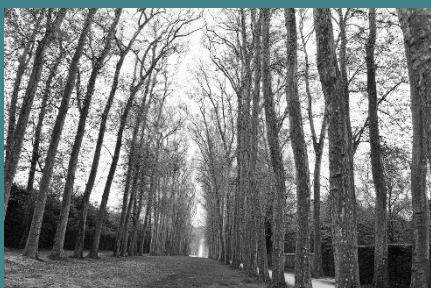


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& design



Great Crested Newt Survey Report

Client

Miller Homes Limited

Project

Ashby Road and Normandy Way,

Hinckley

Date

August 2026

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
-	Final	LC / 13.04.26	RJS / 13.04.26
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 FPCR Environment and Design Ltd were commissioned by Miller Homes Ltd to conduct surveys for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* to inform a Full planning application to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, for a residential development at a site spanning two separate areas, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley (central OS grid references SP428 963 and SP429 957 respectively).
- 1.2 This document should be read in conjunction with the other ecological documents prepared for this application which included surveys and reporting for badgers¹, bats², and birds³ along with the Ecological Appraisal⁴ and the Biodiversity Net Gain Report⁵.

Site Context

- 1.3 The application sites, hereafter referred to as 'the Asby Road site', 'the Normandy Way site' or collectively as 'the sites', comprise of two separate redlines. The larger of the two sites (Ashby Road) is c.17.8ha, with the Normandy Way site c.2.8ha. Both sites are situated to the north of the town of Hinckley and are located approximately 350m from each other.
- 1.4 The Ashby Road site comprises three large primarily arable fields bound by native hedgerows with occasional mature trees standards. Other habitats present include a single pond (P1) and seasonally wet ditch (D1) towards the eastern boundary, narrow field margins and small areas of ruderal vegetation and bare earth soil mounds.
- 1.5 The smaller Normandy Way site comprises a single modified grassland field under agricultural management, bound by native hedgerows, wooden boundary fencing to the south, and residential gardens to the east.
- 1.6 Land use in the surrounding area consists of a mixture of large open arable and grassland pasture fields with boundary hedgerows, and a stream situated over 200m west of both sites.

Site Proposals

- 1.7 Full planning application for the erection of 482 dwellings on land at Normandy Way and Ashby Road, Hinckley, comprising development across two parcels including:
- the northern parcel (off Ashby Road) for residential development, public open space, play provision, structural landscaping, sustainable drainage infrastructure and the provision of a new vehicular route;
 - the southern parcel (off Normandy Way) for residential development, public open space, landscaping and drainage infrastructure.
- 1.8 Together with associated access, internal roads, pedestrian and cycle connections, utilities and all other associated infrastructure.

¹ FPCR (2026) Badger Survey Report, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley, August 2026

² FPCR (2026) Bat Survey Report, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley, August 2026

³ FPCR (2026) Combined Bird Survey Report, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley, August 2026

⁴ FPCR (2026) Ecological Appraisal, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley, August 2026

⁵ FPCR (2026) Biodiversity Net Gain Report, Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley, August 2026

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Waterbodies and Site Habitats

- 2.1 An assessment of the suitability of the terrestrial habitats within the sites to support GCN was completed during the initial Phase 1 habitat survey in July 2023. Suitable terrestrial habitats include areas that may provide shelter, such as scrub and rank vegetation, and habitats which may provide suitable hibernation sites, such as rubble piles and tussock grassland.
- 2.2 Evidence of ponds within 250m of the site boundaries were sought using colour 1:25 000 Ordnance Survey base maps and aerial photographs. Where accessible, these were assessed against the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI).

Desk Study

- 2.3 Desk study information was compiled from OS maps, aerial imagery and online sources, with data on national and international designated sites taken from the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website⁶.
- Local records of protected/notable species, were obtained from Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC).

Habitat Suitability Index

- 2.4 The HSI provides a measure of the likely suitability that a waterbody has for supporting great crested newts. In general, ponds with a higher score are more likely to support GCN than those with a lower score, and there is a positive correlation between HSI scores and ponds with this species recorded.
- 2.5 The surveyed waterbodies were assessed for their potential to support an amphibian population, including GCN, using the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This provides a measure of the likely suitability that a waterbody has for supporting GCN (Oldham et al. 2000)⁷. Generally, ponds with a higher score are more likely to support GCN than those with a lower score and there is a positive correlation between HSI scores and ponds with newts recorded. Ten separate attributes were assessed for each pond to calculate the suitability of the ponds to support GCN:
- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Geographic location | • Presence of water-fowl |
| • Pond area | • Presence of fish |
| • Pond drying | • Number of linked ponds |
| • Water quality | • Terrestrial habitat |
| • Shade | • Macrophytic coverage |
- 2.6 A score is assigned according to the most appropriate criteria level set within each attribute and a total score calculated of between 0 and 1. Pond suitability is then determined according to the scales shown in Table 1.

⁶ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspxx> (accessed 17.11.2022)

⁷ Herpetological Journal 10(4); (2000) Evaluating the suitability for the Great Crested Newt, Oldham et al.

Table 1: HSI Scores as a measure of Pond Suitability

HSI score	Pond Suitability
<0.5	Poor
0.5 - 0.59	Below average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling

- 2.7 Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling was undertaken to determine the presence/likely absence of GCN in accordance with the guidance set out in Technical Advice Note WC1067⁸. This methodology has been approved by Natural England for the determination of GCN presence/likely absence.
- 2.8 Sampling was undertaken on 13th (P1 and P5) and 23rd May (P2) 2024 by appropriately licenced ecologists who collected a sample of water from the waterbodies using kits obtained from ADAS. The samples were taken from 20 locations around each waterbody and mixed thoroughly. 15 ml of this water was then placed into each of the 6 sterile sample tubes containing preservative, precipitates and a DNA sequence that was used for degradation control. All samples were stored in accordance with the protocols provided by the laboratory. The samples were then transported under suitable conditions to ADAS's laboratory for analysis. Following analysis, results provided by the laboratory could have one of three outcomes which are described in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Description of Possible Results of eDNA Analysis

Result	Description
Positive	A positive result means that eDNA from GCN was detected and they have been present within the water in the 20 days preceding sampling. An eDNA score would be provided indicating the number of positive replicates from a series of twelve.
Negative	DNA from GCN was not detected; in the case of negative samples the DNA extract is further tested for PCR inhibitors and degradation of the sample.
Inconclusive	Controls indicate degradation or inhibition of the sample, therefore the lack of detection of GCN DNA is not conclusive evidence for determining the absence of the species in the sample provided. Degradation can occur through poor storage of the samples or kits and inhibition can occur through unexpected chemicals in the sample.

⁸ Defra (2014) *Analytical and Methodological Development for Improved Surveillance of the Great Crested Newt, and other pond vertebrates*

Limitations

- 2.9 At the time of the surveys, D2 was dry and access to D3 was not provided, as such it was not possible to take water samples for the eDNA survey.
- 2.10 P3 and P4 were also not surveyed as access to the land was not granted.

3.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

- 3.1 None of the statutory or non-statutory designated sites identified within the search area cited GCN in their designations.
- 3.2 No records of GCN were returned through the desk study.
- 3.3 A search of MAGIC identified that there were no EPS mitigation licences issued within 1km of the sites.

Site Habitats

- 3.4 The Ashby Road site was dominated by three large intensively cultivated arable fields with narrow field margins boundary by native hedgerows. At the time of survey, the land was sown with a non-cereal (legume) crop with common arable weeds encroaching from field margins and corners. This habitat is considered unsuitable for GCN.
- 3.5 The field margins were narrow, generally less than 1m wide and were associated with bordering hedgerows. A small patch of ruderal vegetation and two soil mounds were also present on-site. The ruderal vegetation and hedgerows could provide some suitable cover and commuting routes for GCN. Only one of the surveyed ponds was present within the Ashby Road site boundary.
- 3.6 The Normandy Way site comprised a single field of modified grassland which was bound by native species-rich hedgerows to the north and scrub to the west, which did offer refuge and commuting opportunities for GCN. A small access point comprised hard standing was also present on the southern boundary.

Waterbodies

- 3.7 Ordnance survey maps and aerial photography were searched for waterbodies within 250m of the site boundaries. One pond(P1) and one ditch (D1) were recorded within the Ashby Road site boundary (P1), whilst a further five ponds are present within 250m of this area (P2, P3, P4, P5 and D2). No on-site waterbodies were present within the Normandy Way site, however, one pond (P6) and one ditch (D3) were present within 250m (Figure 1) Table 3 provides a summary of these waterbodies, their locations and surrounding habitats.

Table 3: Waterbodies within 250m of Site Boundaries

Waterbody ref.	Approximate Distance/Bearing from Site	Surrounding Habitat
On site		
P1	Within the Ashby Road Site boundary	Arable fields
D1	Within the Ashby Road Site boundary	Arable fields/hedgerow
Within 250m of the Ashby Road Site		
P2	10m west	Arable/grassland fields, scattered trees

P3	160m west	Grassland Field
P4	140m south	Amenity Grassland and Scattered Trees
P5	100m north-east	Amenity grassland
D2	215m north	Amenity grassland, hedgerow
Within 250m of the Normandy Way Site		
P6	228m east	Woodland pond
D3	122m west	Arable field, hedgerow

Habitat Suitability Index

- 3.8 The HSI assessment was conducted on all accessible waterbodies. The results of the HSI assessments are summarised in Table 4 and a full breakdown of the HSI calculations are in Appendix A.

Table 4: Descriptions, Photographs and HSI Scores of Surveyed Waterbodies

Pond Number & Description	Photograph	HSI Score	Predicted Presence of GCN
P1 Small on-site pond next to arable fields		0.56	0.20
P2 Heavily vegetated pond surrounded by trees		0.66	0.55

Pond Number & Description	Photograph	HSI Score	Predicted Presence of GCN
P5 Large pond on private residential property		0.60	0.55
P6 Small woodland pond		0.66	0.55
D1 Seasonally wet ditch		0.31	0.03

Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling 2024

- 3.9 Access to D3 was denied and D2 was dry at the time of survey so no samples could be taken.
- 3.10 D1 was considered largely unsuitable for GCN due to the shallow water depth and heavy over-shading from the surrounding vegetation and associated hedgerow, thus demonstrated by the HSI score of 0.31 (poor) with a predicted presence of 0.03. Consequently D1 was scoped out of the assessment and no eDNA samples were taken.
- 3.11 The results of the eDNA analysis for ponds P1, P2, P5 and P6 were negative indicating that GCN are absent from those ponds. As noted in the limitations section, no access was granted to survey the other ponds (P3 and P4) within 250m of the sites. A summary of the results is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Results of GCN eDNA Analysis of Ponds

Waterbody ref.	GCN Detection	GCN Score (#/12)	Inhibition (#/2)	Degradation
P1	Negative	0	2	Within limits
P2	Negative	0	2	Within limits
P5	Negative	0	2	Within limits
P6	Negative	0	2	Within limits

3.12 All surveyed waterbodies came back as negative for GCN eDNA.

4.0 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 GCN are afforded full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 4.2 A single pond and seasonally wet ditch were present within the eastern portion of the Ashby Road site, with a further five ponds and two ditches within 250m of the two combined site areas. The arable fields that dominated the Ashby Road site was considered to provide a very limited commuting, foraging and sheltering resource for GCN, in the event that they were locally present. The modified grassland that dominated the Normandy Road site was considered to provide foraging, refuge and commuting opportunities. Other, albeit limited, extents of other habitats present within the sites including hedgerows, also offered some suitable foraging, sheltering and hibernation potential.
- 4.3 The HSI assessment of waterbodies assessed P2, P5 and P6 as providing 'Average' suitability for GCN. P1 had 'Below Average' suitability and D1 had 'Poor' suitability. The predicted presence of GCN within all assessed waterbodies was below 55%.
- 4.4 On completion of surveys in 2024, no ponds showed evidence of GCN eDNA in the samples taken (negative result). No access was available for ditch D3, whilst ditch D2 was dry at the time of survey so no samples could be taken for analysis, and D1 was considered to be wholly unsuitable for GCN. No access was granted to survey the other ponds (P3 and P4) within 250m of the sites.
- 4.5 Research conducted by English Nature (now Natural England) in 2004 (English Nature Research Report Number 576) to assess the value of different habitats for GCN states in the non-technical summary that:
- 'By far the most captures were recorded within 50 m of ponds and few animals were captured at distances greater than 100 m.'*
- 4.6 Natural England's report then goes on to say:
- 'Captures on fences (and by other methods) at distances between 100 m and 200 – 250 m from breeding ponds tended to be so low as to raise serious doubts about the efficacy of this as an approach, although a small number of projects did report captures on significant linear features at distances approximately 150 – 200 m from ponds.'*
- 4.7 The strong implication of the above research and advice is that the risk of GCN being present more than 100m from a pond is low; and furthermore, that the risk of GCN being present beyond 100m from a pond is greatest with "large populations" or "particularly favourable habitat". In terms of the site, the eDNA results for the on-site pond P1 were negative, and all surveyed ponds within 250m were also negative. Although access was not granted for two of the ponds, the ponds were surrounded by sub-optimal GCN habitats including hardstanding and amenity grassland.
- 4.8 Given (i) the above, (ii) the negative results of the survey, (iii) the overall limited suitability of the on-site habitats to be lost on site, (iv) the suitable terrestrial habitats for GCN surrounding the off-site ponds, and (v) the at least partial barriers to dispersal in the form of buildings, hardstanding and a roads between these ponds and onsite pond P1, it is considered that the likelihood of GCN from the ponds offsite (if present) using the site is extremely low.

- 4.9 It is therefore considered extremely unlikely that GCN present a statutory constraint to development at either of the sites and, as such, so no for further surveys or mitigation are required.

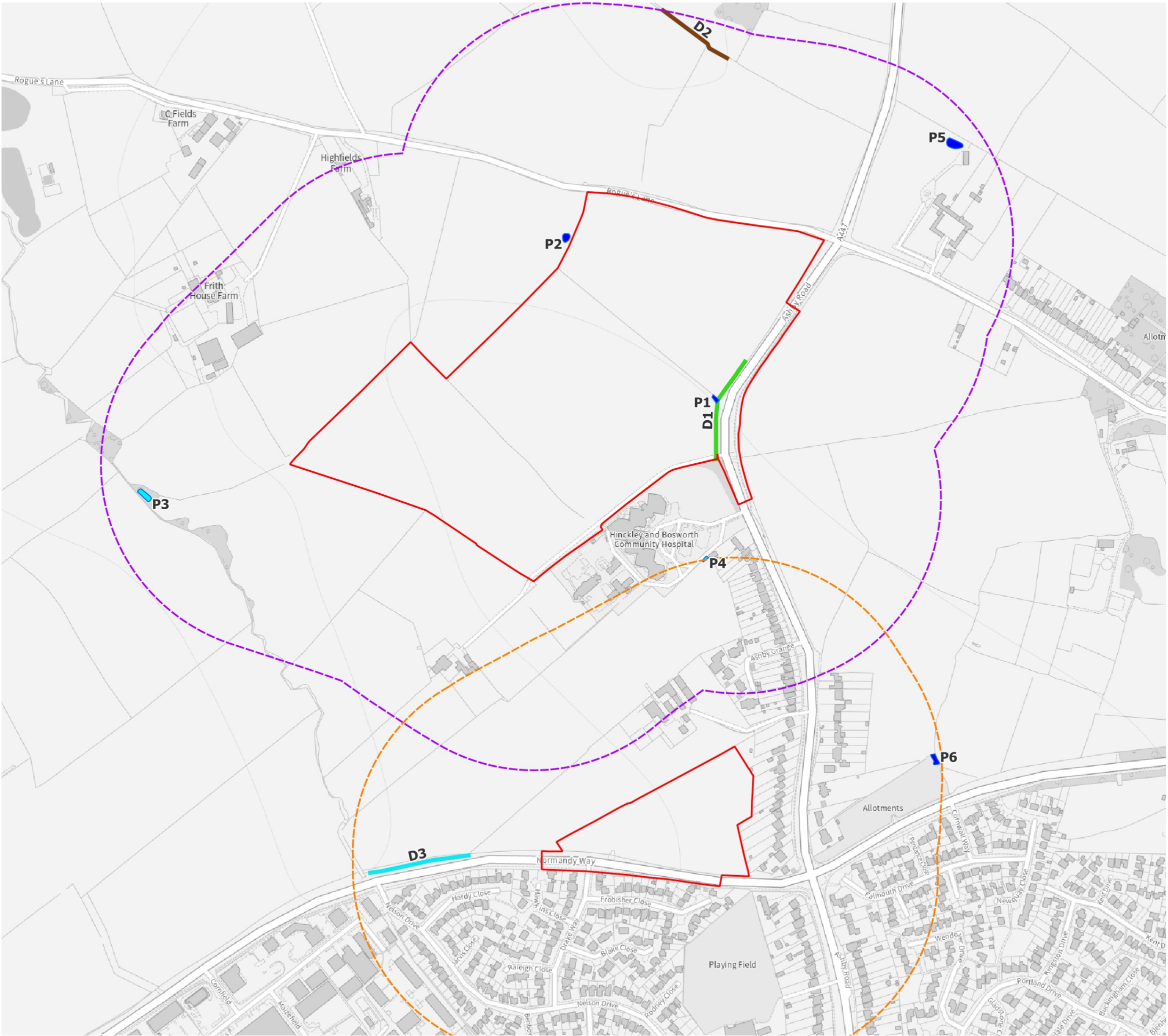
5.0 APPENDIX A – HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX RESULTS

Waterbody ref.	SI -1	SI -2	SI -3	SI -4	SI -5	SI -6	SI -7	SI -8	SI -9	SI -10	HSI Score	Pond Suitability	Predicted Presence
	Geographical Location	Pond Area	Pond Drying	Water Quality	Shade	Fowl	Fish	Ponds	Terrestrial Habitat	Macrophytes			
P1	1	0.05	0.5	0.67	0.9	1	1	0.75	0.67	0.9	0.59	Below Average	0.2
P2	1	0.05	1	0.67	1	0.67	1	0.75	1	0.9	0.66	Average	0.55
P5	1	0.30	0.1	1	1	0.67	1	0.75	1	0.45	0.60	Average	0.55
P6	1	0.05	1	1	0.9	1	1	0.55	1	0.6	0.66	Average	0.55
D1	1	0.05	0.1	0.33	0.2	1	1	0.75	1	0.35	0.31	Poor	0.03

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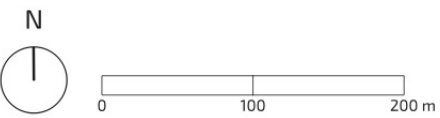
Registered Office: Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby DE74 2RH
Company No. 07128076. [T] 01509 672772 [E] mail@fpcr.co.uk [W] www.fpcr.co.uk

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- Site Boundary
- 250m Buffer North
- 250m Buffer South
- Waterbody
 - Nedgative eDNA Result
 - No Access
- Ditch (lines)
 - Dry
 - No access
 - Not surveyed

date 03/08/26 drwn/chkd LH / LC

client Miller Homes
project Ashby Road and Normandy Way, Hinckley

title WATERBODY LOCATION AND eDNA SURVEY RESULTS PLAN scale 1:5,000 @ A3

number FIGURE 1 rev A