CROFT ECOLOGY

Ratby Sports Club, Ratby

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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Site Details

Report	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Site Address	Ratby Sports Club, Desford Ln, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0JN
Central OS Grid Reference	SK 51052 05534
Client	Tony Blanchard

Document Control

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Imogen Holloway	Zachary Mason & Anna Scott-Swift	First issue	v1.0	01/04/2026
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Contact details:

E: enquiries@croftecology.co.uk

Disclosure:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Croft Ecology was commissioned by Tony Blanchard to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Ratby Sports Club, Desford Ln, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0JN in relation to the development of sports pitches and car parking at the Site.
- The survey involved identifying habitats and features of ecological interest within the Site, including the potential for supporting protected or notable species, to determine the key ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development. Any additional survey work and any possible mitigation requirements were also be identified.
- The survey was undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel on 2 December 2025.
- The Site comprised existing sports pitches, parking, associated access, woodland, bare ground, and grassland.
- The Site lies within multiple Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zones and the proposed development to extend the pre-existing car park is listed as infrastructure development likely to impact the SSSI. Therefore, consultation with Natural England is required.
- Due to the close proximity of five ponds, a positive record for great crested newt (GCN) returned within the surrounding area and the Site falling within an Amber Risk Zone for GCN, it is required that a District Level Licence for the species is acquired for works to be carried out. This is outlined in Section 4.
- The grassland, tall forbs and woodland on Site provided opportunities for protected species and are common and widespread habitats; whilst the surrounding landscape of woodland, scrub, ponds, hedgerows and fields provided optimum habitat for many protected species. The Site was assessed to offer potential opportunities for species which may occasionally utilise it, such as commuting great crested newts or other amphibians, foraging and commuting bats, basking or commuting reptiles, nesting birds and commuting or foraging badger and hedgehogs.
- Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures have been recommended in Section 4. These measures include pre-work checks for badger presence; and sensitive methods and timing of works to ensure that no protected or notable species will be harmed during works and can continue to make use of the Site post-development.
- Proportionate enhancement measures are also included in Section 4, which would include provision of bat and bird boxes to provide enhanced opportunities, for roosting and nesting

and inclusion of night blooming flowers in grassland enhancement, to encourage nocturnal pollinators.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Croft Ecology was commissioned by Tony Blanchard to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Habitat Suitability Index assessment (HSI) of the Ratby Sports Club, Desford Ln, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0JN (central grid reference: SK 51052 05534) in relation to the development of sports pitches and car parking at the Site.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

- identify key ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems) within the Site;
- identify the potential for/evidence of protected and notable species within the Site;
- identify any further surveys that may be required to fully understand the likely impact on a given ecological feature;
- identify any mitigation measures or licensing likely required; and
- identify any opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.

1.2 Site Location

The land within the red line boundary of Figure 1 below is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

The Site was located on Desford Lane, on the outskirts of the village of Ratby. The Site comprised areas of grassland, sports pitches, bare ground, unsealed surface, individual trees, areas of woodland and areas of tall forbs. A stream connecting to Rothley Brook ran 10m away from the northern Site boundary. The surrounding landscape has arable and pasture fields to the south and west, woodland to the northwest, hedgerows from the south to the west, waterbodies to the south, west and north, and developed land to the northeast and east.



Figure 1. Site red line boundary

1.3 Planning and Legislative Context

Both UK legislation together with national and local planning policies provide varying levels of protection to sites of ecological interest and species of conservation concern. Where relevant, this report takes into account the afforded protection for specific habitats and species likely to be found on the Site.

Further information on wildlife legislation and planning policy is provided in Appendix A.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Personnel

The PEA survey, including Great Crested Newt (GCN) HSI assessment, was undertaken by Imogen Holloway and Zachary Mason. Zachary Mason has 5 years of experience working in the field of ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of walkover surveys/baseline habitat surveys and has been using UK Hab survey methodology for the last 4 years. Zachary has prepared many reports during this time including protected species survey reports, method statements, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal reports (PEA reports) and Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA reports). Zachary holds a level 1 Great Crested Newt (GCN) licence (2025-84173-CL08-GCN).

The survey and report were also undertaken and written by Imogen Holloway BSc (Hons), Assistant Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Imogen has three years' experience of conducting bat surveys, carrying out emergence and re-entry surveys, and bat transect surveys. Imogen also has experience writing PEA reports and conducting PEA surveys.

The technical review was undertaken by Anna Scott-Swift MCIEEM, Director of Ecology at Croft Ecology. Anna has over 20 years of experience working in ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of Preliminary Roost Assessments, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and Ecological Impact Assessments for projects of a range of scales. Anna holds a Level 2 survey licence for bats (2025-82204-CL18-BAT)10527-CLS-CLS), a Level 1 survey licence for GCN (2025-82200-SCI-CL08) and a survey licence for barn owl (2026-88081-CL29-OWL) .

2.2 Data Search

The Government's website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was accessed 15 December 2025 to conduct an initial search for the presence of designated sites, priority habitats, protected species mitigation licences issued within 1km of the Site, and to assess whether the Site was located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone. Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre were also contacted for details on statutory and non-statutory sites as well as protected, notable and invasive species records within a 1km radius of the Site boundary. Additionally, aerial photography was viewed to assess habitat connectivity around the Site's locale, which may be important to ecological features present on Site and for the consideration of suitable ecological enhancements.

2.3 Survey Date and Conditions

The Site was visited on 2 December 2025 and included all land within the red line boundary (see Figure 1) together with a brief assessment of those habitats bordering the Site. Weather conditions at the time of the survey were sunny with 34% cloud cover, moderate breeze and no rain. The air temperature was 6°C.

2.4 UK Hab Field Survey

A UK Hab[1] Field Survey was undertaken in accordance with the methodology described within v2.0 documentation (2023) and was used as the basis for subsequent assessment in line with the standards and methods described within the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018) and Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017).

A fine-scale minimum mapping unit (of 25m^2 or 5m) was deemed appropriate for use at the Site given its relatively small scale, consequently only habitats with an area of 25m^2 or greater, or linear features 5m in length or greater, were mapped.

The UK Hab uses primary codes whereby habitats are categorised by an increasingly detailed hierarchy until a match is discovered. Secondary codes describe environmental factors that provide additional information such as management regime, hydrology or similar. In this case, each habitat was assigned a Primary Code[1] at the Level 4 hierarchy and secondary codes were applied where these could provide greater context (UK Hab Ltd, 2023).

During the field survey, all habitats within the Site were thoroughly observed, described, and mapped. A DAFOR abundance (D = dominant, A = abundant, F = frequent, O = occasional, R = rare) was assigned to each botanical species identified in each habitat and nomenclature followed Stace (Stace, 2019).

[1] The UKHab System comprises a five-level Primary Habitat Hierarchy and a list of Secondary Codes, the latter is sub-divided into Essential codes and Additional codes (UKHab Ltd, 2023).

2.5 Protected Species

The UK Hab field survey was extended to identify any protected or priority species per CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). A thorough search was conducted to detect the presence, or potential presence, of notable and protected species, including breeding birds, badger *Meles meles*, bats, reptiles and amphibians, notable mammals, invertebrates and any invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

2.5.1 Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

The HSI assessment is a widely accepted method to determine if a waterbody is suitable for GCN and helps determine if additional investigation is necessary. It is calculated as the mean of ten numerical or categorical environmental variables. The methods used to measure each variable are provided within ARG advice note 5 (2010). The ten factors are scored for a pond, in the field and from map work. The HSI assessment focuses on the pond and is based on ten criteria for 'suitability', namely: geographic location, pond area, frequency of drying, water quality, perimeter shading, waterfowl presence, fish presence, pond density within 1km, terrestrial habitat quality and macrophyte cover.

Five ponds were identified within a 250m radius of the Site (Figure 2). Only one pond was accessible as the other ponds were on private land to which no access could be gained. Pond 1, located 10m from the area of woodland in the east of the Site, was subject to a HSI assessment in accordance with the methodology listed in ARG advice note 5 (2010) with the suitability of the pond classified as per Table 1 below.

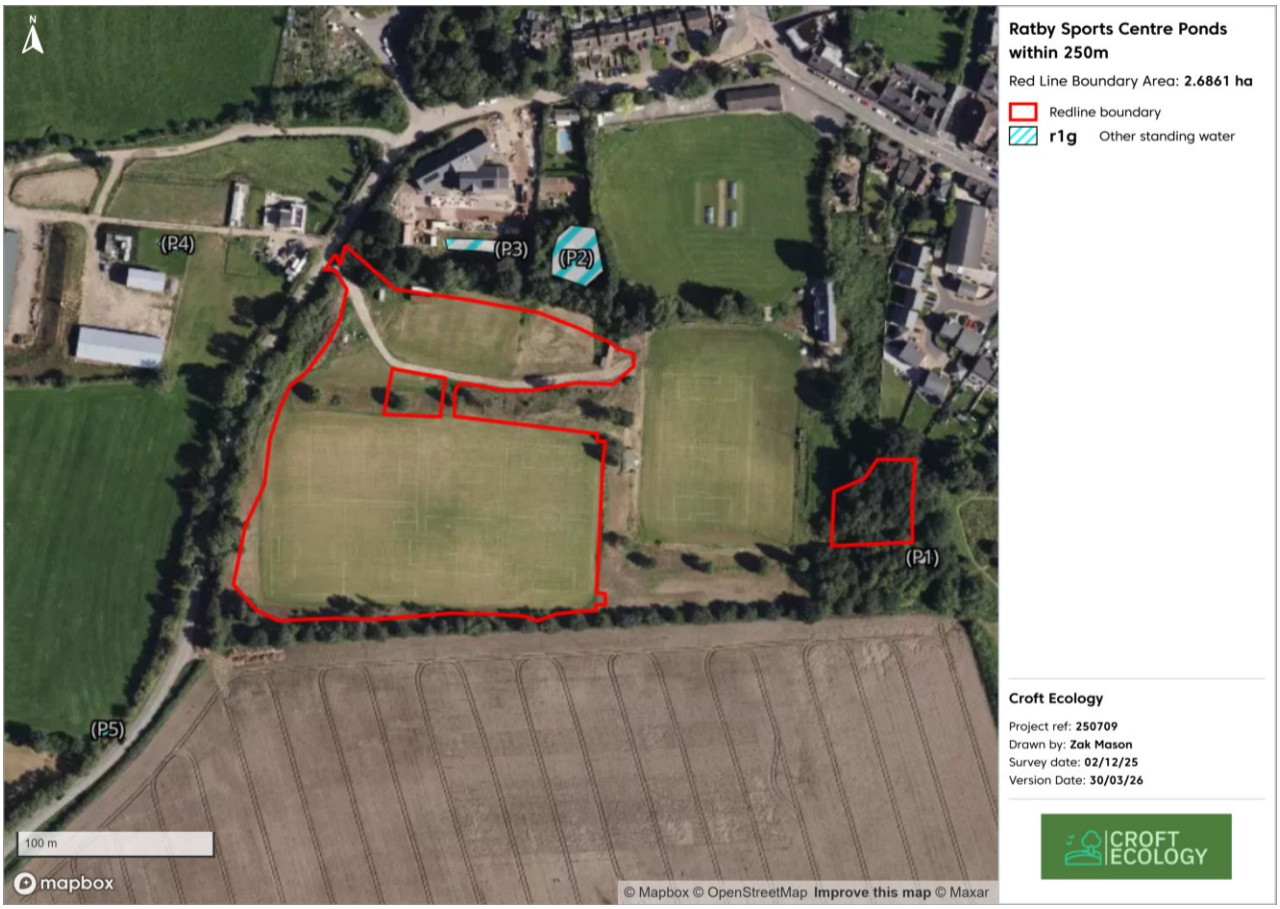

Figure 2: Map showing ponds within 250m of the Site.

Table 1: Scale of Pond Suitability

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.50	Poor
0.50 – 0.59	Below Average
0.60 – 0.69	Average*
0.70 – 0.79	Good*
> 0.80	Excellent*

Pond typically requires further survey **if it is likely to be impacted by development proposals*

2.6 Survey Limitations

Ecological surveys are limited by factors including weather and time of year, which influence the presence of animal species and plants. The survey was undertaken in December; therefore, this report describes the ecological conditions at the time of the survey. It should be noted that winter is a sub-optimal time of year for botanical surveys to be conducted. However, given the limited number of habitats and their extents on the Site, and that several species were identifiable to accurately determine habitat type, this is not considered to pose a constraint to this report.

All areas of the Site were readily accessed, with no limitations to the survey.

In general, ponds with high HSI scores are more likely to support GCN than those with low scores. However, the system is not sufficiently precise to conclude that any particular pond with a high score will support newts, or that any pond with a low score will not do so. As a result, the HSI assessment should be used as a tool to inform professional judgement only.

2.7 Evaluation of Constraints and Opportunities

All potential ecological constraints to the development were identified. In the context of the Mitigation Hierarchy[2], consideration was then given as to how any significant effects could be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Following this, appropriate compensation and enhancement measures were outlined. Where additional surveys are required to better understand the likely presence of, and hence impact of the proposed development on, a given ecological feature,

[2] "*The overarching aims of ecological work used to inform the planning process are to minimize harm and to maximize benefits for biodiversity resulting from development. The generally accepted way of doing this, now embedded within the planning system, is to follow the "mitigation hierarchy". This seeks as a preference to avoid impacts then to mitigate unavoidable impacts, and, as a last resort, to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures." Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013)*

these are detailed in Section 4. Lastly, opportunities for enhancements and biodiversity net gain have been provided.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Sites

The data search revealed no statutory sites and 16 non-statutory designated sites within a 1km radius of the Site. However, the Site did fall in the impact risk zones for two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Botcheston Bog SSSI approximately 2.4km southwest of the Site and Groby pool and wood SSSI approximately 2.4km north of the Site. SSSI's are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, because they support flora and fauna that struggle to thrive in other conditions. To protect these species, it is required that any development proposals are assessed on their likelihood to impact the surrounding SSSI habitats. As the development includes car parks that are to be constructed, the development falls within the category that will **require that Natural England are contacted** to determine the potential impacts the development could have on the surrounding SSSI's, and how best to avoid or mitigate them, but it is not clear exactly which SSSI this requirement relates to. Although consultation is required, it seems unlikely that the extension of the car parking would have recreational pressures on the nearby SSSI's due to the existing use of the Site as a sports club.

Ten of the non-statutory sites were notified, candidate or potential Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). A notified site meets the LWS criteria and the landowner has agreed to designation; a candidate site is known to have significant local wildlife value and is waiting to be designated; and a potential site is likely to meet the LWS criteria but has not yet been assessed. The remaining six were historic LWS which were last surveyed between 1980-1990 and it is not known if they still have value. The designated sites are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Relevant designated sites.

Site Name	Distance	Summary	Status	Grid Reference
Ratby, tributaries of Rothley Brook	10m	Small river or stream	LWS (Potential)	SK508056
Ratby Ash Tree 1	250m	Ash tree with girth 4.23m, dead wood and cavities.	LWS (Candidate)	SK50840578
Ratby Ash Trees 4	250m	Three Ash trees with girths just under 3m, dead wood and cavities.	LWS (Potential)	SK507057
Rothley Brook	315m	River with Potamogeton crispus, eroded earth cliff, moss covered bedrock/boulders, trees with exposed roots & overhanging branches, meanders.	LWS (Notified)	SK508048
Ratby Ash Trees 2	520m	Two Ash trees with girths >3m, dead wood and cavities.	LWS (Candidate)	SK504058
Land Rear Of 4 - 28 Markfield Road Ratby, Mature Poplar	600m	Mature Poplar, 1200mm stem diameter.	LWS (Potential)	SK51310632
Ratby, Church Ponds Close open space	635m	Mesotrophic grassland with 16 LWS indicators recorded, swamp and scrub.	LWS (Candidate)	SK519058
Ratby Ash Trees 3	705m	Two Ash trees with girths >3m, dead wood and cavities.	LWS (Candidate)	SK504061
Martinshaw Wood	900m	Ancient semi-natural woodland, with community value	LWS (Notified)	SK510072
Ratby, Field E of Martinshaw Wood, adj to M1	975m	Mesotrophic grassland-Small triangular field, moderately species-rich, possibly of recent origin	LWS (Candidate)	SK511067

Stream	275m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK516052
Kirby Muxloe, Rothley Brook between Ratby Lane and M1	810m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK522052
Marsh	840m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK500055
Hedgerow	875m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK500052
Rough grassland	890m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK501047
Grassland - the old bury camp	945m	No recent survey data - not known if the site still has value	LWS (Potential: historic)	SK499057

A MAGIC search revealed ten national forest inventory woodlands, six priority habitat deciduous woodlands, two floodplain grazing marshes and an ancient woodland (Martinshaw wood). The closest to the Site being a national forest inventory woodland, 270m northwest. The closest floodplains were located 330m south of the Site.

Due to the scale and size of the planning development it is unlikely that it will impact all but one of the LWS and priority habitats. The Ratby tributary to Rothley Brook runs along the Site 10m from the northern boundary and 10m from the pocket of woodland in the east of the Site . Due to its close proximity to the Site, there is potential for the stream to be impacted by pollution from the work being carried out on Site. To prevent this from happening standard mitigation measures are recommended in section 4.

3.2 Habitats

The Site consisted of three areas of modified grassland broken up by bare ground and unsealed surface and two individual trees. A patch of woodland was present in the northwest corner of the Site and tall forbs were present along the southern boundary of the Site. An area of

woodland to the east of the Site has been included in the red line boundary to be used for enhancement and compensation for the development.

A UK Hab Habitat Baseline map of the Site can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.1 Modified Grassland

Three areas of modified grassland were present on Site. An area of modified grassland was present in the south (Photo 1) of the Site, being used as sports pitches. An area of grassland was also present in the north of the Site. They were both dominated completely by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne.* Both areas were in poor condition, being heavily managed, with swards reaching no taller than 5cm throughout and consisting of less than 6-8 species per meter squared.

The third area of modified grassland (Photo 2) in the northwest of the Site consisted of a slope with varied sward heights and higher species diversity than the other areas. The area consisted of dominant perennial ryegrass, occasional curled dock *Rumen crispus*, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, common nettle *Urtica dioica* and rarely occurring white dead-nettle *Lamium album*. The top of the bank was well heavily managed, but the sloping side of the hill was less managed than the other areas, with some swards reaching 15cm. Where the grass was left to develop more species had established. Overall, the grassland was in poor condition due to consisting of less than 6-8 species per meter squared.



Photo 1: Heavily managed modified grassland used as a sports pitch at the south of the Site (photo facing northwest).



Photo 2: The northwest grassland slope (photo facing north).

3.2.2 Urban – Bare ground

Three areas of the Site in the northeast, middle and southeast had been cleared prior to the Site visit. The areas were stripped down to bare earth (Photo 3). To the north of the access track, the land had been dug out to create a shallow ditch and was filled with rubble and bricks (Photo 4).



Photo 3: Cleared area of land in the northeast of the Site (photo facing north)



Photo 4: Area dug out and filled with rubble and bricks (photo facing northeast)

3.2.3 Other Broadleaved woodland

An area of woodland was located in the northwest corner of the Site (Photo 5). The woodland had species of dominant alder *Alnus glutinosa*, and occasional buddleja *Buddleja davidii*, common nettle, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare* and curled dock. The woodland was in moderate condition with one age class present, one native tree species, and no ground vegetation, veteran trees or deadwood.

An additional area of woodland was located in the east of the Site and has been included in the boundary to use for habitat enhancement and compensation for the development (Photo 6). The woodland consisted of dominant alder, and rarely occuring field maple *Acer campestre*, and silver birch *Betula pendula*. The woodland was in poor condition, with only one age class present, consisting of one storey, having no ground vegetation or veteran trees present and damaged ground.



Photo 5: Broadleaved woodland in the northwest corner of the Site (photo facing north).



Photo 6: Broadleaved woodland in the southeast corner of the Site (photo facing east).

3.2.4 Tall Forbs

Near the southern boundary there was an area of unmanaged tall forbs growing on an embankment (photo 7). The species consisted of abundant curled dock, frequent creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus,* and occasional false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*.



Photo 7: Tall forbs along the south boundary of the Site (photo facing south).

3.2.5 Individual Trees

Two individual trees were present on Site; one located in the area of tall forbs in the south of the Site and the other located in the modified grassland in the northwest of the Site. A small pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* was in the tall forbs in the south of the Site. It was in good condition being a native tree and having ecological niches for invertebrates such as ivy and lifted bark. A medium sized hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* in the northwestern area of modified grassland (Photo 8). It was in moderate condition as it was a native species but lacked ecological niches for invertebrates.



Photo 8: Medium sized hornbeam in the northwest of the Site (photo facing east).

3.2.6 Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface

An area of bare ground was present at the Site entrance (Photo 9), making up an access track and areas of parking. The ground had been cleared and was covered with gravel.



Photo 9: Area of unsealed surface near Site entrance (photo facing south).

3.3 Species

3.3.1 Amphibians

The data search returned 44 records for amphibians. One record was for a GCN, four records were for common toad *Bufo bufo*, 20 records were for smooth newt *Lissortriton vulgaris* and 18 records were for common frog *Rana temporaria*. The closest record was for common toad which was 50m north of the Site. The MAGIC website returned no records of granted European Protected Species Licences for GCN, no records from Great Crested Newt Pond Surveys 2017 – 2019 and no records of class survey licence returns for GCN within 1km of the Site.

The record for GCN was a positive eDNA result from a pond located 260m west of the Site, from 2024. This pond was connected to arable land and hedgerows which were separated from the Site by Desford Lane, which would act as a minor barrier to GCN movement. The Site is located within an amber GCN risk Zone according to the Natural England database for Leicestershire, Rutland, Rushcliffe and South Kesteven[3].

No waterbodies were present on Site and there were five ponds located within 250m of the Site, shown in Figure 2 above. Only one was accessible due to the others being located on private land: as such only that one was subject to an HSI assessment. The pond subject to the HSI assessment was 10m from the area of woodland in the east of the Site (P1) (Photo 10). This was connected to the Site via woodland, hedgerow and a wet ditch located 10m south of the area of woodland in the east of the Site. The remaining ponds (P2-P5) ranged from 14m to 70m from the north and west Site boundaries. The ponds to the north of the Site were also connected by woodland and a stream tributary of Rothley Brook.

[3] GCN Risk Zones (Leicestershire, Rutland, Rushcliffe and South Kesteven) | Natural England Open Data Geoportal. A 'amber zone' typically contains main population centres for GCN and comprise important connecting habitat that aids natural dispersal.



Photo 10: Pond 1 located 160m from the east Site boundary (photo facing east)

Pond 1 was subject to a HSI assessment to determine its suitability to support GCN, and in turn, to assess the likelihood of GCN being present within the Site. The results are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3- HSI assessment results for the pond 12m east of the Site.

HSI Category	**P1 HSI Result**	**P1 HSI Numerical Score**
Location	A	1.0
Pond Area	50-100m2	0.1
Pond Permanence	Sometimes Dry	0.5
Water Quality	Moderate	0.67
Shade	81-85%	0.5
Waterfowl Effect	Absent	1
Fish Presence	Absent	1
Pond Density	6	0.8
Terrestrial Habitat	Moderate	0.67
Macrophyte Cover	41-50%	0.75
HSI Score	**Average**	**0.61**

The HSI results suggest that there is potential for P1 to provide suitable habitat for GCN.

The majority of the Site was modified grassland or bare ground which provides sub optimal terrestrial habitat for GCN as the grassland lacked a tussocky sward to provide cover for commuting GCN and both were subject to high levels of disturbance. The tall forbs around the southern edge of the Site provided suitable terrestrial habitat; as did the woodland of the Site; and there is potential they could use the created rubble pile on Site for sheltering.

Overall, the Site itself is considered to have **low** suitability for great crested newts and other amphibians due to the heavy management and high levels of disturbance creating sub optimal habitat. However, the Site is well connected to the surrounding landscape and network of surrounding ponds via woodland and hedgerows and has suitable habitat for GCN around its boundaries. It is therefore considered likely that they may occasionally utilize the Site for commuting as they are known to be in the surrounding area. Due to the Site being in an amber risk zone for GCN, the presence of nearby records, the average HSI score of the nearby pond and the likelihood of GCN utilising the Site to commute, a District Level License should be

obtained for the proposed works to be able to take place. Further details on this and appropriate working methodologies are also set out in Section 4.

3.3.2 Badger

The data search returned ten records for badger within 1km of the Site. The closest record was for a latrine from 2022, 297m south of the Site. The closest record for a sett was for an outlier sett 780m north of the Site. The remaining records were for outlier setts and roadkill, ranging from 303m to 1528m from the Site.

No evidence of badgers was identified on Site during the survey. The Site provides some suitability for commuting and foraging by this species, and the banked grassland and woodland provided some foraging and sett building opportunities. Nearby habitats of bramble scrub, embankments and woodland would provide suitable foraging and sett building opportunities. Mammal paths were identified throughout the tall forbs to the southwest of the Site, although these were determined to be too small to be caused by badgers.

The surrounding landscape and wider site contained optimal habitat for this species, particularly the woodland to the east and northwest, bramble scrub and an embankment outside the west Site boundary that would provide good sett building and foraging habitat. It is considered likely that they may occasionally pass through the Site and therefore the Site is considered to have **moderate** suitability for foraging and commuting badgers.

3.3.3 Bats

The desk study returned 76 records of bats within 1km of the Site. These ranged between 2000 and 2024 and were for 'bat' *Chiroptera*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, pipistrelle bat species *Pipistrellus* sp., nyctalus bat species *Nyctalus*, long-eared bat species *Plecotus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Myotis bat species *Myotis* sp., and noctule bat *Nyctalus noctule*. The closest records were 21m northwest of the Site for common pipistrelle from 2023, and noctule, pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle from 2022. The 2023 record was from a static bat detector, and the 2022 records were from a survey carried out. The closest roost records were from 41m northwest of the Site for a pipistrelle roost and a brown long eared bat roost in a building.

There were two European Protected Species licences for bats on the MAGIC website within 1km of the Site, both for common pipistrelle from 2014 and 2015, approximately 300m north of the Site.

The tall forbs and woodland on Site offered foraging opportunities for bat species, but the grassland that dominated the Site was too species poor to support enough invertebrates for foraging bats. No suitable roosting features for bats were observed on any of the trees on the Site during the survey. The stream and hedgerows just outside the Site boundary offered potential flight paths, and the woodlands, hedgerows, tussocky grassland, ponds and scrub within the surrounding landscape provided foraging, commuting and roosting opportunities for a range of bat species. The Site is well connected to the surrounding landscape via hedgerows and the Rothley brook tributary, and with two roosts located close by it is considered likely that bats utilize the Site to commute and forage.

Overall, the Site is considered to have **moderate** suitability for bat foraging and commuting due to the optimum surrounding habitat and the close proximity to multiple roosts, but the Site was considered to have **negligible** potential for roosting bats as no suitable roosting features were observed on any of the trees during the survey.

3.3.4 Birds

The desk study returned 27 records for birds, all of these being for Schedule 1 species: greylag goose *Anser anser*, Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*, red kite *Milvus milvus*, redwing *Turdus iliacus*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and barn owl *Tyto alba*. The closest record was from 2010 for a redwing, 151m northeast of the Site.

All the species returned from the data search could frequent the Site, except for Cetti's warbler which favours wetland habitat. The woodland and individual trees provided foraging and nesting opportunities for the species returned, although the arable fields in the surrounding habitat could be favoured for foraging habitat. The modified grassland and tall forbs of the Site offered foraging opportunities, although the grassland was too species poor to support a diverse assemblage of invertebrates for foraging birds and the on-site habitats are well represented in the wider landscape. The area of tall forbs just outside the RLB to the south offered opportunities for ground-nesting birds, although this area was adjacent to scattered trees and hedgerows outside the Site boundary which are ideal locations for predatory birds,

making it sub optimal habitat for ground nesting birds. No ground-nesting bird species were returned from the data search, and no active or disused nests were observed during the survey.

The arable fields in the surrounding landscape provide foraging opportunities, and habitats within the wider site offered opportunities for foraging and nesting birds, which could lead to them frequenting or passing through the Site. Overall, the Site is considered to have **moderate** suitability for foraging and nesting birds. No further surveys for nesting birds are recommended as sensitive working methods relating to the time of works are considered sufficient to mitigate impacts to nesting birds and are detailed in section 4.

3.3.5 Hazel Dormice

Hazel dormice were once extinct in Leicestershire, however, they have recently been reintroduced to Leicestershire. However, there were no records for dormice within 1km of the Site.

The woodlands on Site were not favourable for dormice as they lacked new growth and a suitable understory of scrub, particularly hazel *Corylus avellana,* to support dormice. Therefore, the Site is considered to lack suitability for hazel dormice, and they are not considered further within this report.

3.3.6 Invertebrates

Four records were returned for white-letter hairstreak *Satyrium w-album* within 1km of the Site. The closest record was from 2003, 549m southeast of the Site. The caterpillar foodplants, various elm species, were not recorded on Site and therefore it is unlikely that they would be present. The Site is considered unlikely to support a diverse assemblage of invertebrates as the habitats are common and widespread, with the majority of the Site being short, well managed modified grassland with poor species diversity. As a result, invertebrates are not considered further within this report.

3.3.7 Reptiles

The data search returned 12 records for slow worm *Anguis fragilis* within 1km of the Site. The closest record was from 2019, 730m north of the Site. All records are not well connected to the Site, being separated by the village of Ratby.

The areas of tall forbs and woodland on Site provided suitable foraging and sheltering opportunities for reptiles, although the woodland lacked an understory, and the on-Site unsealed surface offered potential basking opportunities, with the shallow ditch filled with rubble and bricks adjacent to this providing opportunities for sheltering. The wider site contained areas of bramble scrub suitable for foraging, sheltering and hibernating reptiles, however the Site is subject to high levels of management and disturbance.

The woodland, ponds and grassland within the surrounding landscape provide optimal habitat for foraging and sheltering reptiles, but the arable farmland and developed land surrounding the Site lacked suitability. It is considered possible that reptiles could use the Site on occasion, but due to the high levels of disturbance and management, as well as the small number of nearby records which have a lack of connectivity to the Site, it was considered to have **low** potential to support reptile species.

3.3.8 White-clawed crayfish

Six records of white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobium pallipes* were returned by the data search. All records were from the same general area with the closest being 809m southeast of the Site, associated with Rothley brook, downstream from the Site. The record dated 2002.

The recorded was recorded a significant distance from the Site but were located downstream from the Site and could be impacted by pollution to the stream adjacent to the Site boundary. Therefore, standard pollution prevention measures relating to the adjacent stream are recommended in section 4 to prevent impacts to this species.

3.3.9 Other species

No records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were returned by the desk study; however, the surrounding landscape provides optimum habitat for this species, and it is considered likely that they will utilise and commute across the Site occasionally.

No water vole *Arvicola amphibius* or otter *Lutra lutra* records were returned by the desk study. However, it cannot be concluded that neither species could use the Site for commuting especially due to the close proximity of the stream, and Rothley Brook being nearby.

3.3.10 Invasive species

No records for invasive species were returned by the data search. No evidence of invasive species – flora or fauna - was recorded during the Site visit. As a result, invasive species are not considered further within this report.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Proposed Development

The proposals are for the development of multiple sports pitches, padel courts, a club house, and associated parking and access (Figure 3). The development is largely focused on the modified grassland bare ground and unsealed surface on Site, and no impacts to the individual trees or northwestern area of woodland are anticipated. The areas of tall forbs, northern grassland and eastern area of woodland will be used for enhancement to provide compensation for the habitat loss as a result of the development. The red line boundary is 10m from the stream tributary to Rothley brook and whilst no direct impacts are anticipated, indirect impacts from pollution relating to dust and spillage could occur. Therefore, pollution prevention measures are recommended to ensure there are no impacts to the adjacent stream and protected species associated with it.



Figure 3: Proposed Site Masterplan – 9431_03_01PL2 AO

4.2 Designated Sites

The Site falls within multiple SSSI impact risk zones. The proposed construction to extend car parking is listed under the infrastructure development type that could likely impact the nearby SSSI's. Although it seems unlikely that the extension of the car parking would have recreational pressures on the nearby SSSI's (based on the Site's current sports club usage), it is **required** that the Local Planning Authority contact Natural England to determine potential impacts and how best to avoid or mitigate them.

4.3 Habitats

The developed land and bare ground on the Site have no inherent ecological value and are therefore considered to be of negligible ecological importance. The modified grassland was species poor and has low inherent ecological value.

The retained woodland, retained individual trees and any trees in the wider site must be protected in line with BS5837 (2012) to avoid any potential accidental damage as a result of the movement of machinery or storage of materials impacting root protection areas. These should also be protected with heras fencing, or similar, to avoid impacts from construction activities.

The tall forbs, northern grassland and eastern block of woodland will be retained and enhanced as part of the compensation for the development, improving their ecological value.

4.4 Species

There are five ponds within 70m of the Site, and one record of GCN within 1km of the Site. The Site provided limited suitable terrestrial habitat and no ponds for GCN to breed within. However, it is possible GCN could occasionally use the Site for foraging or sheltering and the rapid risk assessment tool from Natural England says that an offence as a result of the development is highly likely. Based on the nearby records of GCN, the setting of the Site within an amber risk zone, the results of the rapid risk assessment tool and the nature of the works it is required that a District Level Licence is acquired for works to be carried out. This licence, along with appropriate mitigation measures are required to ensure that there are no impacts, as a result of the development, to any GCN that may be present. The GCN DLL comprises an

application form and map data which is submitted to Natural England. Natural England will issue a conservation payment certificate allowing works to commence once this is received.

Safe methods of working should ensure that potential impacts to badger or other mammals, such as hedgehog, otter or water vole passing through the Site, can be avoided during construction activities. Badgers are a highly mobile species, therefore, due to the suitable habitat for sett building present nearby, a pre-commencement check for any newly built setts should be carried out on the banked grassland, woodlands and area of tall forbs before works start.

The Site has potential for foraging and commuting bats, especially with two roosts located 41m northwest. A sensitive lighting scheme is recommended during and post-construction to avoid illuminating the retained and created boundary habitats, and to allow the Site to continue providing foraging and commuting opportunities for this species.

The tall forbs and woodland on Site, as well as habitats within the wider site provide suitable habitat for reptiles and amphibians. Therefore, appropriate mitigation measures are recommended to ensure that there are no impacts as a result of the development to any herptiles that may be utilising or passing through the Site. The rubble pit on Site provide opportunity for sheltering reptiles or amphibians. If the rubble is to be removed during works, this must be undertaken in suitable weather conditions and checks by a suitably qualified ecologist must be carried out prior and during removal.

The woodland and individual trees offer opportunities for nesting birds. These habitat are not being removed as part of the proposals but a sensitive timing and methods of works, or pre-works check by a suitably qualified person would ensure that potential impacts to nesting birds could be avoided during the development.

4.5 Summary of Further Surveys Required

- No further surveys required, although an eDNA survey of the ponds within 250m of the Site may reduce the cost of the GCN DLL required for the development by ascertaining if GCN use the pond for breeding.

4.6 Mitigation Requirements

- The works must be undertaken in line with a Natural England District Level Licence for GCN. Details will be included within this licence, such as timing of works within suitable

weather conditions, to avoid the hibernation period, and requirements for on-Site supervision by a licensed ecologist during sensitive destructive searches.

- The managed grassland should be maintained in its current short sward condition prior to works commencing to prevent it becoming suitable for amphibians or reptiles. If it is allowed to become more established, precautionary vegetation clearance measures may be required, such as careful timing and a phased clearance.
- No night-time work is anticipated. Any lighting to be installed as part of the scheme should use warm white LEDs to reduce the blue light component. Further advice concerning light-spill, column height and glare should be discussed and agreed with a lighting professional and an ecologist. Additionally, the position of such lighting is important as it should not illuminate any retained, bordering or planted semi-natural habitats i.e. individual trees. Especially the scrub, woodland and hedgerows near the south and west Site boundaries and in the northwest corner of the Site and the individual trees near the centre of the Site.
- Retained trees and hedgerows must be protected from accidental damage and compaction within their root protection areas in accordance with BS 5837: 2012. The trees and woodland to the south and in the northwest corner of the Site should also be protected with heras fencing, or similar, to avoid impacts from construction activities.
- Standard, best practice pollution control measures should be adopted on Site to ensure no potential run-off/pollution incidents which would affect the adjacent off-site stream. Heras fencing with dust sheets should be installed in front of the stream just beyond the Site boundary, to reduce the dust pollution reaching the waterbodies, and silt traps should be installed around the edges of construction zones.
- Before any work begins on Site a check for badger activity signs such as latrines, or sett entrances should be carried out by a competent person. This should be completed within 3 months of the proposed work commencement date.
- Construction works should ideally be undertaken during late-September-February to avoid the typical bird nesting season of March-August. If this is not possible, such works during March-August within 10m of a retained tree, the tall forbs or woodland must be preceded by a nesting bird check (within 24 hours) by a competent person to ensure no nesting is taking place. If there is evidence of nesting birds, work cannot proceed until nest-building and chick-rearing is complete or until an ecologist is able to advise on a suitable buffer distance to allow work in other areas of the Site.
- Sensitive working methods, including the covering of excavations or provision of a ramp to provide a means of escape, will be adopted to avoid the potential for killing or

injuring of mammals such as badgers, hedgehog or rabbits, should they be present foraging or commuting.

- As the rubble pit provides suitable refugia for reptiles and amphibians they should be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to removal if required. The rubble should be removed by hand where possible avoiding the use of machinery. Where machinery is used an ecologist must be present to carry out fingertip searches. Removal must be undertaken with a careful, measured approach to ensure any reptiles and amphibians within can safely escape or be transferred to an area of retained habitat or previously identified receptor site. The removal must be undertaken in temperatures in which reptiles and amphibians will be active (above 6C and not following overnight frost or prolonged spells of cold).
- If a common amphibian or reptile is recorded during the works, they should be allowed to move away on their own accord or safely moved to an undisturbed area of the Site.
- Materials brought onto Site should be stored on a sealed surface or on raised pallets away from boundary habitats, to prevent animals from taking refuge beneath them.

4.7 Compensation Requirements

- The proposals result in the loss of some of the grassland area on Site, but proposed tree planting and enhancements to existing grassland, woodland and tall forb areas will result in an overall enhancement to the Site's suitability for protected species. Wildflower plantings will provide additional nectar sources for notable invertebrates.

4.8 Opportunities for Enhancement

- Landscape proposals should include the provision of native species or those with a known value to wildlife, as far as possible. This could include species that bear fruit and nuts or are prolific at flowering to attract pollinators and other invertebrates, which in turn would provide increased foraging opportunities for badgers using the Site as well as protected or notable species with the potential to be present on the Site, such as bats. Species recommended by Leicester City Council include oak, silver birch, hornbeam, field maple, cherry and hawthorn. Tree species planted could also include elm species as

these are the food plant for the butterfly; white-letter hairstreak which is a species on the IUCN red list that was recorded in the area.

- Night blooming flowers can be sown or planted in areas of grassland to encourage nocturnal pollinators such as bats and moths. Some examples recommended by the RSPB are sweet rocket *Hesperis matronalis,* hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabium,* tobacco plant *Nicotiana alata* and evening primrose *Oenothera biennis.*
- Bird boxes should be attached to some of the retained trees and integrated into the new buildings to provide nesting opportunities for birds. These should be installed on trees in the northwest woodland, at least 3m above the ground, facing north to east and away from artificial light sources. Further details on type and location of these boxes should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist.
- Creation of a log pile (Figure 4) in a suitable location on Site or within the wider site would provide shelter, basking, and foraging opportunities for reptiles. A location within the southwest woodland in the wider site would be a welcome enhancement due to the connectivity to the wider landscape and the appealing habitats already present there.

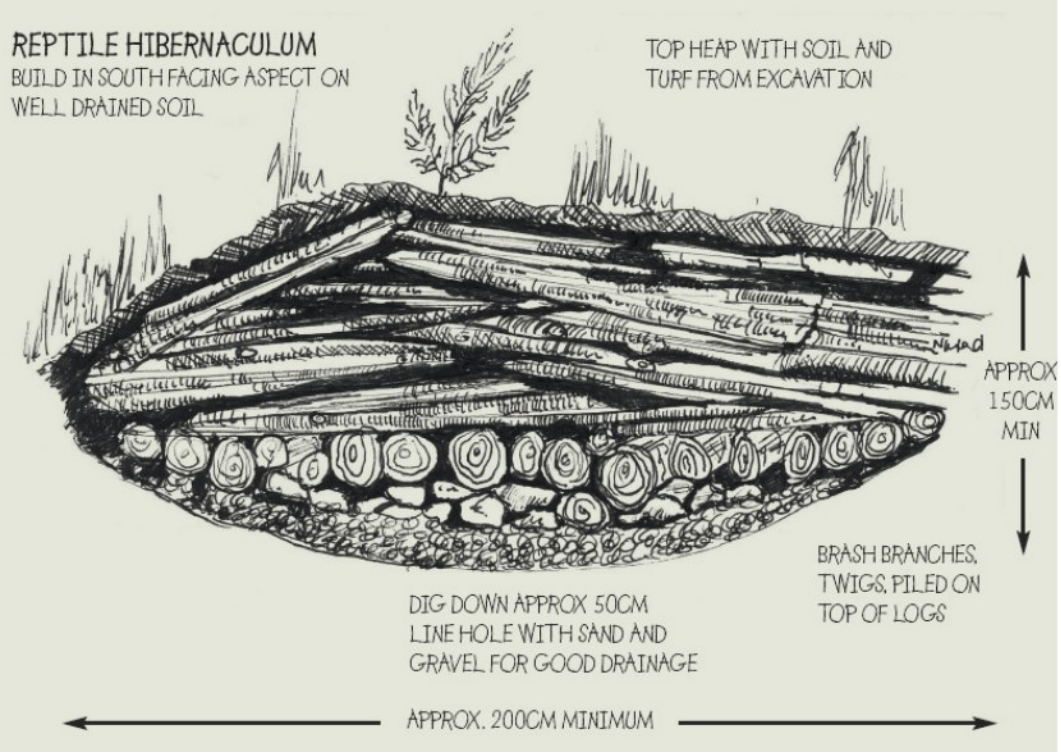

Figure 4: Reptile Hibernacula

- The installation of integrated bat boxes on the new buildings could provide long term roosting opportunities. Bat boxes should be installed facing south to east, at least 4m off the ground and away from artificial light sources. Further details on box types and location should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist. Manthorpe bat ridge roof tile or similar would be suitable for pipistrelle bat species (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Manthorpe bat ridge roost tile available from various sources.

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6 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Legislation and Planning Policy

Summary

Habitats and species receive various levels of protection under UK legislation and national and local planning policies. Those that are potentially relevant to the Site are listed below Note: Although summaries are provided, it is recommended to seek the full legal or policy wording separately for more information.

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Environment Act 2021
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revised in 2026
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2026

UK Legislation

In Britain, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[4] serves as the main tool for safeguarding wildlife. Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) deals with the protection of wildlife, including birds, animals, and plants. The Schedules that hold the most significance in terms of planning are Schedule 1, which protects bird species, Schedule 5, which protects other animal species, and Schedule 8, which protects plant species. Schedule 9 lists species of plants and animals that are not native to Great Britain but have established themselves in the wild, posing a threat to the natural fauna and flora.

[4] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Additionally, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[5] incorporates the EEC Council Directive 92/43/EEC, also known as the Habitats Directive, into UK legislation. This directive safeguards habitats and species of conservation concern throughout Europe, including those found in the UK.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF was revised on 17 August 2026. Chapter 19, Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, seeks to support nature recovery and safeguard important habitats, species and landscapes. Policy N2 requires development proposals to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity, conserve and enhance natural features where possible, strengthen ecological networks and incorporate appropriate biodiversity enhancements.

Under the statutory biodiversity net gain (BNG) framework established by the Environment Act 2021, development which is subject to BNG must achieve at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value compared with the pre-development baseline. Certain development is exempt from mandatory BNG, including, from 6 August 2026, qualifying development on sites of 0.2 ha or less.

Designated Sites

In the UK, there are different types of statutory sites which are classified under various categories. These categories include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR) which are established under national legislation. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) (for birds) are designated protected areas under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Ramsar sites should be treated within the planning system in the same way as SACs and SPAs. Meanwhile, Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are sites that are protected, and designated, only at the local level.

[5] The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The NPPF refers to non-statutory sites as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Although they do not have a formal level of protection, they are commonly included in local planning policies and therefore receive some level of protection at the local level.

Priority Habitats and Species

Section 41 (s41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species of principal importance in England. These are known as Section 41 priority habitats and species and are considered to be most under threat or declining in the UK. The list is reviewed every six years.

There are currently 56 habitats on the list and 943 species from plants and fungi to invertebrates and mammals.

Protected Species

Bats, Great Crested Newt, Otter and Hazel Dormice

All British bat species (Rhinolophidae and Vespertilionidae), great crested newts Triturus cristatus, otters Lutra lutra and hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* are legally protected in the UK under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are fully protected under Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The latter piece of legislation resulted in them being known as “European protected species”. This means that it is illegal to deliberately take, injure, or kill the animal; to intentionally or recklessly disturb the animal whilst they are in a 'place used for shelter or protection' or damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even when the animal is not present). It is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection; or to possess, control, sell, or transport live or dead individuals or their body parts. If you cannot avoid disturbing these species or damaging their habitats, you may apply to Natural England for a licence to carry out such works under the close supervision of a licensed ecologist.

Common Amphibians

Common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth *Lissotriton vulgaris* and palmate newts *Lissotriton helveticus* are protected from sale only under Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Common Reptiles

Grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, adder *Vipera berus* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) but only part of sub-section 9(1) and all of sub-section 9(5) apply. These species are protected against killing, injury and sale.

Birds

In the UK, the law protects all wild bird species, as well as their eggs and nests, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Intentionally harming or taking wild birds, damaging or destroying their nests while in use or under construction, taking or destroying their eggs, or possessing, controlling, or transporting live or dead wild birds is considered an offence. Some birds (such as barn owl *Tyto alba*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, and peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* amongst others) receive additional protection under Schedule 1, Part 1 of this Act and are protected by special penalties at all times. For these bird species, it is also an offence to disturb them while they are nesting, building a nest, near a nest with their young, or disturbing their dependent young.

Badger

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 safeguards badgers *Meles meles* and their setts. It is illegal to deliberately harm badgers by capturing, killing, or injuring them, or by damaging, destroying, or blocking access to their setts. Disturbing badgers in their setts, treating them cruelly, intentionally sending a dog into a sett, and baiting or digging for badgers are also prohibited.

Water Vole

Water vole *Arvicola amphibius* are legally protected in the UK under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (All parts of Section 9 apply). This means that it is against the law to intentionally kill, injure, take or possess the animal. It is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb the animal whilst they are in a 'place used for shelter or protection', or to damage or destroy or obstruct access to these places. Additionally, the sale and exchange of these animals is prohibited. If you cannot avoid disturbing water voles or damaging their habitats, you may apply to Natural England for a licence to carry out such works under the close supervision of a licensed ecologist.

Invasive Species

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 9 Part 2 provides controls on the release of non-native species into the environment, i.e., those considered to be invasive if they survive, thrive and spread rapidly within the environment. This prohibits the planting of such species or causing them to grow in the wild (plants), or the release/allowing to escape into the wild (animals).

APPENDIX B –Habitat Map

