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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Drayton Barn Farm
Chapel Lane
Witherley
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 3LR

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Report Ref: 267857PEA – 2342

Report Date: 24th June 2026



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1. Non-technical Summary

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared for land at Drayton Barn Farm, Chapel Lane, Witherley, Atherstone, CV9 3LR. The report assesses the ecological value of the site, identifies any potential constraints to the proposed development, and sets out appropriate mitigation, precautionary working methods and enhancement measures.

The proposed development will comprise the construction of new structures for kennel and storage use. The proposals will also include new hedgerow planting and the creation of a new wooded area to the south of the field.

The main findings of the appraisal are summarised below:

- The site forms part of an active cattle farm and is dominated by species-poor cattle-grazed grassland. This habitat is considered to be of limited botanical value due to regular grazing, trampling and nutrient enrichment.
- The main ecological value of the site is associated with the native hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area. These features provide habitat structure, shelter and connectivity within the wider rural landscape.
- No statutory designated ecological sites are located within 1 km of the proposed development site. Priority habitats are present within the wider surrounding area, but these are located off-site and are not expected to be directly affected by the proposals.
- The site lies within a Countryside Stewardship priority area for lapwing. However, the site itself is considered unlikely to provide optimal breeding habitat for lapwing due to its enclosed character, hedgerows, scattered trees, fencing, farm infrastructure and regular cattle grazing.
- The site provides negligible potential for roosting bats within the proposed development footprint. Some mature and standing dead trees in the wider area may provide limited bat roosting potential, but these are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals.
- The site provides moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats, mainly associated with the retained hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area. A sensitive lighting strategy will therefore be required to maintain dark corridors and avoid light spill onto retained habitats.
- The site provides moderate potential for breeding birds, particularly within hedgerows, trees, scrub and wooded areas. Any vegetation clearance, hedgerow works or tree works should therefore be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season where practicable.
- Badger potential is considered to be low. No setts or field signs were recorded during the survey, although occasional foraging or commuting along boundary habitats cannot be ruled out.
- Hedgehog and other small mammals may use hedgerows, field margins, scrub and less disturbed areas of the site. Precautionary working methods should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks.
- Reptile and great crested newt potential within the proposed development area is considered to be negligible due to the short, grazed, disturbed nature of the grassland and the lack of suitable aquatic habitat within the site boundary. No further surveys are considered necessary, although precautionary working methods should still be followed.
- No invasive non-native plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, were recorded during the walkover survey.
- The proposed development will result in the loss of a small area of species-poor grazed grassland. This habitat is of limited ecological value, and no significant adverse ecological effects are anticipated, provided the retained hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and wooded/scrub habitats are protected.
- Biodiversity Net Gain will be delivered within the red line boundary of the site. This will include on-site habitat creation and enhancement, including new native hedgerow planting, the proposed new wooded area and appropriate long-term management of retained and newly created habitats.
- Recommended mitigation includes protection of retained habitats, sensitive lighting design, timing vegetation clearance outside the bird nesting season where practicable, precautionary measures for hedgehog, reptiles and amphibians, pollution prevention measures and an ecological toolbox talk for contractors.

Subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation, precautionary working methods and biodiversity enhancement measures, the proposed development is considered unlikely to result in significant adverse ecological effects.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this report

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared to provide an initial assessment of the ecological receptors present within Drayton Barn Farm, Chapel Lane, Witherley, Atherstone, CV9 3LR.

The purpose of the appraisal is to establish the baseline ecological value of the site, identify potential constraints or opportunities associated with the proposed development, and assess any relevant legislative or policy considerations.

Specifically, the report:

- Outlines the habitats and species recorded on site during the survey.
- Identifies ecological receptors of potential importance and any constraints to development.
- Highlights where further targeted surveys are required to assess risks to protected or priority species.
- Recommends mitigation, avoidance and enhancement measures proportionate to the level of risk.
- Provides initial guidance on how statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements, under the Environment Act 2021, can be integrated into the design process.

This PEA is intended to inform the planning process, support decision-making, and provide a basis for subsequent ecological survey and mitigation strategies.

2.1.1 Personnel

The site and accessible adjacent land were surveyed by Ecologist Alexander Billingsley BSc (Hons) Ecology on 8th June 2026, in sunny conditions with occasional overcast periods and air temperatures between 12-14 °C.

2.2 Site location and description

Site Location

The site is located at Drayton Barn Farm, Chapel Lane, Witherley, Atherstone, CV9 3LR. The site lies on the edge of Witherley village, close to Atherstone and near the Warwickshire/Leicestershire county boundary. The surrounding landscape is rural in character, comprising agricultural land, scattered farmsteads, hedgerows, mature trees, small woodland blocks, field ponds and village-edge residential development. The River Anker lies within the wider local landscape and forms an important linear feature providing ecological connectivity between Witherley, Atherstone and the surrounding countryside. At a national landscape scale, the site lies within National Character Area 72: Mease/Sence Lowlands, as identified on the baseline habitat mapping. The NCA is characterised by a low-lying rural landscape of mixed farmland, river corridors, hedgerow networks, scattered settlements, small woodland blocks and mature boundary trees. The site therefore sits within a rural village-edge landscape where hedgerows, mature trees, field margins, watercourses and agricultural habitats contribute to local ecological connectivity.

Site Description

The site comprises part of an active cattle farm, with the main habitats formed by grazed agricultural grassland, native hedgerows, scattered native trees, agricultural fencing and associated farm infrastructure. The grassland is subject to regular cattle grazing and is therefore short, disturbed and species-poor, with botanical diversity limited by grazing pressure, trampling and nutrient enrichment. The sward is dominated by hardy and common agricultural grass species, including perennial ryegrass and timothy, with few flowering herbs present. The field compartments are enclosed by electric fencing used to contain livestock, with access provided through large metal field gates. Native hedgerows enclose parts of the site and include areas of blackthorn, with associated native hedgerow trees including ash and oak. These boundary features provide the main ecological structure within the site and contribute to local habitat connectivity across the wider farmed landscape. Structures adjacent to the proposed development area are in active use as kennels and form part of the working farm setting. A small, wooded area is present towards the southern side of the site, comprising native trees and providing additional local habitat value for common birds, bats, invertebrates and small mammals.



Figure 2.2 Site Location: Satellite image using Google Earth.

2.3 Proposed Development

The proposed development will comprise the construction of multiple structures for storage and kennel use, together with new hedgerow planting and a new wooded area on the south side of the field.



Figure 2.3: Proposed development

2.4 Policy and Legislative Context (summary)

The appraisal and proposed development are subject to a range of legislative provisions and planning policy requirements relevant to ecology and biodiversity.

Key legislation:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended): affords strict protection to European Protected Species (e.g. bats, great crested newts) and Habitats Sites.
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended): protects wild birds, certain animals and plants, and prohibits the spread of invasive species.
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992: makes it an offence to harm badgers or interfere with their setts; sett location data is confidential.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, Section 41: places a duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance priority habitats and species.
- Environment Act 2021: introduces mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be secured for at least 30 years through a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and legal agreement.

National planning policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, revised December 2024, amended February 2025): requires developments to follow the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate), conserve and enhance biodiversity, and deliver measurable net gains.

3. Desk Study & Site Context

3.1 Desk study sources

A desk-based review of ecological data and mapping resources was undertaken to provide wider context to the site survey. Sources consulted included:

- Badger records (within a 1 km search radius).
- Bat species records (within a 2 km search radius).
- Other mammals.
- Reptile and amphibian data including great crested newt (GCN) records.
- MAGIC Map (DEFRA): to identify statutory designations, priority habitats, ancient woodland and Agri-environment scheme data.
- NBN Atlas: to review species records and distribution trends at a broader scale.
- Aerial imagery and OS mapping: used to identify ponds, riparian woodland and hedgerow connectivity in the wider landscape.
- Phase 1 habitat plan: baseline mapping provided by the client (*2342 Phase 1 Habitat Map.pdf*).

This combined desk study information was used to inform the field survey, highlight potential ecological constraints and identify species or habitats requiring further consideration in the appraisal.

3.2 Designations within 1km

Statutory Sites

No statutory designated sites are located within 1km of the proposed development site; therefore, no direct impacts on statutory ecological designations are anticipated.

Priority Habitats

Priority habitats identified within 1km of the proposed development site include coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland. These habitats are located off-site and are separated from the proposed development area by intervening agricultural land, field boundaries, roads and/or existing land uses. There is no direct habitat connectivity between the site and these priority habitats, and no priority habitat will be lost or directly affected by the proposals. As such, impacts on off-site priority habitats are considered unlikely, subject to standard construction controls to prevent dust, runoff, pollution or accidental encroachment.

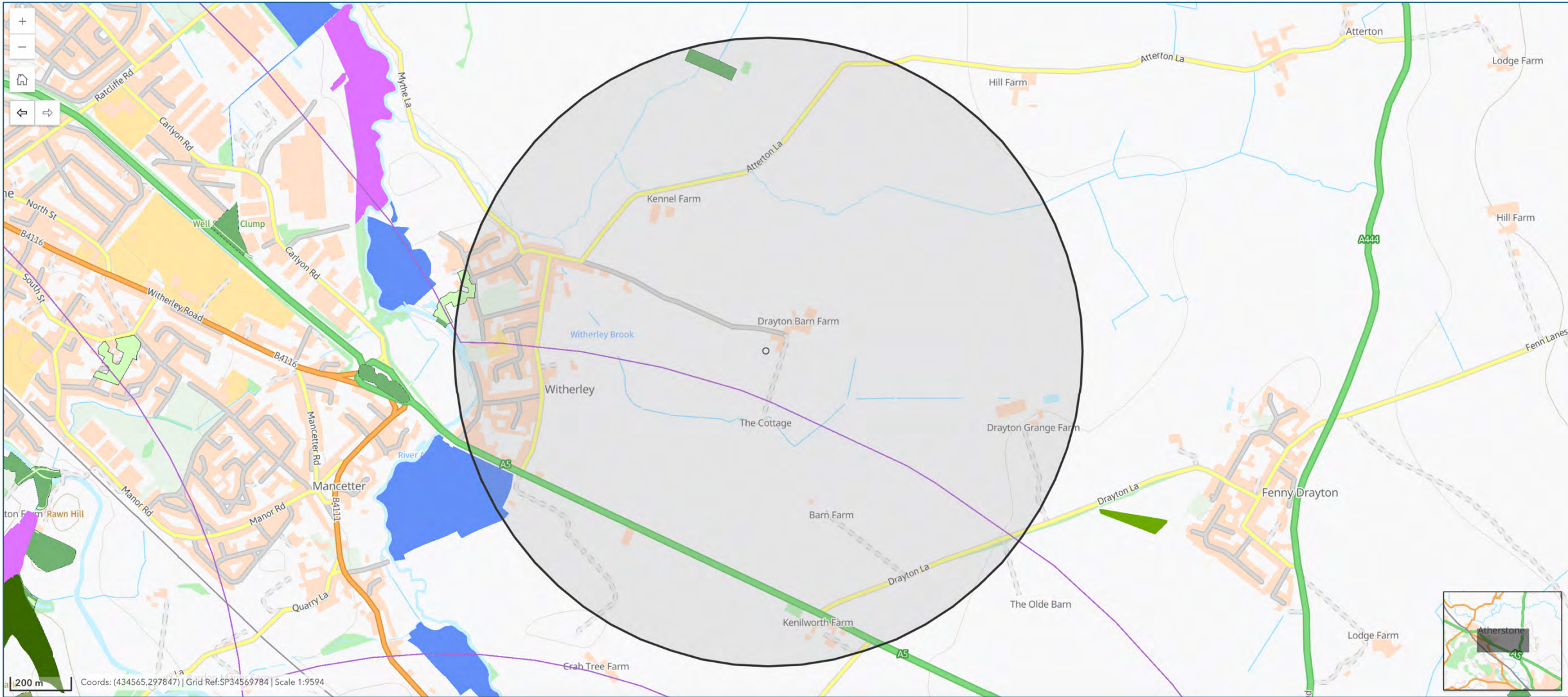


Figure 3.2: MAGIC Map showing statutory designations and priority habitats with 1km

3.3 Priority Species for Countryside Stewardship Targeting

A review of Countryside Stewardship Priority Species Targeting mapping identified that the site lies within a priority area for lapwing. Lapwing is a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and is typically associated with open farmland, wet grassland, floodplain grazing marsh and sparsely vegetated or seasonally wet ground. The site comprises part of an active cattle farm, with species-poor grazed grassland, hedgerows, scattered trees, electric fencing, farm infrastructure and adjacent kennel structures. Although the grassland is managed through cattle grazing, the site is enclosed by hedgerows, trees, fencing and farm buildings, which reduces its suitability for breeding lapwing, which generally favour more open landscapes with wide visibility. The site is therefore unlikely to provide optimal nesting habitat for lapwing; however, its location within a lapwing priority area indicates that the wider agricultural landscape may support opportunities for the species. The proposed development should therefore avoid unnecessary impacts on open grassland and field margins where practicable, retain and enhance boundary hedgerows and trees, and incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures that support the wider farmed landscape, such as species-rich grassland margins, sensitive grazing management and protection of wet or open field habitats where present.

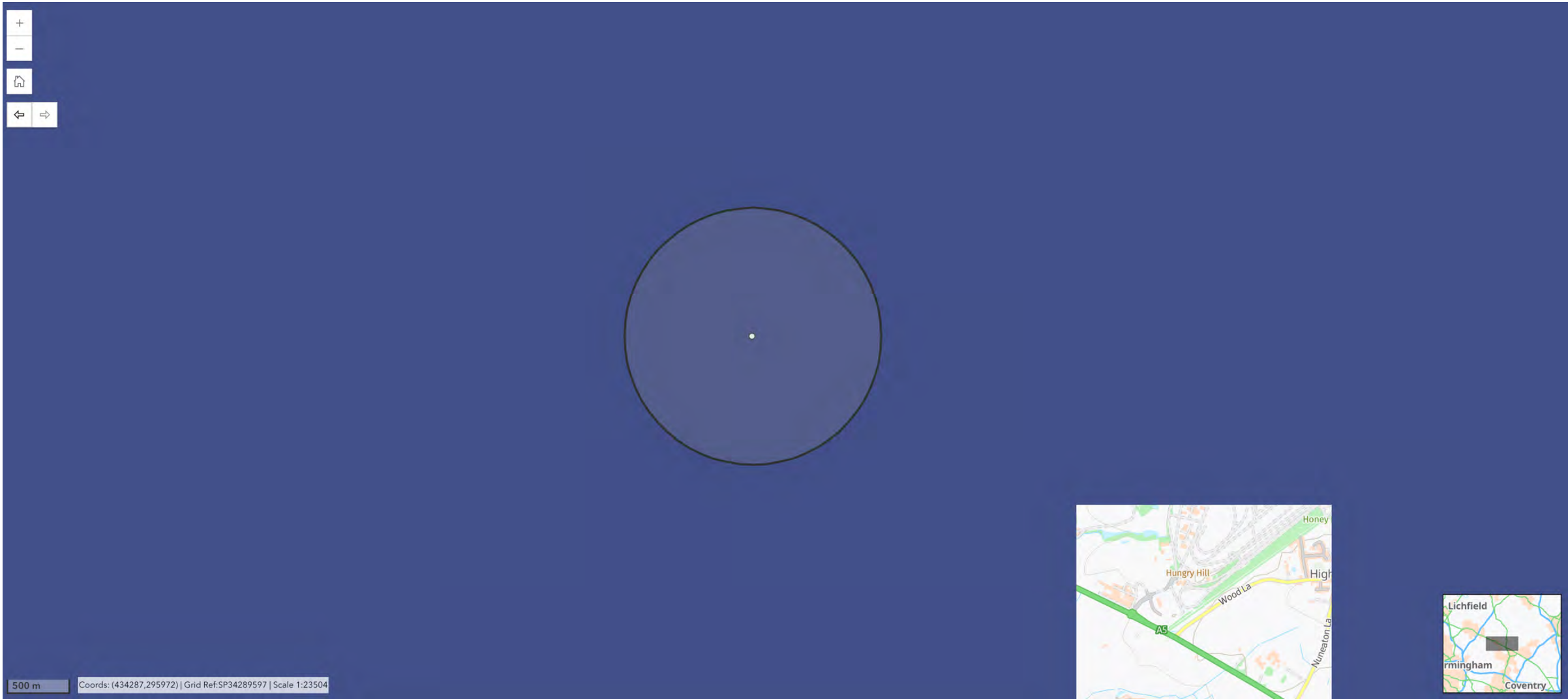


Figure 3.3: Priority species for Countryside Stewardship Targeting

3.4 Notable species records (Within 1km except bats which is within 2km)

Birds

Records returned within the search area comprised mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, mute swan *Cygnus olor*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, magpie *Pica pica*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, dunnoek *Prunella modularis*, carrion crow *Corvus corone*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, blackbird *Turdus merula*, jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, great tit *Parus major*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, swallow *Hirundo rustica*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, rook *Corvus frugilegus*, linnet *Linaria cannabina*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, stock dove *Columba oenas*, house martin *Delichon urbicum*, little egret *Egretta garzetta*, pied wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*, green woodpecker *Picus viridis*, green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, teal *Anas crecca*, swift *Apus apus*, Canada goose *Branta canadensis*, tree sparrow *Passer montanus*, blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*, raven *Corvus corax*, jay *Garrulus glandarius*, golden plover *Pluvialis*

apricaria, stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*, nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, siskin *Spinus spinus*, collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, whitethroat *Curruca communis*, coot *Fulica atra*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, pied wagtail *Motacilla alba*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, red-legged partridge *Alectoris rufa*, Muscovy duck *Cairina moschata*, Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*, snowy egret *Egretta thula*, brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, common gull *Larus canus*, gadwall *Mareca strepera*, smew *Mergellus albellus*, goosander *Mergus merganser*, yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*, spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, sand martin *Riparia riparia* and tawny owl *Strix aluco*.

Bats (Within 2km)

No bat records were returned within the 2 km search area.

Amphibians & reptiles

Records returned within the search area comprised grass snake *Natrix helvetica*.

Other mammals

Records returned within the search area comprised badger *Meles meles*, hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, mole *Talpa europaea*, field vole *Microtus agrestis*, brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, otter *Lutra lutra* and brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*.

3.5 Desk Study Summary

The desk study identified no statutory designated sites within 1km of the proposed development site; therefore, no direct impacts on statutory ecological designations are anticipated. Priority habitats within 1km include coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland; however, these habitats are located off-site and are not directly connected to the proposed development area. Countryside Stewardship Priority Species Targeting mapping identifies the site as lying within a lapwing priority area, although the enclosed and grazed nature of the site means it is unlikely to provide optimal breeding habitat for this species. Species records returned within the search area included a range of common and notable birds, including farmland, wetland and woodland species, as well as grass snake, badger, hedgehog, rabbit, mole, field vole, brown hare, otter and brown rat. The site's grazed grassland, hedgerows, mature trees and small wooded area provide some ecological value for common wildlife, particularly nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats, small mammals and reptiles. However, given the active cattle grazing, species-poor grassland and managed farm setting, the overall ecological value of the site is considered limited, with the main ecological constraints likely to relate to retention and protection of boundary hedgerows, native trees, the small, wooded area, nesting birds and precautionary measures for mammals and reptiles.

4. Methods

4.1 Desk study

A desk-based review of existing ecological information was undertaken to provide context for the field survey and to highlight potential ecological receptors requiring consideration. The following sources were consulted:

- MAGIC Map (DEFRA): to identify statutory designations, ancient woodland, priority habitats, and Environment Agency datasets relating to watercourses.
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas: to review records of species of conservation concern within the wider area.
- Aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping: to assess the distribution of ponds, hedgerows, riparian woodland, and wider connectivity of the landscape.
- Phase 1 habitat plan: baseline mapping provided (*2342 Phase 1 Habitat Map.pdf*) to support habitat identification and cross-check site observations.

Search radii were applied in line with standard guidance:

- 1km for general protected species and habitat records.
- 2 km for bats and records relevant to licensing considerations.

This information was used to guide the scope of the walkover survey, identify potential ecological constraints, and inform recommendations for further surveys and mitigation.

4.2 Field survey

Surveyor and date(s):

The site and accessible adjacent land were surveyed by Alexander Billingsley on 8th June 2026.

Weather and survey conditions:

The survey was undertaken in sunny conditions with occasional overcast and showers, with temperatures between 12-14 °C and good visibility. Overall conditions were suitable for habitat recording and for making general observations of faunal activity.

Survey scope and coverage:

- All accessible land within the red line boundary was inspected.
- Adjacent sites were viewed from boundary lines.

Habitat survey method:

- The site was walked systematically, and habitats were classified using Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010) with cross-reference to UK Habitat Classification (UKHab, 2020).
- Habitats and features with potential for protected or notable species were identified and assessed.
- Target Notes (TN1–TN7) were used to describe key habitat parcels and features of interest, supported by photographic evidence.

4.3 Photographic Record

		
Species-poor cattle-grazed grassland with native hedgerow boundary and scattered mature trees in the wider field context.	Grazed grassland showing poached and disturbed ground along the field margin, with native hedgerow and scattered trees.	Timber kennel structure adjacent to the proposed development area, with surrounding grazed grassland, hedgerow and mature tree.
		
Open cattle-grazed grassland with boundary hedgerows and scattered mature native trees.	Species-poor grazed grassland beneath mature tree canopy, with native hedgerow and wider agricultural landscape beyond.	Mature native tree (outside of the site) with cavities, deadwood and ivy/bramble at the base, providing potential ecological value for roosting bats, nesting birds and invertebrates.

		
Species-poor cattle-grazed grassland with scattered mature trees and native hedgerow boundaries in the wider farmed landscape.	Small wooded area and scrub habitat within the grazed field, with native hedgerows and wider agricultural land beyond.	Standing dead mature tree within the field boundary (outside of site), providing potential ecological value for roosting bats, nesting birds, deadwood invertebrates and other wildlife.

4.4 Standards and guidance

The survey and appraisal followed recognised professional standards and guidance:

- CIEEM (2017, updated 2021): *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*.
- JNCC (2010): *Phase 1 Habitat Survey Handbook*.
- UKHab Ltd (2020, updated 2021): *UK Habitat Classification – Field Survey Guidance*.
- Relevant species-specific guidance (Natural England / CIEEM) for bats, great crested newt, reptiles, and birds.
- Biodiversity Net Gain calculations will reference the Statutory Biodiversity Metric v1.04 (England).

4.5 Limitations

The following limitations apply to the PEA survey:

- Timing: The survey was completed in early summer, which is generally appropriate for broad habitat assessment; however, some botanical features and winter visitor birds may be less apparent at this time of year.
- Single visit: As a single walkover survey, it cannot confirm the absence of cryptic, seasonal or low-density species (e.g. reptiles or great crested newt).
- Tree assessment: Trees were assessed from ground level only; no climbed inspections, internal cavity checks or other aerial surveys were undertaken at this stage.
- Access: Full access was available to all areas within the site and to accessible land immediately adjacent.

5. Results
5.1 Habitats (UKHab classification) and Phase 1 map

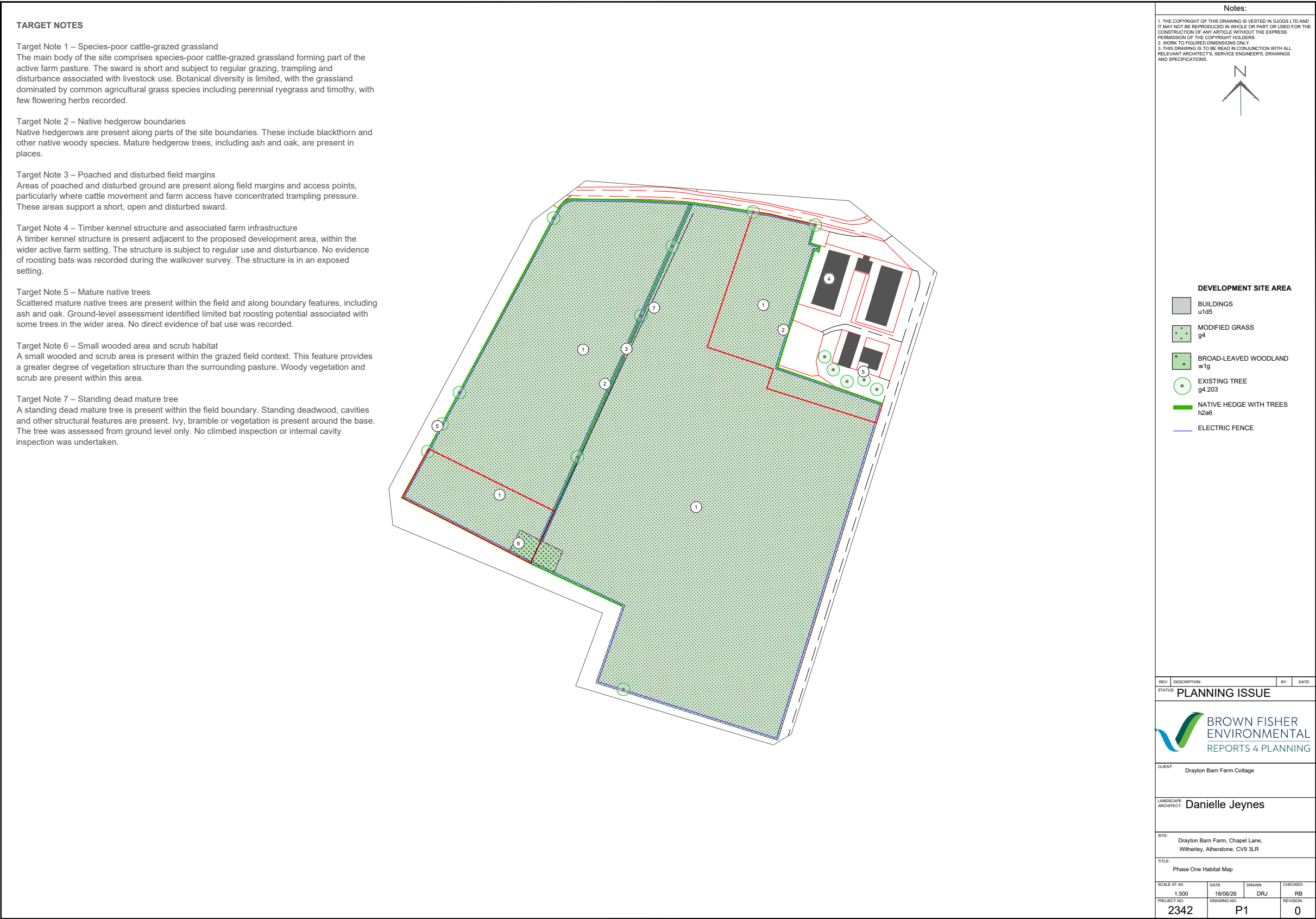


Figure 5.1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map

5.2 Target Notes

Target Notes (Phase 1 Mapping):

Target Note 1 – Species-poor cattle-grazed grassland

The main body of the site comprises species-poor cattle-grazed grassland forming part of the active farm pasture. The sward is short and subject to regular grazing, trampling and disturbance associated with livestock use. Botanical diversity is limited, with the grassland dominated by common agricultural grass species including perennial ryegrass and timothy, with few flowering herbs recorded.

Target Note 2 – Native hedgerow boundaries

Native hedgerows are present along parts of the site boundaries. These include blackthorn and other native woody species. Mature hedgerow trees, including ash and oak, are present in places.

Target Note 3 – Poached and disturbed field margins

Areas of poached and disturbed ground are present along field margins and access points, particularly where cattle movement and farm access have concentrated trampling pressure. These areas support a short, open and disturbed sward.

Target Note 4 – Timber kennel structure and associated farm infrastructure

A timber kennel structure is present adjacent to the proposed development area, within the wider active farm setting. The structure is subject to regular use and disturbance. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the walkover survey. The structure is in an exposed setting.

Target Note 5 – Mature native trees

Scattered mature native trees are present within the field and along boundary features, including ash and oak. Ground-level assessment identified limited bat roosting potential associated with some trees in the wider area. No direct evidence of bat use was recorded.

Target Note 6 – Small wooded area and scrub habitat

A small wooded and scrub area is present within the grazed field context. This feature provides a greater degree of vegetation structure than the surrounding pasture. Woody vegetation and scrub are present within this area.

Target Note 7 – Standing dead mature tree

A standing dead mature tree is present within the field boundary. Standing deadwood, cavities and other structural features are present. Ivy, bramble or vegetation is present around the base. The tree was assessed from ground level only. No climbed inspection or internal cavity inspection was undertaken.

5.3 Protected and notable species

A summary of species groups assessed during the PEA is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 — Likelihood of occurrence of protected and notable species

Group	Likelihood	Evidence / Constraints
Bats (roosting)	Negligible on site	No buildings are present within the proposed development site. Trees within the surrounding area were assessed from ground level and were considered to provide low bat roosting potential, primarily due to the presence of standing dead trees and associated features that may offer limited roosting opportunities. However, these trees are not located adjacent to the proposed development area and are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals. No evidence of bat activity, including droppings, staining or feeding remains, was recorded at the time of survey.
Bats (foraging/commuting)	Moderate	The site is considered to provide moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats. Although the grazed grassland itself is species-poor and subject to regular cattle grazing, the site is enclosed by native hedgerows, mature trees and a small, wooded area, which provide suitable linear and sheltered habitats for commuting and foraging bats. These features connect with the wider rural landscape and are likely to support insect prey and movement opportunities for common bat species. Bat activity is therefore most likely to be associated with the boundary hedgerows, mature trees, wooded area and field margins rather than the open grazed grassland. Retention of these features, together with a sensitive lighting strategy to avoid light spill onto hedgerows, trees and woodland edges, is recommended.
Breeding birds	Moderate	The site is considered to provide moderate potential for breeding birds. The grazed grassland itself is species-poor and offers limited nesting opportunities due to regular cattle grazing and disturbance; however, the native hedgerows, mature trees, small, wooded area and scrubby field margins provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a range of common and widespread bird species. The standing dead trees may also provide additional ecological value for cavity-nesting birds where suitable features are present. Breeding bird activity is therefore most likely to be associated with the hedgerows, trees, wooded area and boundary vegetation rather than the open grazed grassland. Vegetation clearance, hedgerow works or tree works should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season, which runs from March to August inclusive, where practicable. Where works during this period cannot be avoided, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24–48 hours prior to works commencing.
Great crested newt (GCN)	Negligible	Great crested newt is considered to have negligible potential within the proposed development site. No ponds, ditches or other suitable aquatic breeding habitats were recorded within the site boundary, and the site is dominated by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, electric fencing and farm infrastructure. The regular grazing, trampling and disturbance

		reduce the suitability of the grassland as terrestrial refuge or foraging habitat for great crested newt. Although hedgerows, mature trees and a small wooded area are present within the wider site context, the proposed development area itself offers limited suitable terrestrial habitat, and no evidence of great crested newt was recorded during the survey. On this basis, no further great crested newt survey work is considered necessary, although standard precautionary measures should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks.
Reptiles	Negligible	Reptiles are considered to have negligible potential to occur within the proposed development site. The site is dominated by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, which is subject to regular disturbance, trampling and sward suppression, reducing its suitability for sheltering, basking and foraging reptiles. The proposed development area lacks the structural diversity typically associated with suitable reptile habitat, such as rough grassland, unmanaged scrub margins, log piles, rubble piles or extensive tussocky vegetation. Although hedgerows, mature trees and a small wooded area are present within the wider site context, these features are not considered to provide sufficient suitable habitat within the proposed development footprint to support a reptile population. On this basis, no further reptile survey work is considered necessary, although standard precautionary measures should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks.
Badger	Low	Badgers are considered to have low potential to occur within the proposed development site. No badger setts or field signs, such as latrines, snuffle holes, mammal paths, hairs, footprints or evidence of recent digging, were recorded during the survey. The proposed development area is primarily formed by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture and farm infrastructure, which provides limited sett-building opportunities due to regular disturbance and livestock activity. However, the wider site context includes native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and a small, wooded area, which may provide some opportunities for badger foraging and commuting within the local rural landscape. On this basis, badger presence within the proposed development area is considered unlikely, although occasional use of boundary features cannot be entirely ruled out. A precautionary pre-commencement badger check should be undertaken if works are delayed or if groundworks, vegetation clearance or tree works affect suitable boundary habitats.
Hedgehog	Low-Moderate	Hedgehog is considered to have low to moderate potential to occur within the proposed development site. The site is primarily formed by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, electric fencing and farm infrastructure, which provide limited opportunities for sheltering, nesting or hibernation. However, the wider site context includes native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins, scrub and a small, wooded area, which may provide suitable foraging, commuting and refuge habitat for hedgehog and other small mammals. Hedgehog may therefore occasionally use boundary features and less disturbed areas of the site, although regular use of the open grazed grassland is considered unlikely. Precautionary measures should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks, including careful phased clearance of suitable vegetation, checking any piles of vegetation or debris prior to removal, and ensuring any excavations are covered overnight or include a means of escape.
Mammals	Low	Other mammals, including rabbit, mole, field vole, brown hare and brown rat, are considered to have low potential to occur within the proposed development site. The site comprises actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture with associated farm infrastructure, which limits the availability of undisturbed refuge, nesting and foraging habitat. However, the wider site context includes hedgerows, field margins, mature trees, scrub and a small, wooded area, which may provide suitable foraging, commuting and sheltering opportunities for common and widespread mammal species. Occasional use of the site and boundary habitats by small mammals or brown hare cannot be ruled out, particularly along less disturbed field margins. Precautionary measures should therefore be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks, including phased clearance of suitable vegetation, checks of debris or vegetation piles prior to removal, and covering excavations overnight or providing a means of escape.
Invasive Non-Native species (INNS)	None	No schedule 9 invasive species recorded during walkover.

6. Evaluation & Discussion

6.1 Evaluation of ecological features

The habitats recorded on site are generally of low to moderate ecological value, but several features are of Parish–Local importance and contribute to wider landscape connectivity. Their evaluation is summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 — Evaluation of ecological features

Feature	Importance	Rationale
Species-poor cattle-grazed grassland	Site	The grassland is subject to regular cattle grazing, trampling and nutrient enrichment, resulting in a short, disturbed and species-poor sward dominated by common agricultural grasses such as perennial ryegrass and timothy. It is of limited botanical value, although it may provide occasional foraging opportunities for common wildlife.
Native hedgerows	Local	Native hedgerows form important boundary features within the site and provide ecological structure, connectivity and shelter within the wider farmed landscape. They offer suitable nesting and foraging habitat for common birds, commuting and foraging opportunities for bats, and cover for small mammals and other wildlife.
Mature native trees	Local	Mature native trees, including ash and oak, provide habitat structure and contribute to local ecological connectivity. They may support nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats, invertebrates and other common wildlife. Retention and protection of mature trees should be prioritised where practicable.
Standing dead trees	Local	Standing dead trees are present within the wider field boundary and provide ecological value for deadwood invertebrates, nesting birds and potentially limited bat roosting opportunities. These trees are not located adjacent to the proposed development area and are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals.

Small wooded area and scrub	Local	The small, wooded area and associated scrub provide additional habitat diversity within the grazed field context. This feature offers suitable nesting and foraging habitat for birds, commuting and foraging opportunities for bats, refuge for small mammals, and value for invertebrates.
Field margins and boundary vegetation	Parish-Local	Field margins and boundary vegetation provide the main areas of semi-natural habitat within the site and contribute to local habitat connectivity. These features may be used by common mammals, hedgehog, nesting birds and foraging or commuting bats.
Active kennel structures and farm infrastructure adjacent to the proposed development area	Negligible	The adjacent kennel structures and associated farm infrastructure are in active use and are subject to regular disturbance. They are of limited intrinsic ecological value, although surrounding boundary vegetation may provide some value for common wildlife.
Off-site priority habitats	Local-County	Priority habitats within 1km include coastal and floodplain grazing marsh and deciduous woodland. These habitats are located off-site and are not directly connected to the proposed development area. No direct impacts are anticipated, subject to standard pollution prevention and construction control measures.
Overall site value	Site-Local	The site is dominated by species-poor grazed pasture of limited botanical value. The main ecological value is associated with native hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, boundary vegetation and the small wooded/scrub area, which provide habitat structure and connectivity within the wider rural landscape.

6.2 Protected and Priority Species

- **Great crested newt (GCN):** Great crested newt is considered to have negligible potential to occur within the proposed development site. No ponds, ditches or other suitable aquatic breeding habitats were recorded within the site boundary, and the site is dominated by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, electric fencing and farm infrastructure. Regular grazing, trampling and disturbance reduce the suitability of the grassland as terrestrial refuge or foraging habitat for great crested newt. Although hedgerows, mature trees and a small, wooded area are present within the wider site context, the proposed development area itself offers limited suitable terrestrial habitat. On this basis, no further great crested newt survey work is considered necessary, although standard precautionary measures should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks.
- **Nesting birds:** The site is considered to provide moderate potential for breeding birds. The grazed grassland itself is species-poor and offers limited nesting opportunities due to regular cattle grazing and disturbance; however, the native hedgerows, mature trees, small, wooded area and scrubby field margins provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a range of common and widespread bird species. Standing dead trees may also provide additional ecological value for cavity-nesting birds where suitable features are present. Breeding bird activity is therefore most likely to be associated with the hedgerows, trees, wooded area and boundary vegetation rather than the open grazed grassland.
- **Hedgehog:** Hedgehog is considered to have low to moderate potential to occur within the proposed development site. The site is primarily formed by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, electric fencing and farm infrastructure, which provide limited opportunities for sheltering, nesting or hibernation. However, the wider site context includes native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins, scrub and a small, wooded area, which may provide suitable foraging, commuting and refuge habitat for hedgehog and other small mammals. Hedgehog may therefore occasionally use boundary features and less disturbed areas of the site, although regular use of the open grazed grassland is considered unlikely.
- **Bats:** No buildings are present within the proposed development site. Trees within the surrounding area were assessed from ground level and were considered to provide low bat roosting potential, primarily due to the presence of standing dead trees and associated features that may offer limited roosting opportunities. However, these trees are not located adjacent to the proposed development area and are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals. No evidence of bat activity, including droppings, staining or feeding remains, was recorded at the time of survey.

The site is considered to provide moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats. The grazed grassland itself is species-poor and subject to regular cattle grazing; however, the native hedgerows, mature trees, small, wooded area and field margins provide suitable linear and sheltered habitats for commuting and foraging bats. These features connect with the wider rural landscape and are likely to support insect prey and movement opportunities for common bat species. Bat activity is therefore most likely to be associated with the boundary hedgerows, mature trees, wooded area and field margins rather than the open grazed grassland.

- **Badger:** Badgers are considered to have low potential to occur within the proposed development site. No badger setts or field signs, such as latrines, snuffle holes, mammal paths, hairs, footprints or evidence of recent digging, were recorded during the survey. The proposed development area is primarily formed by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture and farm infrastructure, which provides limited sett-building opportunities due to regular disturbance and livestock activity. However, the wider site context includes native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and a small, wooded area, which may provide some opportunities for badger foraging and commuting within the local rural landscape. Badger presence within the proposed development area is considered unlikely, although occasional use of boundary features cannot be entirely ruled out.
- **Reptiles:** Reptiles are considered to have negligible potential to occur within the proposed development site. The site is dominated by actively grazed, species-poor cattle pasture, which is subject to regular disturbance, trampling and sward suppression, reducing its suitability for sheltering, basking and foraging reptiles. The proposed development area lacks the structural diversity typically associated with suitable reptile habitat, such as rough grassland, unmanaged scrub margins, log piles, rubble piles or extensive tussocky vegetation. Although hedgerows, mature trees and a small, wooded area are present within the wider site context, these features are not considered to provide sufficient suitable habitat within the proposed development footprint to support a reptile population. No further reptile survey work is considered necessary, although standard precautionary measures should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks.

- Countryside Stewardship Priority Species Targeting mapping identifies the site as lying within a priority area for lapwing. The site itself is unlikely to provide suitable nesting habitat for lapwing due to its enclosed character, native hedgerows, scattered trees, fencing, farm infrastructure and regular cattle grazing. However, the wider agricultural landscape may provide opportunities for this species. Retention and enhancement of field margins, hedgerows and grassland habitats should therefore be considered where practicable as part of the biodiversity enhancement strategy.

6.3 Non-native invasive species

No plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded during the site walkover survey.

6.4 Evaluation Summary

The site is of low to moderate ecological value overall. The majority of the site comprises species-poor cattle-grazed grassland, which is of limited botanical interest due to regular grazing, trampling and nutrient enrichment. The main ecological value is associated with the native hedgerows, mature native trees, standing dead trees, field margins, boundary vegetation and the small wooded/scrub area, which provide habitat structure, connectivity and opportunities for common wildlife.

The site provides low potential for roosting bats, primarily associated with standing dead trees in the surrounding area, although these are not located adjacent to the proposed development area and are not expected to be directly affected. The site provides moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats and breeding birds, mainly associated with hedgerows, trees, wooded areas and boundary vegetation. Low potential is identified for badger, and low to moderate potential is identified for hedgehog and other common mammals, while reptiles and great crested newt are considered to have negligible potential within the proposed development site. No further protected species surveys are considered necessary based on the current assessment, although precautionary working methods and appropriate protection of retained habitats should be implemented during construction.

7. Potential Impacts

The likely ecological impacts of the proposed development have been assessed based on the habitats and species recorded on site, as well as the sensitivity of receptors in the surrounding landscape. Impacts are considered both during the construction phase and the operational phase.

7.1 Construction phase

Construction activities have the potential to cause temporary and permanent ecological impacts through vegetation clearance, ground disturbance, pollution, and increased disturbance. Key risks include:

- Vegetation removal and disturbance:
 - Clearance of a small area of species-poor cattle-grazed grassland is proposed to facilitate the development. Construction activities may also result in temporary disturbance to adjacent field margins and retained boundary vegetation, including native hedgerows, mature trees and the small wooded/scrub area, where works, access routes or material storage are not appropriately controlled. These retained features provide the main ecological value within the site and should be protected during construction through appropriate exclusion fencing, careful site management and avoidance of unnecessary encroachment.
- Pollution and runoff risks:
 - Accidental spills of fuel, oil or chemicals could affect soil quality if not appropriately controlled.
 - Construction dust and sediment run-off could indirectly affect adjacent habitats.
- Disturbance (lighting, noise, vibration):
 - Temporary artificial lighting, noise and vibration may cause disturbance to wildlife, including the displacement of foraging and commuting bats and disturbance to breeding birds using boundary vegetation.
- Encroachment onto adjacent habitats:
 - Without appropriate safeguards, there is a risk of accidental damage to retained trees and hedgerows adjacent to the site through inappropriate storage of materials, vehicle movements or contractor access.

7.2 Operational phase

Once occupied, the development may give rise to longer-term ecological pressures. Key risks include:

- Lighting impacts:

Inappropriate external lighting could reduce the dark corridor function of site boundaries, with potential effects on commuting and foraging bats and other nocturnal fauna.
- Disturbance from staff and dogs:

The proposed development will introduce new kennel and storage structures within the existing active farm setting. Given that the site is already subject to regular agricultural activity, cattle grazing, vehicle movements and use of adjacent kennel structures, the proposals are not expected to result in a substantial increase in disturbance to ecological receptors. Potential operational disturbance is likely to be limited to localised noise, movement and lighting associated with the proposed kennel and storage use. Provided retained hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area are protected, and external lighting is sensitively designed, no significant adverse disturbance effects on ecological receptors are anticipated.

- Habitat degradation and fragmentation:

The site comprises species-poor cattle-grazed grassland forming part of a larger active pasture field on the edge of Witherley village. The development will result in the permanent loss of a small area of grazed grassland; however, this habitat is of limited botanical and ecological value due to regular grazing, trampling and nutrient enrichment, and is not considered to provide an important habitat connectivity function. The main connective features within the site are the retained native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and small wooded/scrub area. Provided these features are retained and protected, the loss of a small area of species-poor grassland is unlikely to result in a significant adverse ecological effect. Proposed habitat creation and enhancement, including new hedgerow planting and a new wooded area to the south of the field, will provide additional ecological structure and long-term opportunities for birds, bats, invertebrates and small mammals.

7.3 Potential Impacts Summary

The proposed development has the potential to cause temporary ecological impacts during construction through vegetation clearance, ground disturbance, pollution, lighting, noise and accidental encroachment into retained habitats. The main receptors requiring protection are native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins, the small wooded/scrub area, nesting birds and foraging or commuting bats.

The development will result in the permanent loss of a small area of species-poor cattle-grazed grassland; however, this habitat is of limited botanical and ecological value and is not considered to provide an important habitat connectivity function. Operational impacts are likely to be limited, given the existing active farm setting and adjacent kennel use. Provided retained boundary vegetation is protected, external lighting is sensitively designed and habitat enhancement measures are delivered, no significant adverse ecological effects are anticipated.

8. Mitigation, Avoidance & Precautionary Measures

The following measures are recommended to avoid, reduce, or mitigate ecological impacts associated with the proposed development. These measures should be secured through planning conditions and a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), where appropriate.

8.1 Retention and protection of habitats

- Retained native hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area should be protected throughout construction.
- The proposed development should be kept within the defined working area to avoid unnecessary encroachment into retained habitats.
- No storage of materials, machinery, fuel, chemicals, spoil or welfare facilities should take place within or immediately adjacent to retained hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees or the small wooded/scrub area.
- Suitable protective fencing should be installed prior to commencement of works where construction activity is located close to retained boundary vegetation, trees or wooded/scrub habitat.
- Retained trees should be protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012, including protection of root protection areas where relevant.
- Existing hedgerows and mature trees should be retained wherever practicable, as these features provide the main ecological structure and connectivity within the site.
- The standing dead trees within the wider field boundary should be retained where safe and practicable due to their value for deadwood invertebrates, nesting birds and limited bat roosting opportunities.
- The small wooded/scrub area should be retained and protected from direct loss, accidental damage, soil compaction, dust, runoff and inappropriate lighting.
- Site access routes, turning areas and working zones should be clearly marked to prevent accidental damage to retained habitats.
- Any temporary disturbance to surrounding grassland should be minimised and reinstated or enhanced following completion of works.
- New hedgerow planting and the proposed new wooded area to the south of the field should be delivered as part of the ecological enhancement and BNG strategy.

8.2 Vegetation clearance timing

- Vegetation clearance should be kept to the minimum area necessary to facilitate the proposed development.
- Clearance of grassland, field margins, hedgerows, scrub or woody vegetation should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season, which runs from March to August inclusive, where practicable.
- Where vegetation clearance is required during the bird nesting season, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24–48 hours prior to works commencing.
- If an active bird nest is identified, works affecting the nest or surrounding vegetation should stop and an appropriate exclusion buffer should be established until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active.
- Clearance should be undertaken in a phased and directional manner, moving from the working area towards retained boundary vegetation, hedgerows, field margins or the small wooded/scrub area to allow any mobile wildlife to disperse.
- Suitable vegetation, debris piles, stored materials or potential refuges should be checked prior to removal or disturbance.
- Any cut vegetation should be removed from the working area promptly or stored away from retained habitats to avoid creating temporary refuges for hedgehog, reptiles, amphibians or small mammals.
- Vegetation should be maintained short following clearance until works commence, to reduce the likelihood of wildlife moving back into the working area.
- Retained hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area should not be cut, topped, damaged or otherwise disturbed unless this has been specifically agreed and checked by the project ecologist.

8.3 Bats – trees and lighting

- No buildings are present within the proposed development site; therefore, no impacts on building-based bat roosts are anticipated.
- Trees within the surrounding area were assessed from ground level and were considered to provide low bat roosting potential, primarily due to the presence of standing dead trees and associated features that may offer limited roosting opportunities.
- The standing dead trees and other trees with potential bat value are not located adjacent to the proposed development area and are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals.
- No evidence of bat activity, including droppings, staining or feeding remains, was recorded at the time of survey.
- No tree removal or works to trees with potential roosting features should take place unless they have first been checked by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- If any tree works become necessary, trees should be subject to an updated ground-level bat roost assessment prior to works commencing.
- If a potential roosting feature is identified during works, or if a bat is found, works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
- The site is considered to provide moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats, mainly associated with native hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area.
- Retained hedgerows, trees, field margins and wooded/scrub habitat should be protected to maintain bat commuting and foraging opportunities.
- External lighting should be designed sensitively to avoid light spill onto retained hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area.
- Lighting should follow Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance, including use of warm-white LED luminaires, directional shielding, low mounting heights, motion sensors or timers, and avoidance of unnecessary illumination of boundary habitats.
- Dark corridors should be retained along site boundaries wherever practicable, particularly where hedgerows, mature trees and wooded/scrub habitat connect with the wider rural landscape.

8.4 Reptile Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS)

- Reptiles are considered to have negligible potential within the proposed development site; therefore, reptile RAMS are recommended as a precautionary good-practice measure only.
- The proposed development area is dominated by species-poor cattle-grazed grassland, which provides limited suitability for reptiles due to regular grazing, trampling and lack of structural diversity.
- Vegetation clearance should be kept to the minimum area necessary to facilitate the proposed development.
- Clearance should be undertaken in a phased and directional manner, moving from the working area towards retained hedgerows, field margins, boundary vegetation or the small wooded/scrub area. Any longer grass, field margins, scrub, debris piles, stored materials or potential refuges within the working area should be checked before removal or disturbance.
- Where suitable vegetation is present, a two-stage cut should be undertaken, with the first cut to approximately 150 mm, followed by a second cut to approximately 50 mm after at least 48 hours.
- Vegetation should then be maintained short until works commence, to reduce the likelihood of reptiles or other wildlife moving back into the working area.
- Any log piles, rubble, stored materials or other potential refugia should be dismantled carefully by hand where they are affected by works.
- Excavations should be covered overnight or fitted with a means of escape, such as a shallow ramp, to prevent reptiles or other wildlife becoming trapped.
- If a reptile is encountered during works, works should stop temporarily in that area and the animal should be allowed to move away from the working area of its own accord.
- Contractors should receive a toolbox talk covering reptile identification, the precautionary working method and the procedure to follow if reptiles or other wildlife are encountered.

8.5 Great Crested Newt Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS)

- Great crested newt is considered to have negligible potential within the proposed development site; therefore, great crested newt RAMS are recommended as a precautionary good-practice measure only.
- No ponds, ditches or other suitable aquatic breeding habitats were recorded within the site boundary.
- The proposed development area is dominated by species-poor cattle-grazed grassland, electric fencing and farm infrastructure, which provide limited suitability for great crested newt due to regular grazing, trampling and disturbance.
- Vegetation clearance should be kept to the minimum area necessary to facilitate the proposed development.
- Clearance should be undertaken in a phased and directional manner, moving from the working area towards retained hedgerows, field margins, boundary vegetation or the small wooded/scrub area.
- Any debris piles, stored materials, logs, rubble or other potential refuges within the working area should be checked before removal or disturbance.
- Where suitable vegetation is present, a two-stage cut should be undertaken, with the first cut to approximately 150 mm, followed by a second cut to approximately 50 mm after at least 48 hours.
- Vegetation should then be maintained short until works commence, to reduce the likelihood of amphibians or other wildlife moving into the working area.
- Excavations should be covered overnight or fitted with a means of escape, such as a shallow ramp, to prevent amphibians or other wildlife becoming trapped.
- Any pipes or open-ended materials should be capped or stored off the ground overnight.
- Contractors should receive a toolbox talk covering great crested newt identification, legal protection, precautionary working methods and the procedure to follow if an amphibian is encountered.
- If a great crested newt is found during works, works must stop immediately in that area and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist before works recommence.

8.6 Hedgehog measures

- Hedgehog is considered to have low to moderate potential within the proposed development site; therefore, hedgehog measures are recommended as a precautionary good-practice measure.
- The proposed development area is dominated by species-poor cattle-grazed grassland, electric fencing and farm infrastructure, which provide limited opportunities for hedgehog sheltering, nesting or hibernation.
- Retained hedgerows, field margins, mature trees, scrub and the small, wooded area may provide suitable foraging, commuting and refuge habitat for hedgehog within the wider site context.
- Vegetation clearance should be undertaken in a phased and directional manner, moving from the working area towards retained hedgerows, field margins, boundary vegetation or the small wooded/scrub area.
- Any piles of vegetation, brash, logs, debris, stored materials or other potential refuges should be checked carefully before removal or disturbance.
- Clearance of dense vegetation or potential refuge habitat should be undertaken by hand tools where practicable, or under ecological supervision where considered necessary.
- Excavations should be covered overnight or fitted with a means of escape, such as a shallow ramp, to prevent hedgehog or other wildlife becoming trapped.
- Any open pipes or similar materials should be capped or stored off the ground overnight.
- Contractors should receive a toolbox talk covering hedgehog identification, legal status, precautionary working methods and the procedure to follow if a hedgehog is encountered.
- If a hedgehog is found during works, works should stop temporarily in that area and the animal should be allowed to move away from the working area of its own accord. If the hedgehog is injured, trapped or at risk, advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist or wildlife rescue organisation.
- Where new boundary fencing is installed, hedgehog access gaps should be incorporated where practicable to maintain permeability across the site and wider landscape.

8.7 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

No plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded during the site walkover survey.

8.8 Pollution prevention and site management

- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be prepared and implemented to control risks of pollution, dust, sediment run-off and accidental encroachment into retained habitats.
- Fuel, oil, chemicals and other potentially polluting substances should be stored securely in designated areas away from retained hedgerows, mature trees, field margins, the small wooded/scrub area and any drainage features.
- Fuel and chemical storage should include appropriate secondary containment, such as bunding or drip trays, to reduce the risk of accidental spills.
- Refuelling should take place in a designated area away from retained habitats and should not be undertaken within tree Root Protection Areas or immediately adjacent to hedgerows or boundary vegetation.
- Spill kits should always be available on site, and contractors should be briefed on their location and correct use.
- Measures should be implemented to prevent sediment, dust, cement washout or contaminated run-off from entering retained habitats, field margins or surrounding land.
- Materials, machinery, spoil and welfare facilities should be located within agreed working areas and away from retained hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees and the small wooded/scrub area.
- Construction lighting should be kept to the minimum necessary and directed away from retained hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area.
- Contractors should receive an ecological toolbox talk before works commence, covering retained habitats, protected species precautions, pollution prevention and the procedure to follow if wildlife is encountered.
- The working area should be kept tidy throughout construction, with waste materials removed promptly to avoid creating temporary refuges for wildlife.
- Any temporary disturbance to surrounding grassland should be reinstated or enhanced following completion of works.

8.9 Summary

Mitigation and precautionary measures are recommended to avoid or reduce ecological impacts during construction and operation. Retained native hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area should be protected throughout the works, with construction activity kept within the defined working area and suitable protective fencing installed where required.

Vegetation clearance should be kept to the minimum necessary and undertaken outside the main bird nesting season where practicable. If clearance is required between March and August inclusive, a nesting bird check should be completed by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to works commencing. Clearance should also follow a phased and directional approach to allow wildlife to disperse into retained habitats.

Although reptiles and great crested newt are considered to have negligible potential within the proposed development site, precautionary reasonable avoidance measures should be implemented as good practice, including staged vegetation clearance, checks of potential refuges, covering excavations overnight or providing escape ramps, and contractor toolbox talks. Hedgehog measures should also be followed, including checks of vegetation, brash, debris and stored materials prior to removal, and provision of hedgehog access gaps in new fencing where practicable.

The site provides moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats, primarily associated with retained hedgerows, trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area. These features should be protected, and external lighting should be sensitively designed to avoid light spill and maintain dark corridors. Pollution prevention and site management measures should be secured through a Construction Environmental Management Plan, including appropriate fuel and chemical storage, spill response provision, dust and sediment control, ecological toolbox talks and reinstatement or enhancement of temporarily disturbed grassland.

9. Enhancements & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

9.1 BNG Approach

Biodiversity Net Gain will be delivered within the red line boundary of the Site. The proposed development will incorporate on-site habitat creation and enhancement measures designed to achieve the required biodiversity uplift, in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and relevant planning policy requirements. The final habitat proposals will be secured through the detailed landscape design and associated management prescriptions, ensuring that the retained, enhanced and newly created habitats are appropriately established, maintained and monitored over the required management period.

10. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Screening Note

The proposed development has been assessed under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (“the Habitats Regulations”). These Regulations require the competent authority (typically the Local Planning Authority) to consider whether a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any Habitats Site (European site, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

10.1 Screening outcome

- No Habitats Sites lie within or immediately adjacent to the site.
- The nearest internationally designated sites are located well beyond the 1 km desk study area and are separated from the development by substantial intervening land uses.
- The scale and nature of the proposed development, comprising construction of new structures to be used as kennels and storage, means that there are no plausible pathways for significant effects on any Habitats Site.

10.2 In-combination effects

Potential in-combination effects with other plans or projects have been considered. Given the small scale of the proposed development, its rural edge-of-village location, and the absence of impact pathways linking the site to any Habitats Sites, no in-combination effects are identified.

10.3 Conclusion

The proposed development is not considered likely to have a significant effect on any Habitats Site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. On this basis, a full Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) is not required.

11. Conclusions & Recommendations

11.1 Conclusions

The proposed development site is dominated by species-poor cattle-grazed grassland of limited botanical value, with the principal ecological interest associated with retained native hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area. No significant adverse ecological effects are anticipated provided the mitigation, precautionary working methods and retained habitat protection measures set out in this report are implemented. Biodiversity Net Gain should be delivered through the proposed on-site habitat creation and enhancement, including new native hedgerow planting, creation of the wooded area to the south of the field, and appropriate long-term management and monitoring.

11.2 Recommendations

Table 11.2 — Summary of recommendations

Feature / Issue	Risk / Constraint	Recommendation / Action
Retained hedgerows, mature trees, standing dead trees, field margins and small wooded/scrub area	These features provide the main ecological value and habitat connectivity within the site. Risk of accidental damage, encroachment, soil compaction, dust, runoff or inappropriate storage during construction.	Retain and protect these features throughout the works. Install protective fencing where required and keep all machinery, materials, spoil, fuel, chemicals and welfare facilities away from retained habitats. Retained trees should be protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012 where relevant.
Species-poor cattle-grazed grassland	Permanent loss of a small area of low-value grazed grassland to facilitate the proposed kennel and storage development.	Limit land-take to the minimum necessary. Any temporarily disturbed grassland should be reinstated or enhanced following completion of works. Habitat creation and enhancement should be delivered within the red line boundary as part of the BNG strategy.
Breeding birds	Moderate potential for nesting birds within hedgerows, mature trees, scrub and the small wooded area. Risk of damage or disturbance to active nests if vegetation works are undertaken during the nesting season.	Vegetation clearance, hedgerow works and tree works should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season, which runs from March to August inclusive, where practicable. If works are required during this period, a nesting bird check should be completed by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24–48 hours before works commence. If an active nest is found, works affecting the nest must stop until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active.
Bats — foraging and commuting	Moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats associated with hedgerows, mature trees, field margins and the small wooded/scrub area. Risk of disturbance or displacement through lighting.	Retain and protect hedgerows, trees, field margins and wooded/scrub habitat. External lighting should be sensitively designed to avoid light spill onto retained boundary vegetation and maintain dark corridors. Lighting should use directional, low-intensity, warm-white fittings with shields, timers or motion sensors where practicable.

Bats — roosting trees	Low roosting potential associated with some mature and standing dead trees in the wider site context. These trees are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposals.	No tree works should be undertaken to trees with potential roosting features unless they have first been checked by a suitably qualified ecologist. If a bat or potential roosting feature is encountered during works, works must stop immediately and ecological advice must be sought.
Badger	Low potential for badger use. No setts or field signs were recorded during the survey, but occasional foraging or commuting along boundary features cannot be ruled out.	If works are delayed, or if groundworks/vegetation clearance affect suitable boundary habitats, a pre-commencement badger check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. Any excavations should be covered overnight or provided with a means of escape.
Hedgehog and other small mammals	Low to moderate potential for hedgehog and other common mammals to use hedgerows, field margins, scrub and less disturbed boundary habitats. Risk of injury during vegetation clearance, debris removal or open excavations.	Undertake phased and directional vegetation clearance towards retained habitats. Check vegetation piles, brash, logs, stored materials and debris before removal. Cover excavations overnight or provide escape ramps. Where new fencing is installed, include hedgehog access gaps where practicable.
Reptiles	Negligible potential within the proposed development area due to regular cattle grazing, short sward and lack of suitable structural diversity.	No further reptile survey is required. Precautionary Reasonable Avoidance Measures should be followed during clearance and groundworks, including staged clearance, checks of potential refuges, careful removal of debris, and covering excavations overnight or providing escape ramps.
Great crested newt	Negligible potential within the proposed development area. No ponds, ditches or suitable aquatic breeding habitat were recorded within the site boundary, and the grazed pasture offers limited terrestrial suitability.	No further great crested newt survey is required. Precautionary working methods should be followed during vegetation clearance and groundworks, including checks of potential refuges, staged clearance where suitable vegetation is present, and covering excavations overnight or providing escape ramps. If a great crested newt is encountered, works must stop and ecological advice must be sought.
Invasive non-native species	No Schedule 9 invasive non-native plant species were recorded during the walkover survey.	No specific invasive species mitigation is required based on the current survey findings. If any suspected invasive non-native species are identified during works, works in that area should stop and advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Pollution prevention and construction management	Risk of dust, sediment runoff, accidental fuel/chemical spills, soil compaction and encroachment into retained habitats.	Implement a Construction Environmental Management Plan or equivalent site controls. Store fuel, chemicals and materials away from retained habitats, provide spill kits, avoid refuelling near retained vegetation, control dust and sediment runoff, and brief contractors on ecological constraints before works commence.
Biodiversity Net Gain and ecological enhancements	Requirement to deliver measurable biodiversity gain and secure long-term habitat value.	Deliver BNG within the red line boundary through on-site habitat creation and enhancement. Measures should include new native hedgerow planting, creation of the proposed new wooded area to the south of the field, enhancement of field margins where practicable, and long-term management and monitoring of retained and newly created habitats.
Contractor awareness	Risk that ecological constraints are not followed during construction.	Provide an ecological toolbox talk before works commence, covering retained habitats, nesting birds, bats, badger, hedgehog, reptiles, amphibians, pollution prevention and procedures to follow if protected or notable species are encountered.

12. Legislation & Policy

- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 — Section 41.
- Environment Act 2021 — mandatory 10% BNG, ≥30-year management.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, revised December 2024, amended February 2025).

13. References

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024, amended 2025). National Planning Policy Framework.
- Natural England (2023). Statutory Biodiversity Metric v1.04 (England): User Guide and Calculation Tool.
- CIEEM (2017, updated 2021). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- CIEEM (2017, updated 2021). Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing.
- JNCC (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- UKHab Ltd (2020, updated 2021). UK Habitat Classification – Field Survey Guidance.
- Natural England — standing advice.
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric v1.04 (2023).

- MAGIC Map (DEFRA).
- NBN Atlas.