



Ecological Appraisal

LO Church Road,
Witherley

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Executive Summary

Learn Ecology Ltd was instructed by OS Holdings to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in respect of Land off Church Road, Witherley.

There are four statutory designated sites within 2km of the site, all Sites of Special Scientific Interest, three of which are geologically designated and one biologically. The site is located within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) risk zones for the above SSSI's. Completion of the Natural England online risk assessment tool indicates that Natural England only need to be consulted for applications that meet certain criteria of which full details are provided in Section 3 of this report.

The site was subject to survey in August 2025 which determined the site currently comprises neutral grassland and bramble scrub with boundaries formed of lines of trees and native hedgerow.

The mature and semi-mature trees that form the north and western boundaries, particularly the mature oaks to the west look to be in good condition and likely provide habitat for a large range of invertebrates and some small mammals. It is strongly recommended that they are retained. However, if any impacts are intended on these trees an arboricultural survey will be required to fully evaluate those impacts.

The majority of the site was determined to be of moderate local ecological importance, supporting negligible habitat value for roosting bats but moderate value for foraging/commuting bats, badger, hedgehog, nesting birds, reptiles. Precautionary mitigation measures to safeguard populations of these species are proposed.

Furthermore, several enhancement measures are recommended to be implemented to facilitate such species following the completion of the development, such that the proposed development is considered to provide an opportunity for an increase in biodiversity within and surrounding the site.

The 10-metre strip of land adjacent to the western boundary has high local ecological importance as the riparian zone of the adjacent River Anker. The data search revealed records of otter and water vole, 1.5km and 250m from the site respectively. It is advised that any development be as far removed from this valuable scrub and riparian habitat as possible. Any plans for development of the site must show careful consideration of the potential impacts upon the river corridor and the riparian species that are recorded nearby, such as otter and water vole. If proposals were to impact this habitat and/or the river, Phase II surveys for these species would be required.

No significant ecological constraints regarding other protected and Priority species that could not be sufficiently mitigated were identified within the site or surroundings.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Proposals

Learn Ecology Ltd was instructed by OS Holdings to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in respect of the proposed development at Land Off Church Road, Witherley (hereafter referred to as 'the site'), centred at grid reference SP 32487 97413. The site location is illustrated at Plan 1.

The site is located to the west of the village of Witherley in Leicestershire, approximately 400m north of the A5 and immediately east of the River Anker.

The site currently comprises modified grassland in good condition with mature hedgerow, fence and line of trees boundaries. There is a small derelict building in disrepair in the south-east corner of the site.

1.2. Report Aims

This report documents the methods and results of the ecological survey work undertaken at the site to establish the existing ecological interest of the site, as well as the appraisal of the likely ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development. The relative importance of the habitats present is evaluated in respect of local, regional, and national scales. Where required, avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement measures are detailed to ensure that any significant ecological interest within the site and immediate surrounds is fully safeguarded under the proposals, in line with national conservation legislation and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

2. Methodology

2.1. Desktop Study

A desk study was undertaken comprising a review of statutory designated sites, granted European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs), and notable habitats within a 2km radius of the site boundary utilising the MAGIC database¹ and Google Earth Pro².

As the site was found to be on the boundary between two local biodiversity records centres, a biological data search in respect of the site was obtained from them both, namely Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Record Centre (LRERC)³ and Warwickshire Biodiversity Records Centre (WBRC)⁴, with records obtained in October 2025. The data search comprised a 2km search radius for protected species and designated sites.

2.2. Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site was subject to a survey in August 2025 by Emma Jewkes BSc (Hons) PGCert, Assistant Ecologist at Learn Ecology Ltd (Accredited agent under Natural England bat license reference number: 2021-55141-CLS-CLS) to evaluate the ecological value of the site, and to identify the habitats and ecological features present. The survey was undertaken based on standard UK Habitat Classification Directive (v2.0)⁵ methodology, whereby the habitats present are identified and mapped, and the species composition of each habitat is noted. The technique provides the opportunity to denote habitats within the site which may be of elevated ecological significance, whilst highlighting the requirement for further detailed survey work, as required.

2.3. Faunal Opportunities Survey

Faunal activity was recorded during the survey, such as incidental observations of birds, mammals, invertebrates, and reptiles. In addition, the suitability of any habitats or features present within the site to support protected, rare, or notable faunal species was also noted. Specific considerations in respect of bats and badger were also given, as described below.

Bats

British bats are classified as European Protected Species (EPS) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amendment) (EU Exit) 2019) and are also listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Additionally, many bat species are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. As such bats, as well as their resting and breeding places (roosts) therefore receive full protection under UK legislation.

Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey

A visual inspection was undertaken of the exterior of any existing buildings, and particular attention was paid to any features which might provide opportunities for roosting bats, such as lifted, slipped, or missing tiles, flashing, soffit boxes, barge boards, door and window frames.

A similar inspection was also undertaken of the exterior of any existing trees, and particular attention was paid to any features which might provide opportunities for roosting bats, such as woodpecker holes, trunk cavities, lifted bark, branch splits and knot holes.

¹ DEFRA (2025). *MAGIC map application*. Online. Available at: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>. [Accessed on 16th October 2025]

² Google (2022). *Google Earth Pro v 7.3.4.8642*. Online. Available at: <https://earth.google.com/web/@0,0,0a,22251752.77375655d,35y,0h,0t,0r> [Accessed on 16th October 2025]

³ LRERC (2025). Environmental Record Data Search, Thurlaston. Leicester.

⁴ WBRC (2025). Environmental Record Data Search, Warwick, Warwickshire..

⁵ UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)

Additionally, where possible, a search was undertaken for evidence of use of external features of both trees and buildings by bats, such as the accumulation of bat droppings, and staining. An aerial drone and binoculars were used to investigate inaccessible areas more closely where necessary.

Badger

Badgers receive legislative protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, such that the presence of badger within a proposed development site is considered an important ecological feature. The legislation aims to protect badgers from persecution, intentional, or reckless harm, whilst the species remains common throughout much of the UK.

A detailed survey for evidence of badger⁶ was undertaken during the site visit in August 2025, comprising a search for any badger setts within or immediately surrounding the site, and the search for any signs of badger, such as push-throughs, hair, footprints, latrines, and foraging signs.

Any setts or evidence of badger identified were recorded and, where applicable, the number of entrances, evidence of recent activity, and location of badger activity 'hot-spots' within the surrounding landscape was detailed. Information gathered was used to categorise the type and activity level of any setts present, as well as highlighting frequently used dispersal corridors and foraging habitat for the species within the site and surrounds.

Birds

A general assessment of the suitability of the habitats and features present to support nesting and foraging birds was undertaken. Additionally, evidence of active nests and/or nesting birds was sought during the survey visit, including the identification of nesting signs and behaviours such as repeated visits by birds to a probable nest site, nest building activities, recently fledged young, nests with eggs present, or nests with young chicks within.

Other Species

Incidental evidence or suitability for the site to support other rare, notable, or protected faunal species, such as hazel dormouse, water vole, otter, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates were also noted and mapped, where appropriate. General assessments were made regarding the suitability of the site to support such species and, where evidence or suitability was identified, this is noted in Section 3.3 below.

2.4. Limitations

It is often not possible to ensure any and all flora and fauna present within a site, or any faunal species that may use a site occasionally, are observed during the survey visit. The habitat survey was undertaken within the optimal period such that the assessment of habitats and botanical interest are considered to be robust. Furthermore, the suitability of the site to support protected, rare, or notable faunal species is considered to be sufficient to inform any mitigation measures outlined in Section 4 below.

Consideration was given to the presence of any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) however the identifiable presence of such species varies depending on season, management practices for the site, and weather conditions. As such, the absence of records for such species within the site should not be considered absolute, and precautions undertaken to prevent the reckless spread of such species during future development works.

⁶ Based on: Mammal Society (1989) 'Occasional Publication No. 9 – Surveying Badgers'

3. Results & Evaluation

3.1. Desk Study

Statutory Designations

There are four statutory designated sites within 2km of the site, all Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Bentley Park wood lies approximately 1km to the south-west of the site and is biologically designated for its Lowland Mixed deciduous and wet woodland. Woodlands Quarry, Boon's Quarry and Illing's Trenches lie approximately 1km to the south-east of the site and are geologically designated.

The site is located within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) risk zones for the above SSSI's. Completion of the Natural England online risk assessment tool indicates that Natural England only need to be consulted for applications that meet any of the following descriptions:

- Infrastructure: Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.
- Air Pollution: Livestock & poultry units with a floorspace > 500m², slurry lagoons > 750m² & manure stores > 3500 tonnes.
- Combustion: General combustion processes >50MW energy input. Including: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/combustion.
- Discharge: Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 20m³/day that is discharged to ground (i.e. to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.

Non-Statutory Designations

A total of 48 Historic, Potential, Candidate and Notified Local Wildlife Sites were present within 2km of the Site. The nearest of these is the River Anker which is designated along its length as "an important wildlife corridor" The section of the river corridor adjacent to the site is described as "largely arable and improved grassland, although the riverstreams are often tree lined and dotted along the length of the river are a series of species rich meadows", the nearest of which to the site is 500m downstream. There is also a pond 54m to the north-east of the site, at Witherley Hall, which has an historic LWS designation.

Given the proximity of both the pond and the river corridor to the site; and the fact that the river flows downstream from the site, there is a possibility that these important habitats could be indirectly impacted by the development by, for example, run off from construction works, such that strict pollution prevention measures will be essential to protecting these valuable habitats.

All of the other LWSs not associated with the river Anker are over 300m away and, given the small scale of the proposed development, will not be feasibly impacted.

Notable Habitats

Several notable habitats were recorded within 2km of the site boundary within the MAGIC database, as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Priority habitats recorded within 2km of the site boundary (from MAGIC.gov.uk).

Habitat Type	Approximate Distance from Site
Deciduous Woodland	On boundary
Good Quality Semi-Improved Grassland	420m north
Ancient Woodland	1.6km south-west
Lowland Meadows	1.2km south

The deciduous woodland is right on the boundary so could be impacted by pollution during the development, so we have recommended Pollution Prevention measures that are detailed in Section 4 of this report.

Protected Species

Bats

There are 34 records of bats within 2km of the site, 12 of which are within 500m. Where abundance is recorded, they are all for small numbers of bats (maximum of 4) and species recorded are Common Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, and Noctule. The closest of these records to the site are approximately 55m to the south.

Riparian Species

There are records of otter *Lutra lutra* 2km upstream and 1.5km downstream of the site, the most recent being downstream and dating from 2022. One record of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* was returned approximately 1.5km upstream of the site in the River Anker corridor.

There were also two records of common frog *Rana temporaria* returned from within the River Anker corridor, the nearest of which is approximately 250m downstream from the site.

Hedgehog & Badger

Two records of hedgehog within 2km of the site were returned. One approximately 200m to the north-east with good connectivity to the site, and the other unspecified. There is one record of a badger sett over 1.8km north of the site.

Bird species

There are a number of records of swallow and house martin, as well as house sparrow and starling, within 2km of the site, some within 150m indicating that the provision of specialist nesting provision for these groups of species would be of benefit.

Records of the ground nesting species dunnock, skylark and yellowhammer were also returned, indicating the importance of retaining the mature hedgerow forming the western boundary of the site and potentially provision of some dense native scrub as additional nesting habitat.

European Protected Species Licences

Two European Protected Species Licences were identified among the MAGIC database within 2km of the site, details of which are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) identified within 2km of the site

Case Reference Number	Approx. Distance from site	Species	Licence start date	Licence end date	Licensed Impact
2020-45594-EPS-MIT	1.3km	GCN	06/04/2020	31/12/2025	Destruction of a resting place
2019-39729-EPS-MIT	On Boundary (2km west)	Bat- C-PIP, NATT	09/04/2019	01/11/2024	Destruction of a resting place

*C-PIP = Common pipistrelle; NATT= Natterer's; GCN = Great Crested Newt.

3.2. Habitats & Ecological Features

The habitats and features within the site were evaluated in respect of the type of habitat, species composition, and relative ecological value. The condition and status of the habitats and features present were also considered, and any protected, rare, notable, or invasive non-native species were identified and mapped, where possible. An assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development on the habitats and species identified was then undertaken. The potential for the habitats and features present to support faunal species is provided in Section 3.3.

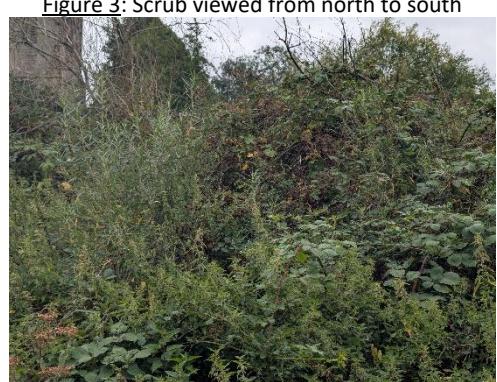
The following habitats and ecological features were recorded within or immediately surrounding the site:

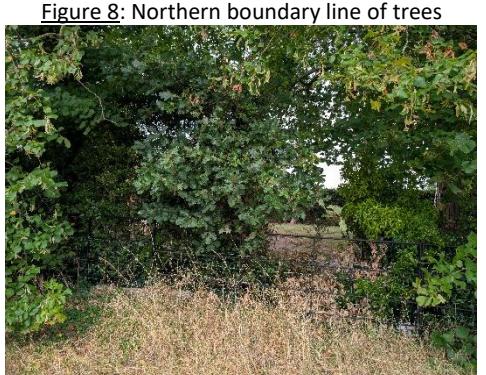
- **g3c** – Other neutral grassland
- **h3d** – Bramble scrub
- **h2a** – Native hedgerow
- **h2a 11** – Native hedgerow with trees
- **u1f 510 81** – Sparsely vegetated urban land, bare ground with ruderal colonisation

An illustration of the location of the habitats present is provided at Plan 2 and described in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Habitats and features within and immediately surrounding the site.

Habitat / Feature	Habitat / Feature Description	Photograph
g3c – Other neutral grassland	<p>The site was dominated by a grassland that was very dry at the time of survey. It did not look to have been recently mown but has been managed by either grazing or cutting previously. Anecdotal evidence indicates that horses might have been kept on this land.</p> <p>Grass species include Common bent <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>, perennial rye grass <i>Lolium perenne</i>, red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>, cocks' foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>, meadow oat grass <i>Avenula pratensis</i>, and crested dog's-tail <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>.</p> <p>Forb species included Curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>, broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, ragwort <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, common hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>, common sorrel <i>Rumex acetosa</i>, common dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>, ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>, white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>, common daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i>, orange hawkweed <i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>, common knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i>, and creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>.</p> <p>There were found to be approximately 8 species per m² and perennial rye and white clover cover was less than 20%.</p>	 <p><u>Figure 1:</u> Modified grassland viewed from centre of site to west</p>  <p><u>Figure 2:</u> Longer sward height of grassland close to the western boundary</p>

h3d – Bramble scrub	<p>This habitat was found along the western hedgerow, extending approximately two metres into the grassland at its central point. It was dominated by bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. with significant nettle encroachment <i>Urtica dioica</i> and some small stands of willow saplings <i>Salix</i> spp., particularly towards the south-western corner of the site. Forb species included common hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> and broad-leaved willowherb <i>Epilobium montanum</i>.</p>	 <p>Figure 3: Scrub viewed from north to south</p>  <p>Figure 4: Species composition of scrub</p>
h2a – Native hedgerow	<p>A native hedgerow extended from the centre of the northern boundary fence along the extent of the western boundary. The northern section comprised Bullace <i>Prunus domestica</i> subsp. <i>insititia</i>, Common hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, Field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> and elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>; not quite meeting the ≥ 5 species required to be defined as 'species rich'.</p>	 <p>Figure 5: North-west corner of site showing hedgerow</p>  <p>Figure 6: Showing unmanaged nature of hedgerow to north-west corner of site</p>

h2a 11 – Native hedgerow with trees	<p>The western section of the native hedgerow was heavily covered in bramble which extended into the grassland, making it difficult to get close enough to identify shrub species.</p> <p>A semi-mature Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> was present in the north-west corner of the site, and a number of young willow trees <i>Salix spp.</i> were found along this boundary, consistent with the fact that the River Anker runs just to the west, though they were likely self-seeded rather than part of the original hedgerow</p>	
w1h 33 – Line of trees	<p>The eastern and north-eastern boundary was formed by a line of trees. Species included pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i>, sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>, field maple <i>Acer campestre</i>, holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>, yew <i>Taxus baccata</i>, large-leaved lime <i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>, cedar <i>Cedrus spp.</i> and fir <i>Abies spp.</i> The majority of these trees were on the far side of a black metal fence with chicken wire on the lower section, which likely marked the site boundary, but have been included here due to potential impacts.</p> <p>There were three field maples <i>Acer campestre</i> next to the wall forming the boundary at the south-east corner of the site that were clearly on-site</p>	  <p>Figure 7: Western hedgerow with trees</p> <p>Figure 8: Northern boundary line of trees</p> <p>Figure 9: Black metal fence to northern boundary with oak behind</p>  <p>Figure 10: Field maples within site boundary to south-east corner of site</p>

u1f 510 81 – Sparsely vegetated urban land, bare ground with ruderal colonisation	This area was very shaded by the large oaks <i>Quercus robur</i> and sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> on the eastern boundary and, as such, was bare ground with substantial ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> encroachment	
Figure 11: Ivy-covered bare ground to south-east corner of site		

Table 4: Target notes.

Target note	Description	Photograph
1.	<p>There was a small outbuilding to the south-east corner of the site that was in an advanced state of disrepair.</p> <p>Constructed of wood shiplap over a hardstanding base with netted side panels and open front. It had no potential for bats or reptiles, but could potentially be used by nesting birds, although no evidence of nesting birds was recorded within.</p>	 

Habitat Evaluation Summary

The on-site habitats were common and widespread, with the most ecological value lying in the lines of trees and dense scrub habitats. The mature and semi-mature trees that form the north and western boundaries, particularly the mature oaks to the west looked to be in good condition and likely provide habitat for a large range of invertebrates and some small mammals. It is strongly recommended that they are retained. However, if any impacts are intended on these trees an arboricultural survey will be required to fully evaluate those impacts.

The dense scrub next to the river to the east was a good example of its type with a good range of native shrub species and some young native hazel and willow trees providing additional niches. It is likely used by ground nesting birds and potentially by reptiles, amphibians and small terrestrial mammals, such as hedgehog, for commuting and/or hibernating.

The neutral grassland habitat had been unmanaged for some time and, as such, has a varied sward height and moderate species diversity for its type. It is therefore likely to be used by foraging and commuting reptiles, amphibians and small mammals such as bats, hedgehog and badger.

There were no invasive non-native plant species noted to be on site.

Whilst off-site, the River Anker corridor, immediately adjacent to the site to the east, is a high distinctiveness habitat with significant ecological value both as a habitat and an important wildlife corridor. Any plans for development of the site must show careful consideration of the potential impacts upon the river corridor and riparian zone as appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposals. It is advised that the any development be as far removed from the valuable scrub and riparian habitat forming the western boundary as possible, a minimum of 10m from the riverbank is advised, to reduce both the likelihood of negative impact and requirement for watercourse BNG.

3.3. Faunal Opportunities

Observations regarding the presence of, or opportunities for, any other protected, rare, or notable faunal species were made during the site visit. Details are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Assessment of suitability for the site to support protected species.

Species	Description	Assessment of Ecological Value
Roosting bats	The small outbuilding was deemed unsuitable for roosting bats. None of the on-site trees were noted to have any obvious roosting features.	Whilst none of the on-site trees were noted to have any obvious roosting features during the PEA, if any of the trees were to be subject to removal a full ground level tree assessment (GLTA) and, where appropriate, aerial inspection would be required to confirm the absence of roosting bats prior to the commencement of any works.
Foraging and Commuting Bats	The scrub, tree and hedgerow lined boundaries and grassland habitats present on site would likely provide conditions suitable to support a moderate assemblage of common invertebrates, the primary food source for UK bats. The surrounds of the site support further pasture and arable land with small woodland blocks. The River Anker immediately to the east of the site provides a wildlife corridor for foraging, commuting and dispersal.	The site is considered to be of moderate value to foraging and commuting bats due to the presence of well-established woody boundaries as well as being well-connected to other suitable habitat within the local landscape. Subject to the implementation of precautionary mitigation measures and enhancements, foraging and commuting bats are not considered to form a constraint to the proposals.
Badger	<p>Two badger scats and a potential push through, to the north-eastern corner, were found on site. The data search returned one record of a badger sett approximately 1.8km north of the site and two badger casualties on the A5 approximately 1.5km south-east of the site.</p> <p>The site supports grassland, scrub, and wooded vegetation that could support badger foraging and dispersal and is well-connected to other suitable habitat surrounding the site through the riparian corridor of the River Anker.</p>	<p>The site is considered to be of moderate ecological value to badger due to the presence of habitats suitable to support foraging and commuting and presence of further suitable habitat in the wider landscape.</p> <p>Whilst some evidence of badger was identified, no setts were found to be present, however their presence within the woody boundary and dense scrub to the western boundary cannot be ruled out.</p> <p>Therefore, it is recommended that, precautionary safeguards will be implemented to ensure the ongoing conservation of local badger populations, if present.</p>
Riparian mammal species	<p>Records of both otter and water vole within 2km of the site were returned in the data search. The exact width of the riparian zone for the river Anker was not measured as watercourse assessment is not within the scope of the PEA.</p> <p>However, for BNG Assessment, the riparian zone of a river is considered to extend 10m from the top of each of the banks. Therefore, the riparian zone could be considered to be the 10m strip of land immediately inside the western boundary.</p>	<p>The riparian zone of any river is an ecologically very important habitat for riparian species including otter and water vole.</p> <p>It is recommended that any impacts within the riparian zone are avoided. If this was not deemed possible, Phase II surveys or otter and water vole would be required to determine possible impacts and appropriate mitigation.</p>
Reptiles and Amphibians	<p>The site provided some suitability for reptiles and amphibians in the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle due to the longer sward length of the grassland and well-established scrub and riparian habitat to the western boundary.</p> <p>No evidence of reptiles or amphibians, including GCN, was identified during the survey work undertaken.</p>	<p>The terrestrial habitats within the site are of moderate value to terrestrial amphibians and reptiles due to the presence of the scrub and grassland and the proximity to the river increases the likelihood of their presence, particularly grass snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>.</p> <p>No records of reptile species were returned within a 2km radius of the site and only two records of common frog 250m north (downstream) of the site.</p>

	<p>Two records of common frog <i>Rana temporaria</i> were returned from within the river Anker corridor, the nearest of which is approximately 250m downstream from the site. No records of other amphibians, including GCN, or reptiles were returned within 2km of the site.</p> <p>There are no waterbodies on site and only one pond within 500m of the site, at Witherley Hall approximately 60m to the north-west. This pond has no records of GCN. The nearest record is a Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Return dating from 2015, approximately 1.2km south-west of the site.</p> <p>The site is located within a Green Risk Zone for GCN in accordance with Natural England Impact Risk Zone Map for Leicestershire⁷, such that it "may contain sparsely distributed GCN" and is "less likely to contain important pathways of connecting habitat for this species."</p>	<p>However, the absence of records does not prove the absence of the species.</p> <p>Whilst there is evidence of common frog nearby, the lack of water body on site and presence of only one within 500m, combined with the lack of records and location of the site within the green zone all indicate that the presence of GCN is unlikely.</p> <p>Given the lack of other ponds within 500m of the site, there is deemed to be no feasible commuting route through the site, so GCN can be scoped out of the need for further survey.</p> <p>Given the suitability of the on-site habitat and proximity to the important wildlife corridor of the River Anker which could support grass snake Phase II reptile surveys are recommended to determine presence/absence and, if present, species breakdown and population size(s) to determine appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures.</p>
Birds	<p>The lines of trees and hedgerows associated with the site boundary were considered to provide suitable nesting and foraging opportunities for birds. The existing buildings may also provide some opportunities for common species of nesting and roosting birds, albeit no evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the site visit.</p>	<p>Due to the suitability of habitats within the site to support nesting of common species, safeguarding measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of breeding birds within the site throughout the development works.</p>
Other	<p>Other faunal species were also considered during the site visit, such as hedgehog and dormouse.</p> <p>The site provided some suitability for hedgehog due to the grassland and scrub habitats. The riparian corridor of the river Anker provides good connectivity to the wider rural landscape provides for such species.</p> <p>There was no suitable connected habitat for dormouse on site and no evidence of dormouse during the survey. Furthermore, dormice are not known to be in the area and no records were returned in the data search so they can be scoped out of the need for further survey.</p> <p>The habitats within the site are common and widespread and are not considered likely to be of particularly elevated value to such species.</p>	<p>The habitats within the site suggest that hedgehogs are likely to be present in the local area and may utilise the site for sheltering and foraging.</p> <p>In 2020, hedgehogs were put on the IUCN Red List as vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain and they are listed as a Species of Principle Importance in England on Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act 2006.</p> <p>As such, precautionary safeguarding measures are set out in Section 4 below to ensure the species is protected throughout development works and beyond.</p>

On the basis of the above, the site is considered to be of moderate value to faunal species, with some opportunities present for foraging and commuting bats, badger, hedgehog, common reptiles, and birds. As such, several mitigation and enhancement measures are set out in Section 4 below to ensure the ongoing conservation value of these species during and following the construction phase of the proposed development.

⁷ Natural England (2023) GCN Risk Zones (Leicestershire, Rutland, Rushcliffe and South Kesteven. Available online: <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra:gcn-risk-zones-leicestershire-rutland-rushcliffe-and-south-kesteven> (Accessed 25/11/2025).

4. Mitigation & Enhancement Measures

Several mitigation and enhancement measures are detailed in Table 6 below to ensure that any habitats, features, and species within or immediately surrounding the site are safeguarded throughout the proposed work, and to promote a net gain for local biodiversity as a result of the development.

Table 6: Recommended mitigation and enhancement measures to facilitate the proposed development.

Feature	Recommendation
Mitigation	
<u>Habitats and Vegetation</u>	<p>MIT1 – Retention of Habitats. Due to the ecologically sensitive nature of the River Anker corridor, the habitats along the western boundary should be retained, and development activity located as far away from this area as feasible.</p> <p>MIT2 – Pollution Prevention Measures. Due to the proximity of habitats of significant ecological interest in the vicinity of the site, namely the River Anker and its riparian zone, strict pollution prevention measures are required to be implemented throughout the demolition and construction phases to ensure the surrounding habitats are protected from direct and indirect impacts from pollution. These should be detailed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to be adhered to throughout and beyond the development phase to ensure the protection of this sensitive habitat.</p>

<p><u>Roosting and Commuting Bats</u></p> <p>Development activity <i>unlikely</i> to result in an offence under the relevant legislation.</p>	<p>MIT3 – Sensitive Lighting Strategy. A sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented throughout and following construction within the site in accordance with best practice guidelines⁸ to reduce potential impacts on light-sensitive species, including bats and other nocturnal fauna:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting should lack UV elements and metal halide, and LED luminaires with a warm white spectrum (< 27,000K) used where possible to reduce blue light emission. • Any new ornamental shrub planting associated with the proposed development should be placed in positions to reduce light spill on to existing woody features, such as linear treelines, which might be utilised by commuting bats. • Light levels should be kept as low as possible, including the exclusion of light entirely where safe to do so, to reduce the overall spread of light within the site. • Lights should be directed only where necessary, toward the horizontal wherever possible, to avoid sky glow or unnecessary environmental illumination. Details regarding light specification and precise location will be subject to review by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to installation.
<p><u>Amphibians, Reptiles, & Other Species</u></p>	<p>MIT4 – Reptile and Amphibian Presence/Absence Surveys. These should comprise combined refugia and visual encounter surveys. Prior to the survey commencement, artificial refugia should be distributed across the suitable habitat(s) at a density of 10 per hectare and left in place for about a week. The refugia should be checked during appropriate weather conditions in the main activity seasons of April–June and August–September, ideally on dry days with temperatures around 10–20°C and light cloud. Survey visits should take place in the morning or late afternoon when temperature conditions favour basking beneath or on top of the materials. During each visit, surveyors carefully lift or inspect the refugia and record any reptiles found, as well as recording any incidental observations of reptiles/amphibians sighted outside of the refugia.</p>
<p><u>Riparian Mammals</u></p>	<p>MIT5 – Retention / Avoidance of Riparian Zone. Impacts within the riparian zone of the river Anker should be avoided, with a minimum buffer of 10m between the development site boundary and the river. If this was not deemed possible, Phase II surveys or otter and water vole would be required to determine possible impacts and appropriate mitigation.</p>
<p><u>Nesting Birds</u></p>	<p>MIT6 – Timing. Where possible, works required to facilitate the development which may impact on suitable nesting habitat for bird species, such as the temporary buildings and structures or suitable vegetation, shall be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (May–August inclusive). Where this cannot be avoided, any suitable habitat to be impacted should first be subject to a detailed inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine the presence / absence of any active bird nests. Should a nest be identified, this shall be retained and safeguarded within a buffer no less than 5m from the nest in every direction until such a time as the young have fledged.</p>

⁸ Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018). *Guidance Note 08/18: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK*.
Stone, E.L. (2013). *Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance*.
ILP (2011). *Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light*. Institution of Lighting Professionals. GN01-2011.

Enhancement	
<u>Roosting Bats</u>	<p>ENH1 – Additional Roosting Provision. Due to the proximity of the site to suitable roosting, foraging and commuting habitat for bat species, it is recommended that one bat box per residential building be installed on site to safeguard roosting provision for these protected species. Built in bat boxes are preferable and, whether built in or supplementary, bat boxes should be positioned ≥ 3m from the ground to a southern or west aspect.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p>Figure 14: Vivara Pro Harlech Woodstone Bat Box⁹ and Vivara Pro Build-in Woodstone Bat Box¹⁰ (UK Brick Size)</p>
<u>Nesting Birds</u>	<p>ENH2 – Bird Boxes. Several types of bird nesting boxes are recommended to be installed within the development site to increase nesting opportunities for local bird populations. These shall comprise boxes suitable to support common bird species such as great tits, blue tits, and starlings, such as Woodstone Seville Nest Box 32mm – these can be installed on trees; a built-in sparrow terrace; and cup nests for swallow and house martin under eaves of buildings. This should comprise at least one of each type per building and be mounted at least 3m off the ground facing north or east. Swallow and house martin cups should be multiple and grouped as these species are colonial nesters.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p>Figure 15: (L-R, top- bottom) Woodstone Seville Nest Box 32mm, Schwegler sparrow terrace¹¹, Schwegler No.9B Double House Martin nest¹² and Wildcare Swallow Nest bowl¹³</p>

⁹ Available here: <https://www.arkwildlife.co.uk/products/harlech-woodstone-bat-box>

¹⁰ Available here: <https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-build-in-woodstone-bat-box>

¹¹ Available here: <https://www.nhbs.com/1sp-schwegler-sparrow-terrace>

¹² Available here: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/schwegler-no9b-house-martin-10644.html>

¹³ Available here: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/swallow-nest-bowl.html>

<p><u>Amphibians, Reptiles, & Hedgehogs</u></p>	<p>ENH3 – Hedgehog Highway. Hedgehog highways—small gaps in fences or walls approx. 13cm x 13cm - should be installed into the northern and/or western boundaries of the site, ideally in a corner to allow hedgehogs to access the site. They should be marked as above to prevent unintentional blocking of the gaps by residents/maintenance staff. These small access points will also allow reptiles and amphibians to access the site, if present in the locality.</p>  <p>Figure 16: Examples of hedgehog highways in a brick wall (left) and wooden fence (right)</p> <p>ENH4 – Hibernacula. If practical, the construction of an all-natural hedgehog and reptile hibernaculum, similar to the below, either on or adjacent to the site will provide much needed sheltering and foraging opportunities for the species as well as invertebrates – their primary food source.</p>  <p>Figure 17: Example of a suitable hibernaculum</p>
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Subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures detailed above, it is considered that the habitats, features, and species present within and surrounding the site will be fully safeguarded under the proposals.

5. Conclusion

The majority of the site was determined to be of moderate local ecological importance, supporting negligible habitat value for roosting bats but moderate value for foraging/commuting bats, badger, hedgehog, nesting birds, reptiles. Precautionary mitigation measures to safeguard populations of these species are proposed.

Furthermore, several enhancement measures are recommended to be implemented to facilitate such species following the completion of the development, such that the proposed development is considered to provide an opportunity for an increase in biodiversity within and surrounding the site.

The 10-metre strip of land adjacent to the western boundary has high local ecological importance as the riparian zone of the adjacent river Anker. It is advised that the any development be as far removed from this valuable scrub and riparian habitat as possible. Any plans for development of the site must show careful consideration of the potential impacts upon the river corridor and the riparian species that are recorded nearby, such as otter and water vole. If proposals were to impact this habitat and/or the river, Phase II surveys for these species would be required.

No significant ecological constraints regarding other protected and Priority species that could not be sufficiently mitigated were identified within the site or surroundings.

6. Appendices

Plan 1 – Site Location



Plan 2 – Baseline Habitats and Ecological Features



Existing Habitats & Ecological Features

- Red Line Boundary
- Bramble scrub
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Other neutral grassland
- Ruderal/Ephemeral
- Line of trees
- Native hedgerow
- Native hedgerow with trees

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1:450

Scale at A3

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End of Report