of the red line.

Designated Sites

- 5.2. SSSIs, SACs and SPAs with IRZs within the boundary of Application Site are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Statutory designated sites with an IRZ within the Application Site

Name of statutory designated sites	Approximate distance and direction from Application Site	Reason for designation	Scale of importance
Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI	3km south	An area of wet woodland, which supports over 10% of the English population of the nationally rare Loddon lily <i>Leucojum aestivum</i> , and a number of locally restricted plants such as wild daffodil <i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i> .	National

5.3. Local (non-statutory) wildlife sites within 2km of the Application Site are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Local wildlife sites within 2km of the Application Site

Name of Local Wildlife Site	Approximate distance and direction from the Application Site	Nature Conservation Interest	Scale of importance
Ruscombe Village Pond LWS	340m south	This pond supports populations of great crested newt and smooth newt <i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i> .	County
Ruscombe and Vale Woods LWS	310m east	Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> dominated woodland. Species within the ground flora comprise early purple orchid <i>Orchis mascula</i> and twayblade <i>Neottia ovata</i> . Several wet depressions are present as a result of quarrying.	County
Loddon River LWS	1.1km south west	A seventeen kilometre stretch of the River Loddon running from Swallowfield to its confluence with the River Thames near Wargrave. This section of the river has a diversity of features such as adjacent marsh, islands, inlets, riffles, river cliffs and extensive and varied	County

		channel vegetation. Water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> have been recorded along this stretch of river.	
Twyford Gravel Pits (Loddon Nature Reserve and Charvil Country Park) LWS	1.2km south east	A large, flooded gravel pit that has several islands and a ragged, scrubby fringe that skirts around the shallows. This creates ideal conditions for wintering birds such as gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> , smew <i>Mergus albellus</i> , tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> , pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> , cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> and snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> .	County
Windsor Ait (LWS)	1.4km south east	A small wood with elements of both wet woodland and fen UKBAP Priority Habitats.	County
Charvil Country Park West and Charvil Meadows	1.4km south east	Charvil Meadows comprises a series of traditionally managed, periodically inundated meadows bordering the River Loddon, interspersed with hedgerows	County

		and a wide scrub and tree-lined ditch. The meadows support some typical grassland wildflowers such as agrimony, common bird's-foot-trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> common knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i> , common sorrel <i>Rumex acetosa</i> , lady's bedstraw <i>Galium verum</i> and meadow buttercup <i>Ranunculus acris</i> , along with localised areas of sedges <i>Carex s p.</i> and wetland species.	
Whistley Mill Farm Copse	1.6km south west	A small area of woodland next to the river Loddon. The ground flora includes broad-leaved helleborine <i>Epipactis helleborine</i> , bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides sp.</i> and yellow pimpernel <i>Lysimachia nemorum</i> .	County
Scarletts Wood	1.6km north east	Ancient woodland comprising oak <i>Quercus sp.</i> , ash, and hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> coppice.	County
Wargrave Chalk Pit	1.6km north	An excellent example of the Upper Chalk unit. Designated for	County

		geological importance only.	
Cuttler's Coppice	1.8km north east	A small area of semi-natural ancient woodland with an oak dominated canopy over hazel coppice and with bluebell dominating the ground layer.	County

- 5.4. Impacts on LWS present within 2km of the Application Site are not anticipated as a result of the proposed development.
- 5.5. The closest parcel of ancient semi-natural woodland, which is a Priority Habitat, is located approximately 1.1km north east of the Application Site.
- 5.6. The closest parcel of priority habitat inventory – deciduous woodland is 270m east of the Application Site.
- 5.7. The closest instance of traditional orchard is 50m north east of the Application Site.
- 5.8. The closest instance of wood pasture and parkland is 1km south of the Application Site.
- 5.9. Priority habitat coastal and floodplain grazing marsh is present 1km west of the Application Site.
- 5.10. The river Loddon is located 1.4km south west of the Application Site and is a chalk river. Chalk rivers a priority habitat.
- 5.11. Two priority ponds are located circa. 1.3km south west of the Application Site.

Habitats

- 5.12. Habitats are listed in order of importance. All the features described are shown on the Baseline Habitat Map in Appendix 2, and photographs in Appendix 4.

Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved (w1h5)

- 5.13. An area of other woodland - mixed - mainly broadleaved was identified in the west of the Application Site. Species in the canopy layer comprised ash *Fraxinus excelsior* (dominant),

oak *Quercus sp.* (occasional) and cypress *Cupressus sp.* (frequent). Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, and yew *Taxus baccata* were all present in the understorey which was dominated by cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and bracken *Pteridium sp.* Ground flora within the woodland was limited and comprised cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* garlic mustard *Alliaria petiolata* and common nettle *Urtica dioica*.

Other woodland – broadleaved (w1g)

- 5.14. A small pocket of other woodland – broadleaved was present south of the dwelling in the north east of the Site. Woody species comprised beech *Fagus sylvatica*, yew, oak, cedar *Cedrus sp.* and elder *Sambucus nigra*. This habitat is also present along the southern boundary.

Horticulture, polyculture (c1f7)

- 5.15. Five abandoned greenhouses were present at the Application Site. These were disused and in a state of disrepair.

Urban trees (u³²)

- 5.16. Numerous urban trees were present across the Application Site. Species comprised ash, willow *Salix sp.*, lime *Tilia x europaea*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, holly, cypress, oak, cedar, cherry *Prunus sp.*, elder and beech.

Sparsely vegetated urban land (u1f)

- 5.17. Sparsely vegetated urban land was present across the Application Site. This habitat has been colonised by ruderal species comprising mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, common nettle and bramble. Piles of waste were noted within this habitat. This habitat is thought to have previously consisted of a mixture of bramble scrub and other woodland – broadleaved. This is reflected in the Statutory Metric.

Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)

- 5.18. Developed land; sealed surface was present at the Application Site comprising an access track and small area of hardstanding associated with several sheds.

Buildings (u1b5)

- 5.19. Nine buildings were present within the red line boundary of the Application Site. These comprised eight buildings used for storage and one two storey dwelling. These buildings were all found to be in state of disrepair with significant levels of vandalism noted.

Non native ornamental hedgerow (h2b)

- 5.20. Non native ornamental hedgerow was present along the northern boundary comprised of Californian privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*.

Flora (including invasive non-native species)

- 5.21. The data search returned records of juniper *Juniperus communis*, summer snowflake *Leucojum aestivum subsp. aestivum*, English bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*, good king henry *Blitum bonus-henricus*, heath speedwell *Veronica officinalis*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, large leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, marshwort *Helosciadium inundatum*, touch me not balsam *Impatiens noli-tangere*, wild strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, shady horsetail *Equisetum pratense*, least duckweed *Lemna minuta*, orange balsam *Impatiens capensis* and butterfly bush *Buddleja davidii*.
- 5.22. Schedule 9 plant species returned by the data search comprised Canadian waterweed *Elodea canadensis*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, New Zealand pygmyweed *Crassula helmsii*, Nuttal's waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*, orange balsam *Impatiens capensis* and rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*.
- 5.23. Cherry laurel dominated the understorey of the woodland in the west of the Application Site. Whilst not a schedule 9 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, it is known to be invasive in absence of management and can have severe negative effects of woodland ecosystems. All cherry laurel present should therefore be removed. Bracken was also present within this woodland. This should also be removed.

Fauna

Invertebrates

- 5.24. The data search returned records of the following invertebrate species within 2km of the Application Site; several solitary wasp species (*Nysson trimaculatus*, *Anoplius caviventris* and *Microdynerus exilis*), blue carpenter bee *Ceratina cyanea*, Lathbury's Nomad Bee *Nomada lathburiana*, Lobe-spurred Furrow Bee *Lasioglossum pauxillum*, Moss Carder Bee *Bombus muscorum*, red-tailed mason bee *Osmia bicolor*, sharp-collared furrow bee *Lasioglossum malachurum*, swollen-thighed blood bee *Sphecodes crassus*, yellow loosestrife bee *Macropis*

europaea, flea beetle *Longitarsus symphyti*, water beetle *Hydrochus elongatus*, alder leaf beetle *Agelastica alni*, cramp ball fungus weevil *Platyrhinus resinosus*, stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, small blue *Cupido minimus*, small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, swallowtail *Papilio machaon*, white admiral *Limenitis Camilla*, white letter hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*, common darter *Sympetrum striolatum*, blood vein *Timandra comae*, buff ermine *Spilosoma lutea*, cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae*, feathered gothic *Tholera decimalis*, gallium carpet *Epirrhoe galiata*, ghost moth *Hepialus humuli*, large nutmeg *Apamea anceps*, mottled rustic *Caradrina morpheus*, oak hook tip *Watsonalla binaria*, shaded broad bar *Scotopteryx chenopodiata*, shoulder striped wainscoat *Leucania comma*, small square spot *Diarsia rubi*, white ermine *Spilosoma lubricipeda*, wavy banded broadtail *Eupeodes nitens* and a hoverfly species *Neoascia interrupta*

- 5.25. The data search also returned records of invasive zebra mussel *Dreissena polymorpha* and an amphipod shrimp *Crangonyx pseudogracilis x floridanus*. These are aquatic species. Given that no waterbodies are present within the red line zebra mussel and amphipod shrimp are considered absent from the Application Site.
- 5.26. The habitats on-site including woodland, scattered trees and ruderal vegetation of value to several of the invertebrate species listed namely white letter hairstreak and stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*. Common darter, emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator* and red admiral *Vanessa atalanta* were both noted during the site visit in July 2026.

Fish

- 5.27. The data search returned records of barbel *Barbus barbus*, brown trout *Salmo trutta subsp. fario*, bullhead *Cottus perifretum*, European eel *Anguilla Anguilla* and brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* within 2km of the Application Site. There are no waterbodies on site. Fish are therefore considered absent from the Application Site.

Great crested newts

- 5.28. The data search returned 94 records of great crested newt within 2km of the Application Site, the closest of which was recorded approximately 20m east of the Application Site. Although there are no on site ponds there are nine waterbodies within 500m as well as three drainage ditches.
- 5.29. A search of MAGIC maps returned no granted EPS licences for great crested newt within 500m however great crested newt presence is confirmed at four different ponds within 500m metres by records submitted through class licence returns. The latest of these records is from 2017.

- 5.30. As such, due to the confirmed presence of GCN in the wider area and presence of suitable terrestrial habitat on site the Application Site is considered likely to support GCN in their terrestrial phase.

Other amphibians

- 5.31. The data search returned records of common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* and smooth newt. The Application Site provides suitable habitat for these species in their terrestrial phase

Reptiles

- 5.32. The data search returned records of slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*. The closest of these records to the Application Site is of grass snake records 340m east of the Application Site in 2020.
- 5.33. Although some suitable habitat in the form of ruderal vegetation, waste piles and woodland is present at the Application Site, these habitats are fragmented and most of the site comprises sparsely vegetated land, hardstanding and buildings/greenhouses. The Application Site has also been subject to significant levels of disturbance and vandalism in the past and it is likely that mats will be tampered with. Impacts on reptiles can likely be minimised through sensitive clearance methods under supervision of an ecologist. If reptiles are found during site clearance all works should cease and mitigation measures updated appropriately.

Birds

- 5.34. The data search returned records of a variety of bird species within 2km of the Application Site.
- 5.35. Species returned comprise barn owl *Tyto alba*, barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, black headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, black tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, brent goose *Branta bernicla*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, cattle egret *Ardea ibis*, Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti* common gull *Larus canus*, common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, common tern *Sterna Hirundo*, cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, curlew *Numenius Arquata*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, dunnoek *Prunella modularis*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*, gadwall *Mareca strepera*, garganey *Spatula querquedula*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia*, greater black backed gull *Larus marinus*, great northern diver *Gavia immer*, great white egret *Ardea alba*, green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, grey partridge *Perdix perdix*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, greylag goose *Anser answer*, hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, herring gull *Larus argentatus*, hobby *Falco Subbuteo*, house

martin *Delichon urbicum*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, lapwing *Vanellus Vanellus*, lesser black backed gull *Larus fuscus*, lesser redpoll *Acanthis flammea cabaret*, lesser spotted woodpecker *Dryobates minor*, linnet *Linaria cannabina*, little egret *Egretta garzetta*, little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*, little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, marsh tit *Poecile palustris*, meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Mediterranean gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*, merlin *Falco columbarius*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*, pink footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* pintail *Anas acuta*, pochard *Aythya farina*, red kite *Milvus milvus*, red breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, red shank *Tringa tetanus*, redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, rook *Corvus frugilegus* ruff *Calidris pugnax*, sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, shoveler *Spatula clypeata*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, smew *Mergellus albellus*, snipe *Gallinago Gallinago*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, stock dove *Columba oenas*, swift *Apus apus*, tawny owl *Strix aluco*, teal *Anas crecca*, tree sparrow *Passer montanus*, turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*, wheatear *Oenanthe Oenanthe*, whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* white fronted goose *Anser albifrons*, whitethroat *Curruca communis*, wigeon *Mareca Penelope*, willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, woodlark *Lullula arborea*, woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*, yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*.

- 5.36. The Application Site presents opportunities for a variety of common nesting bird species in the form of a number of buildings, scattered trees and woodland. A disused bird nest was noted within building B9 during the site visit in July 2026. A single woodpigeon was recorded passing over the Application Site during this survey. All trees, buildings, woodland and any emergent bramble scrub should be subject to a nesting bird check prior to any activity likely to cause disturbance to nesting birds at the Application Site e.g. vegetation clearance, demolition of buildings, activities generating significant levels of noise etc.

Bats

- 5.37. The data search returned 564 records of bat species within 2km of the Application Site. Species returned comprised an unidentified bat species *Chiroptera sp.* brown long eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri*, a long eared bat species *Plecotus sp.*, a Myotis species *Myotis sp.*, Nathusius's pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, noctule *Nyctalus noctule*, a Nyctalus species *Nyctalus sp.*, a pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus sp.*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*
- 5.38. A search of MAGIC maps returned three instances of granted EPS licences for bats within 2km of the Application Site. The closest of these is located approximately 400m south of the Application Site and is for the destruction of a resting place for common and soprano pipistrelle (2020-49294-EPS-MIT).
- 5.39. Five greenhouses, nine buildings and numerous trees are present at the Application Site all of which were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Out of these only Building B9 (the abandoned residential dwelling to the north east) was assessed as having potential to support roosting bats.
- 5.40. A full internal inspection of this building was undertaken during the site visit in July 2026. Bat droppings were noted in the loft and several slipped tiles were noted on the exterior of the building which have potential to support crevice dwelling bats. Broken windows/doors allow access into the building for roosting bats. Bat droppings were noted within the loft space. Three emergence surveys for bats are therefore required. It is worth noting that the roof void of building B9 was found to be lined with SuperFOIL SF40 insulation which is considered deadly to bats.
- 5.41. All other buildings/greenhouses at the Application Site are considered to have negligible suitability for supporting roosting bats due to a combination of light levels and lack of suitable roosting features.
- 5.42. Emergence surveys have been undertaken at the Application Site across August/September 2026 by AA Environmental. A roost of brown long eared bat was identified. As such a licence should be sought prior to demolition. Full mitigation measures for roosting bats are detailed within the Supplementary Bat Report by AA Environmental.

Hazel Dormouse

- 5.43. The data search returned no records of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* within 2km of the Application Site. The Application Site is considered unlikely to support hazel dormouse due to lack of suitable habitat and connectivity to the wider landscape. No further surveys are recommended for this species.

Water voles

- 5.44. The data search returned four records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* within 2km of the Application Site. The closest of these records is located 1.3km south east of the Application Site. There is no suitable habitat for water vole at the Application Site. Water vole are therefore considered likely absent and impacts on this species are not anticipated. No further surveys for water vole are needed.

Otters

- 5.45. The data search returned five records of otter *Lutra lutra* within 2km of the Application Site. The closest of these records is located 1.2km south west of the Application Site. There is no suitable habitat for otter at the Application Site. Otter is therefore considered likely absent and impacts on this species are not anticipated.

Badgers

- 5.46. [REDACTED]
- 5.47. [REDACTED] No badger field signs were noted during the site visit in July 2026. Badgers are considered absent from the Application Site however an update walkover should be undertaken by an ecologist prior to commencement of works on site.

Other mammals

- 5.48. The data search returned 79 records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* within 2km of the Application Site. Habitat suitable for supporting sheltering hedgehog is present on site.

- 5.49. Although small mammals such as hedgehogs are not subject to legal protection in terms of their conservation status, they are subject to protection from cruelty under the Wild Mammals Protection Act and the Animal Welfare Act 2006¹⁶. Therefore, due diligence must be exercised during clearance/groundworks to ensure mammals that may be present are not harmed.
- 5.50. The data search returned two records of non native American mink *Neovison vison* within 2km. American mink are considered likely absent from the Application Site due to lack of suitable habitat and are therefore not considered further within this report.

¹⁶ Great Britain. *Wild Mammals Protection Act and the Animal Welfare Act 2006* [online]. Available from: [Wild Mammals \(Protection\) Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

6 SCHEME DESIGN

6.1. The proposed development seeks to demolish all existing buildings and greenhouses to facilitate the development of 18 residential units and associated hard and soft landscaping. This will lead to the loss of some of the majority of the woodland, a number of scattered trees as well as the sparsely vegetated land and developed land sealed surface habitat the ornamental hedgerow would also be lost.

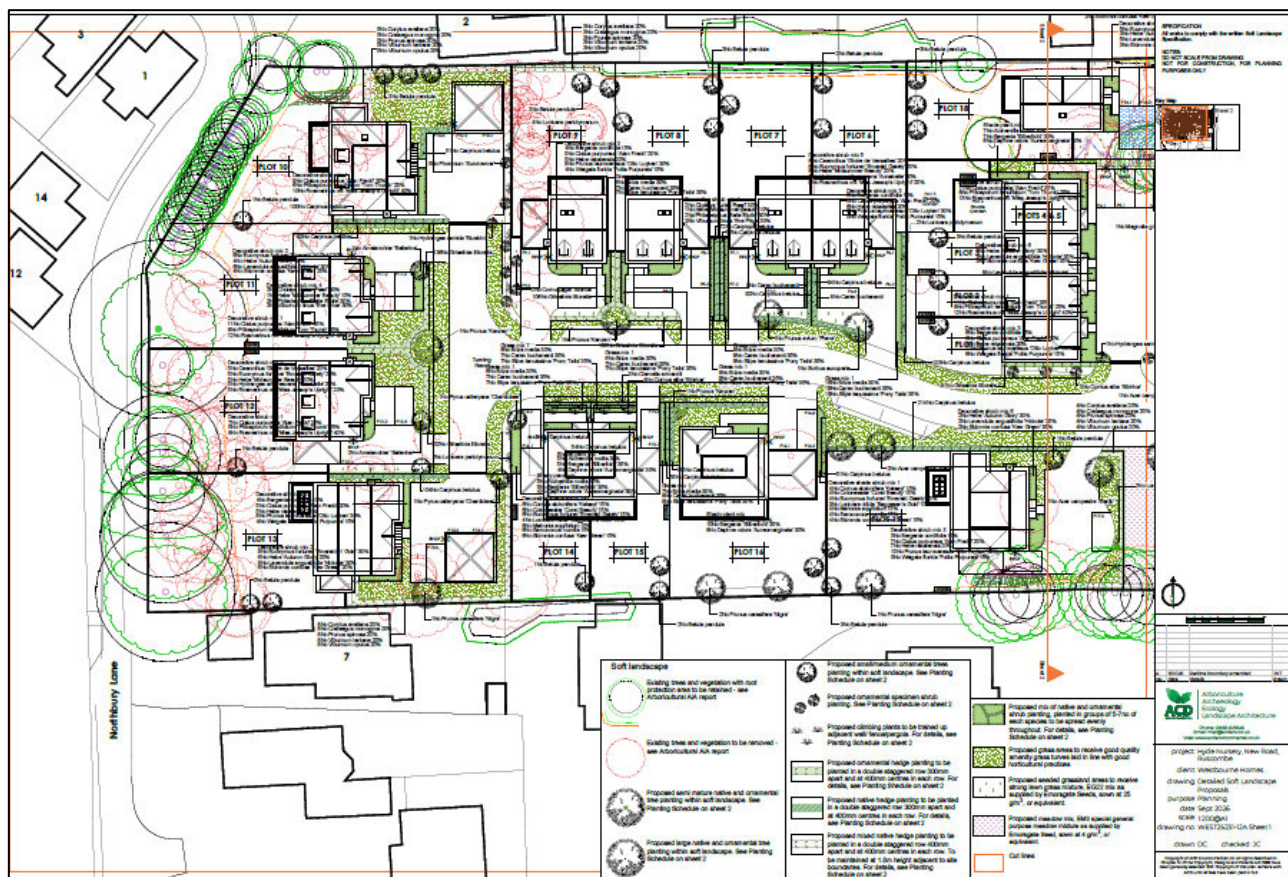


Image 2: Proposed Landscaping Plan (October 2026)

7 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

- 7.1. In accordance with CIEEM guidelines, the following important ecological features have been identified with the potential to be affected by the proposed development and carried forward for further assessment:

Table 5: Important ecological features brought forward for impact assessment

Statutory sites	None
Local Wildlife sites	None
Habitats	Woodland, scattered trees, greenhouses, sparsely vegetated land
Species and species groups	Invertebrates, reptiles, great crested newt, other amphibians, nesting birds, roosting and foraging/commuting bats other mammals, plants

- 7.2. The following ecological features have been scoped out of the ecological impact assessment, owing to the conclusion that no significant effects are predicted:

Table 6: Ecological features scoped out of the impact assessment

Statutory sites	All
Non-statutory sites	All
Habitats	Developed land; sealed surface
Species and species groups	Hazel dormice, badgers, Schedule 9 invasive species and fish

Habitats

- 7.3. The proposed development will result in the partial loss of woodland in the west of the Site. A number of scattered trees will also be lost to facilitate the development. None of the habitats to be impacted are listed on the priority habitat inventory however they are of biodiversity value and their loss should be compensated for. The habitats on site are limited in their floral diversity and further surveys are therefore not needed. Compensation measures for habitat loss are detailed below.

Fauna

Invertebrates

- 7.4. Whilst white letter hairstreak may utilise the Application Site, impacts on this species can likely be avoided by the sensitive timing of vegetation clearance works to avoid the summer egg laying and spring larval feeding seasons. Enhancements for white letter hairstreak are detailed below.
- 7.5. Impacts on stag beetle that may be present at the Application Site can be mitigated through sensitive clearance of deadwood under supervision of an ecologist. Enhancements will be provided for stag beetle which are detailed below.
- 7.6. Further surveys for invertebrates are therefore not considered necessary.

Reptiles

- 7.7. Development will result in the loss of some habitat suitable for reptiles. Any vegetation clearance works at the Application Site should be undertaken under the supervision of an ecologist. Vegetation would need to be subject to a hand search for reptiles followed by sensitive clearance with hand tools. Sensitive clearance measures for reptiles and other protected species should be detailed within the Construction Ecology Management Plan (CEMP).

Great crested newt

- 7.8. Habitat suitable for great crested newt in their terrestrial phase is present at the Application Site and GCN presence has been confirmed at a number of ponds within 500m. It is therefore recommended that the Application Site is registered under NatureSpace's District Level licencing scheme and sensitive clearance measures detailed within a PWMS. No further surveys for GCN are required if this route is taken.

Other Amphibians

- 7.9. The development will result in the loss of terrestrial habitat for a variety of common amphibians. Sensitive clearance measures should be followed as with reptiles and GCN.

Nesting birds

- 7.10. The trees, hedgerow, woodland and remaining remnant bramble scrub all provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. It is therefore recommended that any clearance of suitable habitats is undertaken outside of the nesting bird season where possible. If this is not possible then all suitable habitat should be subject to a nesting bird check prior to clearance.

Roosting bats

- 7.11. Mitigation measures for roosting bats are detailed within the Supplementary Bat Report by AA Environmental. A bat licence should be sought from Natural England prior to any works on the dwelling.

Foraging and commuting bats

- 7.12. The Application site contains habitats of benefit to foraging and commuting bats. Artificial lighting is known to have an adverse effect on foraging and commuting bats. It is therefore recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is prepared to minimise impacts on bat activity.

Other mammals

- 7.13. Habitat suitable for sheltering hedgehog is present at the Application Site. Any vegetation to be cleared should be subject to a pre works check for hedgehog by an ecologist.

Plants

- 7.14. At present cherry laurel and bracken dominate the main extent of the woodland in the west of the Application Site. It is recommended that all bracken and cherry laurel is removed from the Application Site and disposed of appropriately to prevent the spread of these species.

8 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

- 8.1. The development incorporates the creation of new tree and hedgerow planting as well as the creation of new grassland which will be of value to biodiversity.
- 8.2. New tree planting should be carried out at the Application Site targeting white letter hairstreak. Woody species to be planted should include field maple *Acer campestre* and common lime which will benefit white letter hairstreak butterfly.
- 8.3. New areas of grassland are to be created at the Application Site some of which are to be seeded with a wildflower seed mix such as Emorsgate EM1 (or similar).
- 8.4. Management prescriptions for retained, enhanced and created habitats should be detailed within a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP).
- 8.5. A scope of general ecological enhancements can be incorporated into the proposed development including integrating bat and bird boxes into the structure of the new buildings, installing bat and bird boxes on retained mature trees and creating hibernacula for invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles in the form of log piles using the wood from any tree removal on-site. These are to be detailed within the CEMP/LEMP reports. Suggested locations for compensatory provisions for roosting bats are detailed within the Supplementary Bat Report by AA Environmental.

Biodiversity metric

- 8.6. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been completed for the Application Site. This has been calculated using baseline habitat and species information collected during the UK Habitat Classification Survey and using the latest post-development landscape proposals. A full methodology is provided in **Appendix 6**. A completed version of the Metric has been submitted in full as a separate Excel document.

Table 8: A summary of the results of the Biodiversity Metric

On-site baseline	Habitat units	4.57
	Hedgerow units	0.81
On-site post-intervention	Habitat units	3.12
	Hedgerow units	2.07
Total net unit change	Habitat units	-1.45
	Hedgerow units	1.26
Total net % change	Habitat units	-31.74
	Hedgerow units	155.10

- 8.7. The results of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric indicate that development of the Application Site will lead to a -31.74 net loss in habitat units. This is predominantly due to loss of bramble scrub and other woodland; broadleaved. There will be a net gain of 155.10% in hedgerow units due to the creation of a number of new native hedgerows.
- 8.8. The following habitat and hedgerow enhancement and creation measures have been incorporated within the landscape masterplan and are included within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations. For details on locations of these habitats please refer to the habitat creation plan which is presented within **Appendix 3**.
- 8.9. In addition to these measures, habitats within the POS of the Application Site will be managed by a management company during the operational phase of the development. Management prescriptions will be included within a LEMP and will be designed to ensure long-term maintenance and enhancement of ecologically valuable habitats within the development.
- 8.10. As development at the Application Site will result in a -31.74% net loss biodiversity, units will need to be purchased from an offsite provided to ensure that a 10% net gain in biodiversity is provided as there is not scope to provide net gain on site within the scheme. It is understood that Biofarm have been approached and are able to provide the necessary units.

Additional enhancements

8.11. In addition to the habitat and hedgerow enhancements outlined above which have contributed to the Application Site's Biodiversity Metric score, the following enhancements will be included to provide new opportunities for wildlife:

- Construction of deadwood hibernacula using material from on site clearance where possible to provide benefits for invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians
- A suite of bird/bat boxes to be incorporated into the proposed dwellings during construction to be detailed within the LEMP/bat licence.
- The development will contain a number of new gardens, which will provide habitats for hedgehogs which are a UK BAP priority species¹⁷. To ensure hedgehogs are able to utilise the new garden habitats, closed board fencing will include a small hole (13cm x 13cm) cut into the base of the panel to facilitate hedgehog movement by creating a 'hedgehog highway'. This size gap is too small for most pets to fit through; but to encourage residents not to block holes signs can be placed above the gaps to illustrate their purpose.

8.12. The above measures are considered to be a significant contribution to the overall biodiversity value of the Application Site if implemented.

¹⁷ Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group. (2007). *Report on the Species and Habitat Review*. Available at: <https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/bdd8ad64-c247-4b69-ab33-19c2e0d63736> [Accessed 28 November 2022]

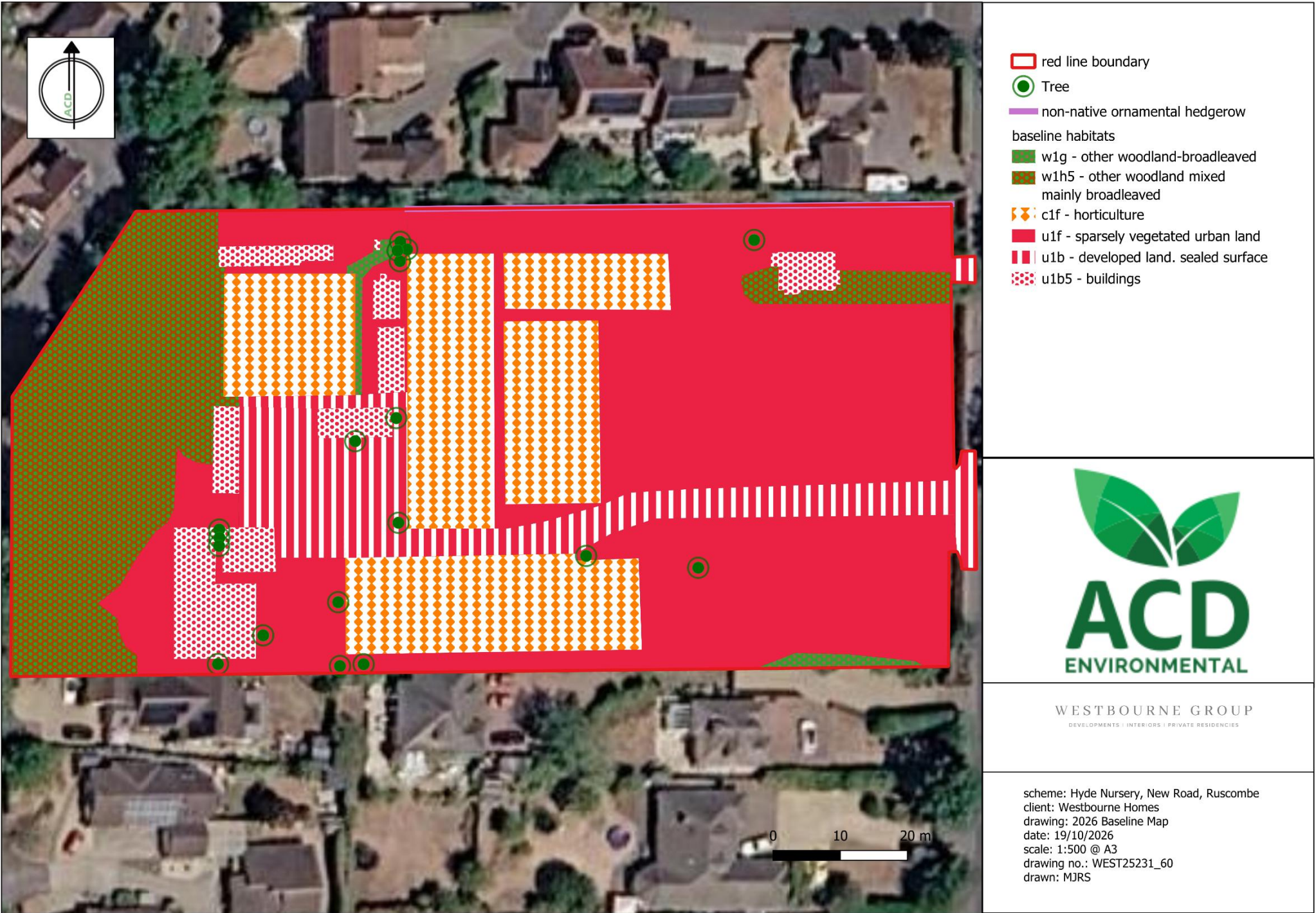
9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1. The Application Site comprises a disused plant nursery that has been colonised by ruderal vegetation, bramble scrub and woodland. Several buildings/greenhouses and associated hardstanding are present at the Application Site.
- 9.2. Any clearance of grassland or scrub habitats on-site will be carried out sensitively under the supervision of an ecologist to ensure there is no harm to reptiles. A district level licence for great crested newt would be required prior to works commencing on site. Alternatively eDNA surveys of all ponds within 500m could be undertaken.
- 9.3. Precautionary measures are required to protect nesting birds during construction. The scattered trees will be subject to a nesting bird check prior to any works or will be carried out outside of the nesting bird season (March - August inclusive).
- 9.4. A sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented to protect suitable foraging and commuting features for bats on-site and maintain dark corridors for bats during the construction and operational phases of the development.
- 9.5. A confirmed roost of brown long eared bat has been identified. A bat licence should be sought from Natural England prior to works to the dwelling commencing. Further details are provided within the Supplementary Bat Report by AA Environmental.
- 9.6. The Application Site has potential to support commuting and foraging mammals such as hedgehogs. Measures will be implemented to protect mammals from harm during the construction phase of the proposed development.
- 9.7. The proposed development will result in a **-31.74% loss** in habitat units and a **155.10% net gain** in hedgerow units. This will involve several habitat creation and enhancement measures that are outlined in the habitat creation plan in **Appendix 3**. Details regarding long-term management and maintenance of these habitats will be outlined in a LEMP report. An offsite provider has been identified that will provide the necessary biodiversity units.
- 9.8. Assuming the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measure set out in this report, the proposed development would conform to Policies CP7 and CP8 the Wokingham Borough Local Plan and would deliver biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the NPPF.
- 9.9. The proposed mitigation includes measures to ensure compliance with the legislation relating to protected species and invasive non-native plant species. A route for licensing the works relating to great crested newts and bats has been identified.

APPENDIX 1: BASELINE HABITAT MAP (BNG)



APPENDIX 2: UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SURVEY MAP (JULY 2026)



APPENDIX 3: HABITAT CREATION PLAN



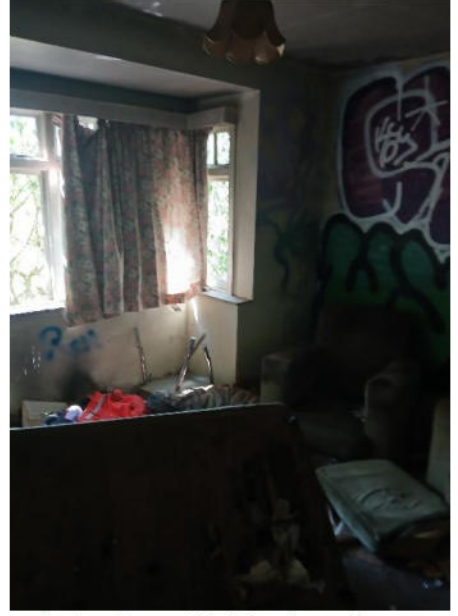
APPENDIX 4: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Loft space within building
B9



Bat dropping found within
B9



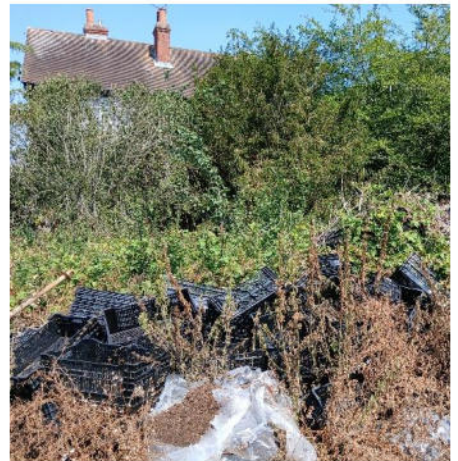
Interior of B9 showing
significant levels of
vandalism



Disused greenhouses
and hardstanding



Woodland dominated by
bracken and cherry laurel



Dwelling and associated
woodland

APPENDIX 5: FIELD SURVEY METHODOLOGY

UK Habitat Classification Survey

- The Application Site was surveyed on 15th July 2025 (two surveyors) using the UK Habitat Classification methodology¹⁸. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail.
- This survey categorises habitats and allows for the completion of condition sheets for input into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- July is within the optimal period for UK Habitat Classification Surveys and the vegetation present was clearly visible and allowed an accurate assessment to be made.
- Using the above method, the Application Site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types with a representative sample of those species present at the time of the survey being described. Descriptive target notes were used for particular areas of interest.
- Incidental records of fauna were made during the survey and the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected species and species of Principal Importance.

Limitations

- There were no limitations associated with the UK Habitat Classification Surveys.

Badger field signs survey

A badger field signs survey was carried in July 2026 by ACD Environmental Ltd during the UK Habitat Classification Survey.

Badger field signs surveys comprised walking the perimeter and interior boundaries of the Site, searching for evidence of badgers, in accordance with Harris et al¹⁹ (1989) and Scottish Natural Heritage²⁰ (2018).

Where badger setts were found, they were described using the following criteria:

¹⁸ UKHab (2023). *UK Hab V2*. Available at: <https://ukhab.org/>

¹⁹ Harris, S., Cresswell, P., and Jefferies, D. (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society.

²⁰ Scottish Badgers (2018). *Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines*. Version 1.

- Number of well-used holes - one or more of the features: well-worn entrance; freshly excavated soil; bedding material
- Number of partially-used holes - leaves or twigs in entrance and/or mosses and other plants growing in or around entrance)
- Number of disused holes - partially or completely blocked, with considerable amount of excavation required for reoccupation

Where feasible, badger setts were classified into the following:

- Main sett - continuously used, breeding and over-wintering sett for a social group of badgers. Only one main sett will exist in each social groups territory, and will be relatively centrally located within the group's range
- Annexe sett - annexe of the main sett, linked by well-used paths to the main sett (but not connected underground). Not continuously used
- Subsidiary sett - distant from the main sett. Several entrances, but with no well-used paths connecting to the main sett, and only used seasonally
- Outlier sett - distant from the main sett. Small, with only one of two entrances only. Used for short periods sporadically, with no obvious, well-used paths connecting to other setts

Limitations

There were no limitations associated with the badger field signs survey.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was carried out²¹. This is an external and internal inspection survey, the purpose of which is to search for bats/evidence of bats and assess the likelihood of bats being present and the need for further survey and/or mitigation.

A systematic search was made of the building and the ground, especially below potential access points where present. Such features include windows sills, window panes, walls, tiles, weather boarding, lead flashing, eaves, behind surfacing materials and under tiles, and other cracks and crevices that provide protection from the elements. Such features are known to be used by roosting bats.

The internal inspection included searching for the following evidence of roosting bats:

²¹ Collins J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

- Roosting bats within crevices or free-hanging
- Bat corpses e.g. on the floor, in uncovered water (header) tanks or other containers in roof voids
- Bat droppings beneath roosting features
- Feeding remains e.g. moth/butterfly *Lepidoptera* spp. wings and beetle *Coleoptera* spp. wing casings
- Scratch marks and characteristic staining from urine and/or fur oil beneath roosting features e.g. on roofing timbers and walls within roof voids
- 'Clean' gaps associated with bat roosts
- Bat-fly *Nycteribiid* spp. pupal cases
- Droppings, corpses, feeding remains and/or bat-fly pupal cases beneath roof insulation, which indicates use by bats before the insulation was installed
- Clean swept floors, which may indicate evidence has been removed

The internal inspection included searching for the following features:

- Gaps within the structure of the roof e.g. mortise joints and junctions between roof timbers and between timbers and walls, and between the roof lining and roof covering
- Gaps within the structure of walls and potential access points to cavity or rubble-filled walls
- Gaps around the structure chimneys or within disused chimneys
- Suitable locations for free-hanging bats and/or night/feeding perches e.g. timber beams
- Gaps between lintels above windows or doors
- Light gaps in the roof indicating access points to the outside
- Cool areas suitable for torpor or hibernation e.g. cellars.

The following equipment was used for the bat survey:

- Binoculars
- Powerful torch to illuminate dark corners from the ground

- Ladder
- Collection pots and labels for corpses and droppings;
- Camera to record evidence and potential roosting sites; and
- Personal protective equipment (e.g. boots, gloves, helmet, mobile telephone).

In addition to the buildings, the trees were also searched for bats/evidence of bats and assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. The evidence of roosting bats searched for is detailed above with regard to buildings (e.g. bat droppings and feeding remains). The features of bats were searched for on the trees with reference to the three broad categories of Potential Roost Features (PRFs) and sub-categories of PRFs from the Bat Tree Habitat Key²². These are as follows:

- Disease and decay PRFs:
 - Woodpecker and squirrel holes;
 - Knot holes;
 - Pruning-cuts;
 - Tear outs;
 - Compression forks;
 - Wounds;
 - Cankers; and
 - Butt rots.
- Association PRFs:
 - Fluting; and
 - Ivy.
- Damage PRFs:
 - Hazard beams;

²² Bat Tree Habitat Key 2018. *Bat Roosts in Trees – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-care and Ecology professionals*. Exeter: Pelagic Publishing.

- Frost cracks;
- Subsidence/shearing and helical splits;
- Lightning strikes;
- Desiccation fissures;
- Transverse snaps;
- Welds; and
- Lifting bark.

Limitations

There were no limitations to the Preliminary Roost Assessment.

APPENDIX 6: BIODIVERSITY METRIC METHODOLOGY

Assessment Framework

For the purposes of this assessment, the Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been utilised. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric is accompanied by a 'Calculation Tool'. This was used to calculate the biodiversity units for the Application Site before and after development. The assessment was conducted using the criteria set out within the Natural England guidance document.

Habitat Measurements

- Baseline habitat measurements were carried out in line with the results of the UKHab survey. Measurements were calculated using QGIS mapping software.
- Proposed habitat measurements were calculated from the soft landscape plans prepared.
- Measurements were entered to the nearest 0.001ha in area.

Habitats - Linear Features

- Linear features (hedgerows) have been measured in metres and the height and condition of the habitats were recorded during the habitat survey.
- Measurements were entered to the nearest 0.001km in length.

Distinction Assessments

Habitats are assigned to distinctiveness bands automatically within the Metric. These are based on an assessment of the distinguishing features of a habitat or linear feature, including the consideration of species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales), and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats.

The distinctiveness band of each habitat is preassigned in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The bands are based upon the UK habitat classification system. A combination of simple rules and professional judgement have been used to assign each habitat type to the appropriate distinctiveness band. The distinctiveness categories used are tailored to habitat type.

Distinctiveness Assessments are assigned according to **Table 9**.

Table 9: Distinctiveness Assessment

Category	Scores	Multiplier
Very High	8	Priority habitats as defined in Section 41 of

Category	Scores	Multiplier
		the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act that are highly threatened, internationally scarce and require conservation action e.g. blanket bog
High	6	Priority habitats as defined in Section 41 of the NERC Act requiring conservation action e.g. lowland fens
Medium	4	Semi-natural habitats not classed as a Priority Habitat
Low	2	Habitat of low biodiversity value. Temporary grass and clover ley; intensive orchard; rhododendron scrub
Very Low	0	Little or no biodiversity value e.g. hard standing or sealed surface

Condition Assessments

Condition assessments for existing habitats can be found in a separate excel document.

Strategic significance

The spatial location of a habitat is treated as a component of the quality of a habitat parcel in the same way as distinctiveness or condition. Strategic significance is used to determine whether the habitat is of increased importance due to its location.

Risk Factors

As part of any proposed habitat creation and restoration, risk factors must be taken into account to correct for disparity, delay or risk. These values are preassigned within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and take into consideration the following factors:

- Temporal risk; and
- Difficulty of creation and restoration.

Advance/delay in habitat creation takes into account any significant time difference in the creation of a habitat type. This time is measured in full years and is entered by the assessor.

Habitat creation in advance is rewarded by reducing the difficulty and temporal risk multipliers applied. This reflects the lower delivery risk - there is less risk of failure when a habitat is already making progress towards its target condition.

Any significant delay in the creation of a habitat type relative to loss of on-site habitats (e.g. due to phased developments and developments that temporarily require parts of the development site for construction purposes) is added to the pre-populated time to target condition and increases the effect of the risk multiplier accordingly.

Limitations

Although the Statutory Biodiversity Metric is a valuable tool underpinned by ecological evidence, there are certain limitations that must be considered when applying the metric. The key principles and rules for the use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric have been followed at all times, in line with these limitations. Further detail is available within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide

A large, stylized leaf graphic in a lighter shade of green, positioned on the left side of the dark green background. The leaf is elongated and tapers to a point, with a central vein and several smaller veins branching off. It is oriented diagonally, from the bottom left towards the top right.

**Arboriculture
Archaeology
Ecology
Landscape Architecture**

www.acdenvironmental.co.uk

