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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

May 2025



39a Station Road, Desford

SMARTECH Design



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Non-Technical Summary

Three Shires Limited was commissioned by SMARTECH Design to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land adjacent to 39 Station Road, Desford. The proposed development is for the construction of a single residential property and the demolition of six buildings (**B1-B6**). There is a second proposed development for 39 Station Road, discussed in a separate PEA.

The Site is predominantly vegetated garden and other neutral grassland with bramble scrub, and a parking area with very low vegetation cover. There is a line of trees to the west and a native hedgerow towards the northeast. Several individual trees are located across the Site. Six wooden stable/feed storage buildings (**B1-B6**) are located onsite. **B3** has evidence of abandoned bird nests.

It is considered unlikely that there will be impacts on Botcheston Bog SSSI which lies within 2km due to the scale and distance from the proposed development.

Root protection areas should be put in place for the trees and hedgerows that will be retained.

Within 500m of the Site there are six waterbodies (**P1-P6**) and two watercourses. Ponds P5 and P6 lie distant from the site, but ponds P1 to P4 lie within 250m. Ponds 1 and 4 were found to be dry and do not appear to hold water at any time. However, Ponds 2 and 3 did hold water and were subject to survey for great crested newt, with eDNA sampling showing negative results. Overall, the risk of encountering GCN on site is considered to be negligible.

On-Site buildings were able to be fully inspected externally and internally and have low potential for bat roosting with this being more likely to be occasional and opportunistic rather than for any longer-term sustained roosting. Further surveys are not considered necessary, however it is recommended that immediately prior to demolition **B1-B6** should be checked, by a suitably qualified ecologist, to ensure that bats are not using the building at that time.

Overall, the Site is considered to have low ecological value with some small amounts of habitats of limited value for some species (common or widespread amphibians, small numbers of reptiles, hedgehog and nesting birds), with any risks to these easily mitigated by implementation of standard best practice measures during any vegetation or ground material clearance.

Table 1: Overview of Required Mitigation for each Ecological Receptor

Factor	Present	Within 2km	Recommendation(s)
Sites of Nature Conservation			
Statutory Site	No	Yes	No action required.
Non- Statutory sites	N/A	N/A	N/A
Habitat			
Modified Grasslands	Yes	Yes	No action required.
Other Neutral Grasslands	No	Yes	No action required.
Trees and Shrubs	Yes	Yes	Avoid removal and root protection zones to be used.
Hedgerows (Priority Habitat)	Yes	Yes	Avoid removal and root protection zones to be used.
Waterbodies	No	Yes	No measures required
Protected and Notable Species			
Badger	No	Possible	A badger walkover prior to vegetation clearance and works.
Bats	Unlikely	Yes	Buildings inspected for bats by a suitably qualified ecologist before demolition. Bat boxes should be installed on some of the retained trees.
Birds	Possible	Possible	Any vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive). Or if within this timeframe, within 48 hours of a check for nesting birds by a suitably experienced ecologist.
Great crested newt, Widespread Amphibians, reptiles and hedgehog	Possible	Possible	A fingertip search to identify any amphibians are present completed before hibernacula or refugia is removed. Bramble scrub clearance performed as a two-stage cut.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Three Shires Ltd was commissioned by SMARTECH Design on behalf of their client to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land in the north of Desford, Leicester LE9 9FN. The area of land contains two sites for two separate proposed residential developments, 39 Station Road and 39a Station Road. This PEA is for 39a Station Road, hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the current biodiversity value of the Site, highlight any other ecological features that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development, and inform the design of the proposed development. The report follows best practice guidance¹ and follows the principles of the mitigation hierarchy and British Standard (BS) 42020 2013²

1.3 Site Location and Context

The Site is approximately 0.5Ha in size and is in the north of the village of Desford, Leicestershire (**Figure 1**) at British National Grid Reference (NGR SK48270374). The Site is located approximately 11km west of the centre of the City of Leicester and approximately 3km north of the A47.

The surrounding landscape is dominated to the south by the village of Desford (**Figure 2**). To the north is mainly arable farmland bordered by hedgerows and scattered trees (**Figure 2**).

¹ Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Second Edition, CIEEM December 2010

² Biodiversity — Code of practice for planning and development, British Standards Institute 2013

Figure 1: Site Location

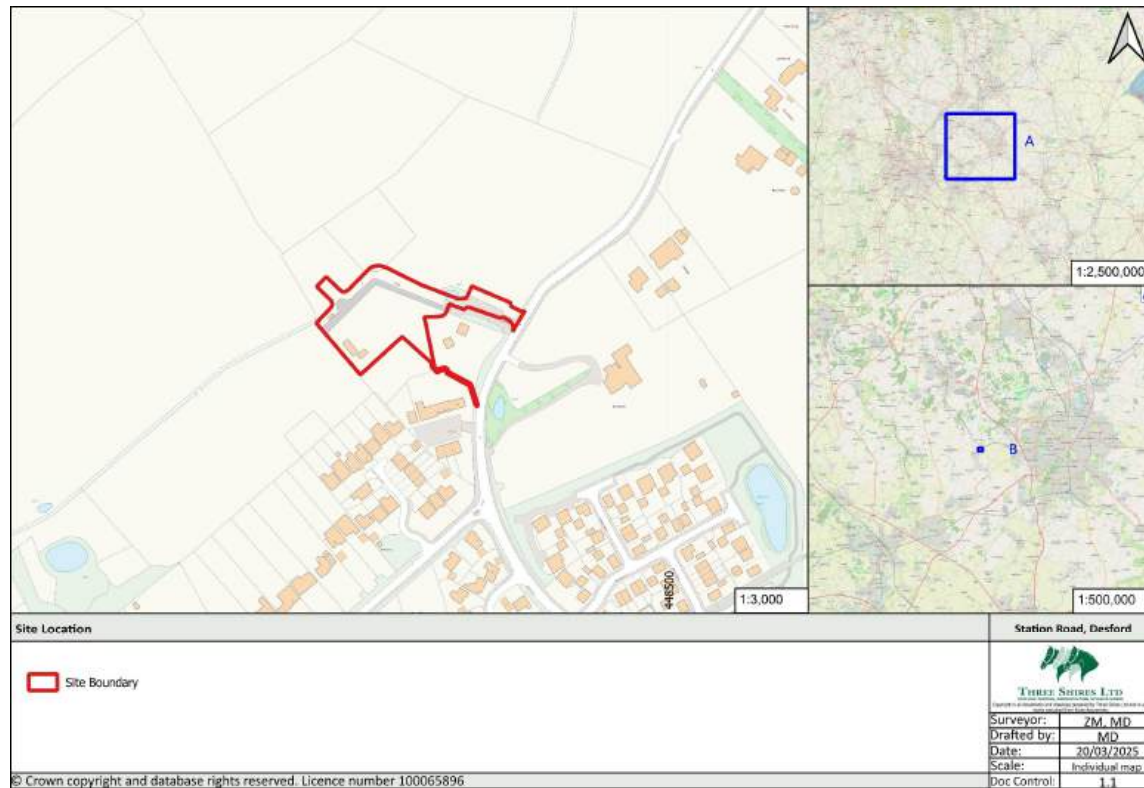


Figure 2: Site Landscape Context



2.0 Relevant Legislation and Local Policy

Relevant legislation and National Planning Policies applicable to the Site can be found in **Appendix A**.

2.1 Local Planning Policies

Local planning policy is set out within the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006 – 2026 (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD)³, adopted July 2016. The policies of relevance to this assessment are detailed below.

DM6- Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest

“Development proposals must demonstrate how they conserve and enhance features of nature conservation and geological value including proposals for their long term future management.

Major developments in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services.

Proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geological interest will be permitted where they comply with other relevant policies in the plan.

On site features should be retained, buffered and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. The removal or damage of such features shall only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated the proposal will result in no net loss of biodiversity and where the integrity of local ecological networks can be secured.

If the harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against or appropriate compensation measures provided, planning permission will be refused.

In addition to the above, where specific identified sites are to be affected the following will be taken into account:

Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites

International and Nationally Designated Sites will be safeguarded.

Development which is likely to have any adverse impact on the notified features of a nationally designated site will not normally be permitted.

In exceptional circumstances, a proposal may be found acceptable where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) A suitable alternative site with a lesser impact than that proposed is not available; and*
- b) The on-site benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the impacts on the notified features of the site and where applicable, the overall SSSI or habitat network; and*
- c) All appropriate mitigation measures have been addressed through the development management process; and*
- d) Development likely to result in a significant effect on internationally designated sites will be subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations and will not be permitted unless adverse effects can be fully avoided, mitigated and/or compensated.*

³ hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk

Irreplaceable Habitats

Proposals which are likely to result in the loss or deterioration of an irreplaceable habitat would only be acceptable where:

- e) The need and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss; and,*
- f) It has been adequately demonstrated that the irreplaceable habitat cannot be retained with the proposed scheme; and*
- g) Appropriate compensation measures are provided on site wherever possible and off site where this not is feasible.*

Locally Important Sites

Development proposals affecting locally important sites should always seek to contribute to their favourable management in the long term.

Where a proposal is likely to result in harm to locally important sites (including habitats or species of principal importance for biodiversity), developers will be required to accord with the following sequential approach:

- h) Firstly, seek an alternative site with a lesser impact than that proposed;*
- i) Secondly, and if the first is not possible, demonstrate mitigation measures can be taken on site;*
- j) Thirdly, and as a last resort, seek appropriate compensation measures, on site wherever possible and off site where this is not feasible."*

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence (Zoi) was defined considering the likely effects arising from the proposals, both during construction and in operation.

It is considered that the following impacts may result from the construction of a single domestic property:

- Temporary and permanent habitat loss;
- Injury or mortality of protected and notable species;
- Habitat degradation (e.g. dust pollution);
- Disturbance to protected and notable species resulting from works – machinery noise, vibration, light, increased human activity.

The distances from the site for these potential impacts are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Zone of Influence used for this Assessment

Ecological Receptors	Zone of Influence
Special Areas of Conservation with bat species as features of interest	Within 10km of the Site boundary
Statutory protected sites	Within 2km of the Site boundary or where any site Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) covers the development site
Non statutory protected sites	Within 1km of the Site boundary
Habitats of Principal Importance and Ancient Woodland boundaries	Within 50m of the Site boundary
Waterbodies	Within 500m of the site boundary
Protected species evidence • Badger • Bat • GCN • Otter • Water vole	Within the Site boundary 30m from the location of disturbance 500m from the Site boundary 200m from the Site boundary along watercourses 200m from the Site boundary along watercourses
Habitats	Within the site boundary plus 50m, where visible

3.2 Desk Study

The following sources were used to provide data for the desk study:

- Aerial photography – in order to aid preliminary ecological and overall assessment of the site;

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)⁴ – for statutory sites designated for nature conservation and recently granted (since 2009) European Protected Species (EPS) licences within 2km of the Site; and
- GCN Risk Zone (Leicestershire)⁵ – to determine if the area is important for GCN populations.
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006 - 2026 adopted July 2016

A detailed description of the methodologies for habitats and protected species can be found in **Appendix B**.

3.3 Field Surveys

An initial field survey was undertaken in August of 2024 by two suitably experienced ecologists. Due to changes to the redline boundary a second field survey was undertaken in April 2025

GCN surveys of two waterbodies were also undertaken in April 2025.

3.4 Survey Constraints / Limitations

The waterbodies and watercourses within 500m were not surveyed due to a lack of access to the land.

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the field evidence and the presence of plants and fauna on-site such as, weather conditions, the time of year, and migration patterns and behaviour. The ecological surveys undertaken to support this PEA have not therefore produced a complete list of plants and animals, and the absence of evidence of any species on-site should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present, or that it will not be present in the future.

⁴ magic.defra.gov.uk

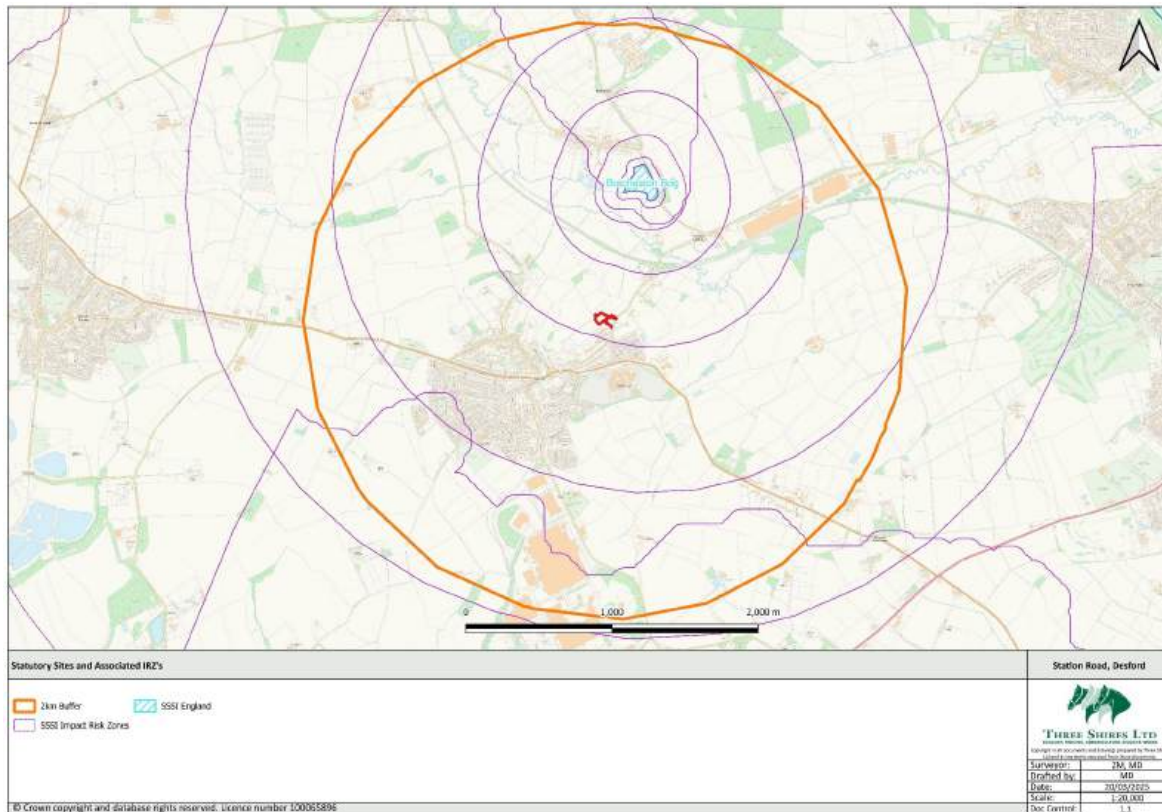
⁵ naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com

4.0 Results and Evaluation

4.1 Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

The Site boundary is 850m from the 2.87ha Botcheston Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and thus falls within its Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) (**Figure 4**). This SSSI is an area of lowland neutral grassland. Due to the extent and scale of the proposed development, it is not expected to have any impacts on the SSSI.

Figure 4: Statutory Nature Conservation Sites



4.2 Non-Statutory Sites

A background search for non-statutory sites was not undertaken as it was not considered to be proportionate or appropriate for the Site due to the small scale of the development proposals and the localised impact within the Site boundary.

4.3 Priority Habitats

A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast.

4.4 Waterbodies

There are no waterbodies onsite. Mapping and aerial imagery identified six ponds (**P1-P6**) within 500m of the Site boundary (**Figure 5**). Further details of each pond are provided in **Table 3**. Two streams are present within 500m of the Site boundary (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Waterbodies Within 500m

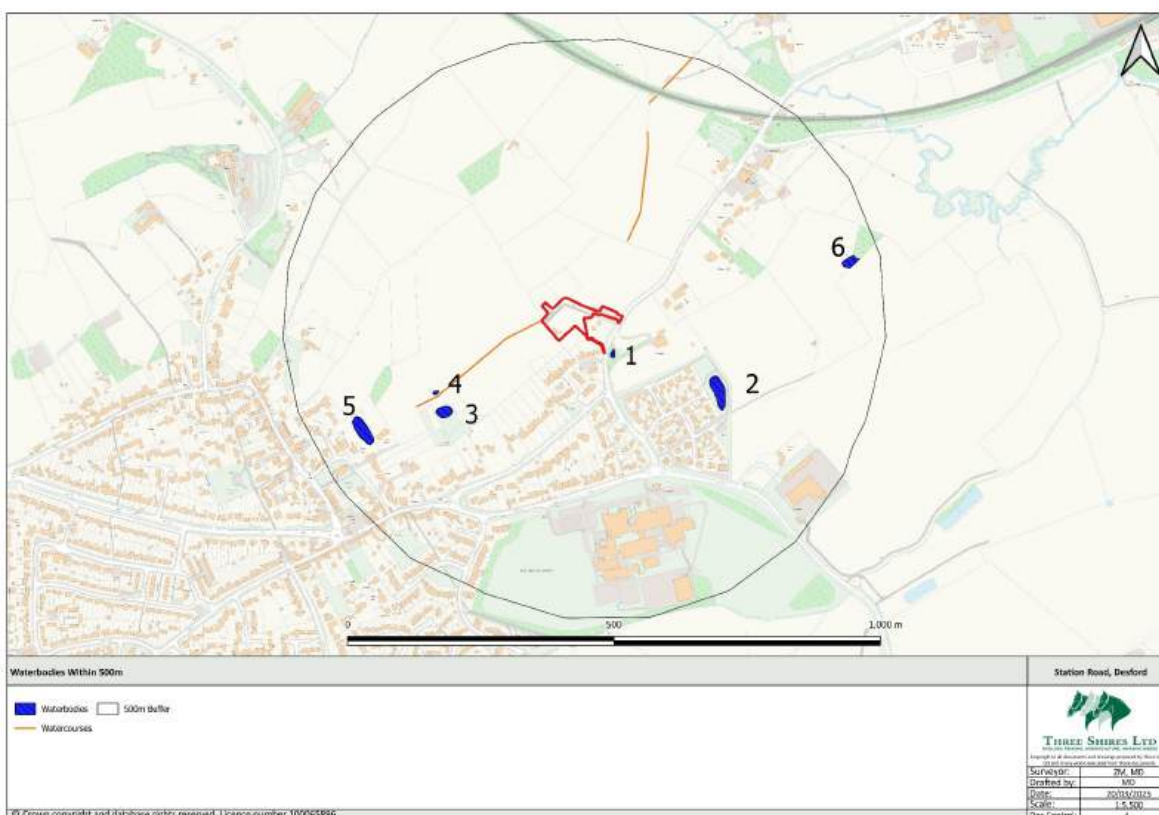


Table 3: Ponds within 500m

Pond Reference Number (Figure 4)	NGR	Distance and Direction from Closest Site Boundary	Holding water or dry
1	SK48370368	45m south	Dry
2	SK48570361	200m east	Holds water
3	SK48050357	235m west	Holds water
4	SK48040361	239m west	Dry
5	SK47900354	388m west	Holds water
6	SK48820386	435m east	N/A

4.5 Habitat Overview

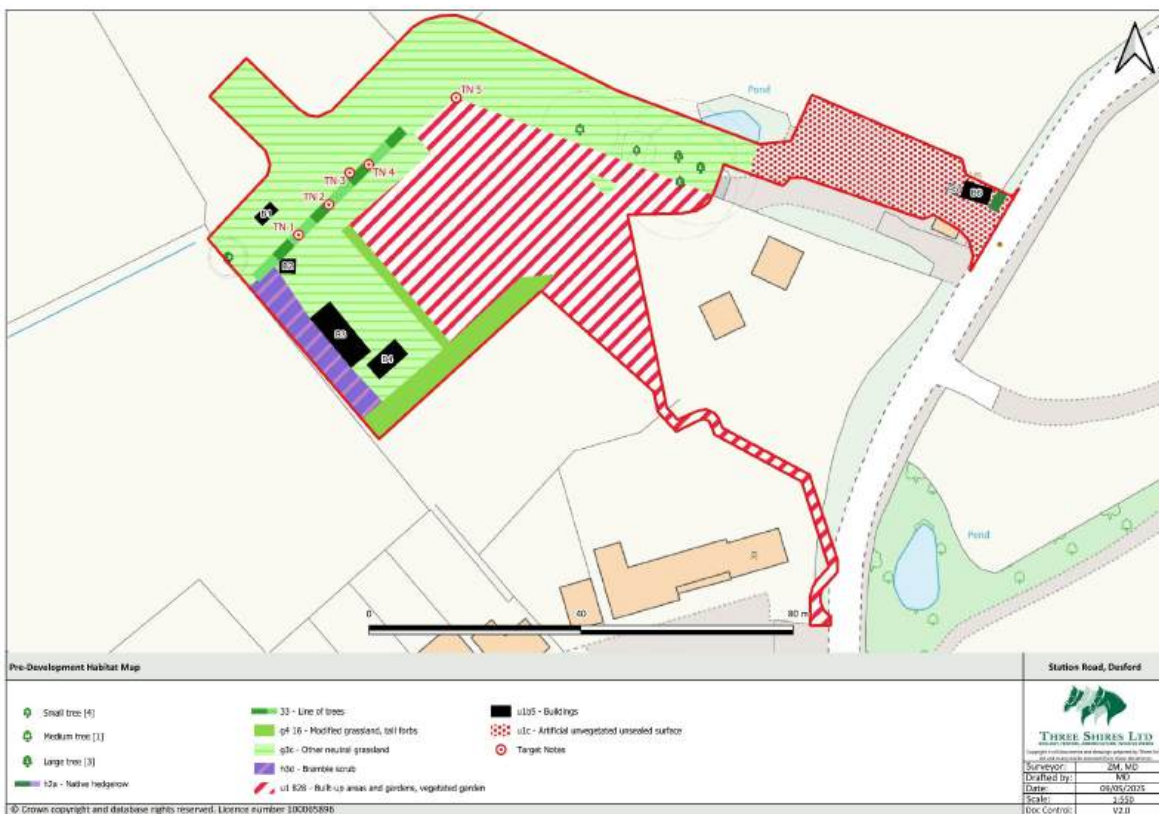
The Site is comprised of other neutral grassland to the north and west (**Figure 6**). Towards the west of the Site there are two sheds (**B1** and **B2**) and two former stables (**B3** and **B4**). An area of dense bramble scrub is along the southwest Site boundary. A strip of tall forbs modified grassland forms the southeast Site boundary and borders the vegetated garden to the south. The centre of the Site and the proposed pedestrian access consist

of vegetated garden in the form of a maintained lawn. A balancing pond is located within the vegetated garden. The northeast of the Site contains artificial unvegetated unsealed surface and two sheds (B5 and B6). A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast.

A line of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and leylandii (*Cupressus × leylandii*) is parallel to the southwest Site boundary. Individual silver birch (*Betula pendula*), ash, and field maple (*Acer campestre*) are along the north boundary of the vegetated garden. Three individual hawthorn trees are located in the north west corner of the Site.

Figure 6 basemap shows a pond present adjacent to the north boundary, however this has not existed for a number of years.

Figure 6: Pre-Development Habitat Map



4.5.1 Native Hedgerow

A native hedgerow borders the Site towards the northeast (**Photograph 1**). The hedgerow is approximately 4m in length, 2m in height, and 2m in width. The hedgerow was dominated by hawthorn. Frequently occurring species included common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). Rarely occurring species included hazel (*Corylus avellana*), elm (*Ulmus procera*), and dog rose (*Rosa canina*). The hedgerow qualifies as a priority habitat. However, the hedgerow does not require further assessment as potentially important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.



Photograph 1: Native hedgerow

4.5.2 Vegetated Garden

The centre of the Site and pedestrian access leading to Station Road consists of vegetated garden. The area is a frequently mown lawn (**Photograph 2**) with a short, even sward with some less maintained areas. The dominant species are perennial rye (*Lolium perenne*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Occasionally occurring species include mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). Rarely occurring species include black medic (*Medicago lupulina*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), and self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*). Scattered planted juvenile trees are present (**Photograph 3**), species include wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), *Prunus* sp., and *Cupressus* sp.

The habitat has been categorised as garden due to being highly maintained, used for recreational purposes (note the football goal in **Photograph 2**).

This habitat has been separated from the other neutral grassland to the north, west, and south due to those habitats lacking management and conforming to the definitions of other neutral grassland. Clear divides are present between the vegetated garden and other neutral grassland via treelines, fencing, and changes in elevation.



Photograph 2: Looking west across vegetated garden lawn.



Photograph 3: Looking north across vegetated garden lawn.

4.5.3 Other Neutral Grassland

The Site contains three distinct sections of other neutral grassland.

In the southwest of the Site around **B2-B4 (Photograph 4)**. The dominant species include perennial rye, creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), common nettle, and willowherb (*Epilobium spp.*). Occasionally occurring species include bindweed (*Convolvulus sp.*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), bitter dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*).



Photograph 4. Other neutral grassland around B3.

The north and west portions of the Site consist of an other neutral grassland access track (**Photographs 5 and 6**). This area is a short, even sward with less maintained, higher sward height strips along both sides. The dominant species include perennial rye. Frequently occurring species include ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), creeping thistle, spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*), cock's-foot (*Dactylus glomerata*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), and foxtail grass (*Alopecurus sp.*).

Occasionally occurring species include creeping thistle, willow herb, bindweed, ragwort, bitter dock, false oat grass, common bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), curled dock (*Rumex crispus*), dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*). Rarely occurring species included bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), bramble, small nettle (*Urtica urens*), cowslip (*Primula veris*) red dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*).



Photograph 5: Other neutral grassland access track. **Photograph 6:** Other neutral grassland access track.

Common nettle is locally abundant next to an outflow pipe located to the south of **B1** (**Photograph 7** and **8**).



Photograph 7: Locally abundant common nettle. **Photograph 8:** Locally abundant common nettle.

The third area of other neutral grassland is within a balancing pond (**Photograph 9**). The habitat is a 5m by 3m depression in the lawn with gravel and rocks at its base. The dominant species are perennial rye, false oat grass, Yorkshire fog, and bitter dock. Frequently occurring species include greater willowherb and creeping thistle. Occasionally occurring species include ribwort plantain and greater plantain. Bristly oxtongue rarely occurs.



Photograph 9: Balancing pond.

4.5.4 Modified Grassland, Tall Forbs

A strip of tall forbs modified grassland occurs along the southeast Site boundary (**Photograph 10**). The vegetation is approximately 1.5m tall at its maximum. The dominant species include creeping thistle, common nettle, and willow herb. Occasionally occurring species include perennial rye bindweed, hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*), ragwort, bitter dock, and false oat grass.



Photograph 10: Strip of tall forbs modified grassland.

Perpendicular to the strip of tall forbs in **Photograph 10** is a strip of tall forbs separating the vegetated garden from other neutral grassland (**Photograph 11**). Frequently occurring species include bramble, common nettle, perennial rye, and ash. Occasionally occurring species include false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and common bluebell.



Photograph 11: Strip of tall forbs modified grassland.

4.5.5 Lines of Trees

A line of trees is parallel to the southwest Site boundary (**Photograph 12**). The line of trees consists of five mature ash and one mature Leyland cypress towards the west.



Photograph 12: Line of ash and Leyland cypress along the west Site boundary.

4.5.6 Bramble Scrub

A linear area of dense bramble scrub is along the southwest boundary to the rear of B3 (**Photograph 13**).



Photograph 13: Dense bramble scrub to the rear of **B3**.

4.5.7 Buildings

The Site contains six buildings (**B1-B6**) (**Table 4**). **B1** is a shed located in the northwest corner of the Site. **B2-B4** are towards the west of the Site and are used for hay storage. **B5** and **B6** are located in the northeast of the Site and are used for the storage of construction materials.

Table 4: Building Description

Building	Description	Photographs
B1	An empty shed with timber walls and a pitched corrugated metal roof. The interior contains timber support beams on the walls and roof. The structure is open on the west aspect and on the east aspect there is a small window with wooden slats. Thus the interior is exposed and illuminated.	 

Building	Description	Photographs
B2	Shed currently used for hay storage with timber walls and a flat corrugated metal roof. The interior contains timber support beams on the walls and roof. At the base of the walls there is an approximately 5cm gap between the wall and ground.	  
B3	The largest of the onsite buildings; a former stable currently used for hay storage. The building has timber walls and a pitched timber roof with corrugated concrete cladding. Gaps in the east aspect result in the interior being exposed and illuminated. There is no attic space.	 

Building	Description	Photographs
		
B4	Former stable currently used for hay storage. The building has timber walls and a flat timber roof with corrugated concrete cladding. Gaps in the north aspect result in the interior being exposed and illuminated. There is no attic space.	 
B5	A flat roofed metal shed used for the storage of construction materials. A skylight is present in the roof and a window on the south aspect resulting in an illuminated interior.	 

Building	Description	Photographs
B6	A pitched roofed metal shed used for the storage of construction materials. The structure is open in the roof and on the west aspect, resulting in the interior being exposed and illuminated.	 

4.5.8 Artificial Unvegetated- Unsealed Surface

A parking and storage area to the northeast of the Site consists of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (**Photograph 14**). The area contains scattered construction machinery, materials, **B5**, and **B6** (**Table 4**).



Photograph 14: Looking west across the parking and storage area.

4.5.9 Individual trees

Five individual trees are present along the north boundary of the vegetated garden (**Photograph 15**): Three large mature silver birch (*Betula pendula*) towards the east, a small ash, and a small field maple (*Acer campestre*) towards the west.



Photograph 15: Five individual trees.

A group of three individual small hawthorn tree are located in the northwest corner of the Site (**Photograph 16**).



Photograph 16: Three individual hawthorn trees.

4.5.10 Off Site Habitats

Native Hedgerow

An off-Site native hedgerow is located south adjacent to the artificial unvegetated unsealed surface (**Photograph 17**). The dominant species are bramble, hawthorn, and bindweed. Common ivy is occasionally occurring. The hedgerow is approximately 25m in length, 3m high, and 1m wide and qualifies as a priority habitat. However, the hedgerow is a poor example and does not require further assessment as potentially important under the Hedgerow Regulations⁶.

⁶ The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, No. 1160



Photograph 17: Off-Site native hedgerow.

4.6 Protected and Notable Species

4.6.1 Great Crested Newt and Widespread Amphibians

The desk study identified the Site as being in an amber risk zone for district licensing of GCN. Indicating they could be present, with suitable breeding ground and terrestrial habitats. MAGIC returned no records of GCN presence within 500m of the Site boundary.

Pond Reference Number (Figure 4)	NGR	Distance and Direction from Closest Site Boundary	Holding water or dry	Connectivity	Scoped in for further assessment/testing
1	SK48370368	45m south	Dry	NA – dry (long term)	No
2	SK48570361	200m east	Holds water	Yes	Yes
3	SK48050357	235m west	Holds water	Yes	Yes
4	SK48040361	239m west	Dry	NA (dry – long term)	No
5	SK47900354	388m west	Holds water	Good – along field boundaries and hedges	Unable to access
6	SK48820386	435m east	Not Known but appears likely for aerial photos	Poor – distant and roads	No

P2 was created after 2019 as both a sustainable drainage system pond and provides habitat suitable for amphibian and reptiles⁷. In the vicinity of **P2**, amphibian and reptile hibernacula and refugia were installed.

P2 and **P3** were surveyed for potential GCN presence. During torch surveys, no GCN were observed in either pond. No GCN or other newt species were found in bottle traps. Results from the eDNA sampling show no GCN presence in either pond.

Although more suitable habitat for GCN and widespread amphibians is present outside the Site as a mosaic of woodland, hedgerows and grassland (**Figure 2**) there are a few small but suitable refugia on-site. Along the line of trees to the southwest there are three piles of processed timber, one of which also contains an upturned bathtub (**Photograph 18, 19, and 20**)- Target Notes 1, 3, and 4. The log piles and bathtub offer suitable refugia and hibernacula for GCN and widespread amphibians (as well as reptiles). The bramble scrub to the rear of **B3**, strip of tall forbs modified grassland, native hedgerow, and the gravel and rocks in balancing pond offer suitable terrestrial habitat and potential refugia.

⁷ https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/info/200249/view_planning_applications_and_decisions



Photograph 18: Pile of processed timber along the west line of trees (Target Note 1).



Photograph 19: Pile of processed timber and upturned bathtub along the west line of trees (Target Note 3).



Photograph 20: Pile of processed timber along the west line of trees (Target Note 4).

4.6.2 Birds

The lines of trees, bramble scrub, and native hedgerow provide habitat that could be utilised by nesting birds. Due to the limited extent of the Site, it is unlikely that important populations of these species occur.

An owl box 5m southeast of the Site boundary offers potential roosting for barn owl and other bird species (**Photograph 21**).



Photograph 21: Owl box on mature ash.

Evidence of three previous swallow (*Hirundinidae* sp.) nests and bird droppings were identified in **B3** (Photographs 22, 23, and 24).



Photograph 22: Bird nests in B3.



Photograph 23: Bird nest in B3.



Photograph 24: Bird droppings in B3

It is considered very unlikely that ground nesting birds would utilize the other neutral grassland and tall forbs modified grassland on Site. This is due to the predominantly short length of grass and the less maintained longer grass being subject to regular disturbance.

4.6.3 Reptiles

Along the west tree line there are three sacks of decomposing grass cuttings (**Photograph 25**) and a pile of decomposed grass cuttings (**Photograph 26**)- Target Notes 2 and 5.



Photograph 25: Three sacks of grass cuttings along the southwest line of trees (Target Note 2).



Photograph 26: Pile of grass cuttings in the northeast Site (Target Note 5).

The grass cuttings are a suitable breeding site for slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*).

4.6.4 Hedgehog

The bramble scrub and native hedgerow offer suitable foraging and hibernacula for hedgehog. The lawn offers further foraging opportunities. The grass cuttings provide hibernacula (Target Note 5). In addition, there is connectivity to the adjacent section of woodland that provides hedgehog foraging and hibernacula (**Figure 2**).

4.6.5 Badgers

There was no onsite evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) presence. However, Badgers are very mobile and the bramble scrub to the east of the Site and surrounding woodland and open country offer some suitable habitat for sett building or foraging. As such, their presence on the Site cannot be ruled out.

4.6.6 Bats

MAGIC has records of licences issued within 2km of the Site boundary. The destruction of a brown long eared (*Plecotus auratus*) resting place or breeding site was allowed in 2010 at a location 850m north of the Site boundary. The destruction of a brown long eared and common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) resting place was allowed in 2017 at a location 1.99km north of the Site boundary. These species are widespread and locally common in Leicestershire and would be expected.

A mature ash located 5m to the southeast of the Site boundary has a PRF for an individual bat (**Photograph 27**). The ash is approximately 15m high and forms part of a line of leylandii.



Photograph 27: Mature ash 6m west of the Site boundary with PRF.

The individual PRF is a knot hole on a branch approximately 6m high (**Photograph 28**). The knot hole may have significant depth and cavities, increasing its suitability. However, the upwards aspect results in the PRF being exposed and rain may enter. As such, the PRF has negligible suitability.



Photograph 28: Knot hole on mature ash.

None of the onsite trees offer Potential Roosting Features (PRFs).

An informal PRA of the onsite buildings (**B1-B6**) was conducted. The buildings offer limited value for roosting bats due to exposure, lack of void spaces, human presence, and lack of darkness (**Table 2**). It has been concluded they have negligible/low suitability for roosting bats.

4.6.7 Other Protected or Notable Species

The following protected species are considered to be absent from the Site due to a lack of suitable habitat and field evidence:

- Hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
- White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)
- Riparian Mammals including otter and water vole
- Notable invertebrates

- Freshwater and Migratory Fish
- INNS
- Other mammals

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The biodiversity value of the Site is considered to be low due to the predominant habitats being a vegetated garden and other neutral grassland. However, **B3**, the bramble scrub, native hedgerow and lines of trees offer potential for nesting birds and the log piles offer some, but limited, potential refugia and hibernacula for amphibians, reptiles and hedgehog. The grass cuttings offer a potential breeding site for slow worm and grass snake. The bramble scrub and native hedgerow offers amphibian refugia and hedgehog foraging and hibernacula. The lawns offer further foraging opportunities for hedgehog. There is a very low possibility for bat presence in **B1-B6**.

The wider landscape offers suitable badger habitat for sett building or foraging.

The development is unlikely to cause any direct or indirect effects to statutory sites of conservation.

The proposals will result in the loss of other neutral grassland, bramble scrub, and native hedgerow.

The appropriate recommendations to mitigate for potential impacts to habitats and protected species are outlined in the next section. The results of the following recommendations should be used to inform a method statement.

5.2 Habitats

Adherence to best practice guidelines in respect to working in the vicinity of trees should be employed, including the implementation of root protection areas⁸.

The native hedgerow should be protected from damage as a priority habitat.

5.3 Protected and Notable Species

5.3.1 Amphibians (including GCN), reptiles and hedgehog

Prior to the removal of refugia or hibernacula (log piles), a suitably qualified ecologist will be required to conduct a fingertip search to identify and remove any amphibians or mammals found to be present.

If vegetation clearance of the bramble scrub occurs, a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PMWS) should be employed. This should involve a two-stage cut of the vegetation, the first stage will reduce the vegetation to no less than 150mm with arisings removed from the area. The second cut to fully clear the vegetation will occur after a suitable period of time to allow dispersal for any individual not located by hand searching.

If a GCN is found, all works must cease and next steps advised by a suitably experienced ecologist. This may include the need to apply for entry to District Wide Licensing.

5.3.2 Birds

It is recommended that vegetation clearances and removal of trees should commence outside nesting bird season (March - August) to prevent the loss of bird nests. If it is not possible to work outside this period, it is

⁸ British Standards Institute (2012). BS 5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design demolition and construction – Recommendations*

recommended that nesting bird checks are completed immediately prior to tree felling, or vegetation clearances.

Provision for nesting birds should be made within the landscape and site design via bird boxes. In particular features suitable for nesting swallow and house martin should be installed.

5.3.3 Badger

A badger walkover prior to vegetation clearance and works is recommended to check for evidence of badgers onsite.

5.3.4 Bats

Due to the low suitability of **B1-B6** for bat species no further surveys are required.

However, there is still the possibility of **B1-B6** being used as an occasional roost. As such, the buildings should be inspected by a suitably qualified ecologist before demolition occurs.

A small number of varying types of woodcrete bat boxes should be included within the Site landscaping design on retained trees.

Appendix A Relevant Legislation and Policies

Legislation

The main pieces of legislation regarding the protection of species and habitats in the UK are the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Other legislation is in force which gives protection to certain species, such as the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, specific activities, such as the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 and specific habitats, such as the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (as amended).

Invasive non-native species are regulated via a combination of the Invasive Alien Species (Permitting and Enforcement) Order 2019 and Section 14/Schedule 9 of the 1981 Act.

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, all public bodies are required to have due regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their function. Under this Act, habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England are identified and published under the provisions of Section 41 (S41).

Planning Policies

The biodiversity policies which are most relevant on a national level are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁹.

National Planning Policies

In terms of planning policy, at a national level, Chapter 15 of the NPPF (which relates to conserving and enhancement the nature environment) requires Local Authorities to take measures to:

- Refuse planning permission if significant harm to biodiversity results from a development that cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for;
- Develop planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- Not usually permit development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments). The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSI;
- Refuse planning permission for development that results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees), unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- Support development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

⁹ National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Appendix B Methodology

Habitat Survey

This was conducted by undertaking a systematic walkover over of the Site habitats, using a route which allowed all habitats to be viewed and flora species identified where possible. Habitats were defined and mapped using the 'UKHab V2.01' classification system.

Dominant plant species were noted, as were any protected, uncommon, invasive species or species indicative of a particular habitat type, but there was no attempt to compile exhaustive species lists for this element of the Site assessment. Botanical nomenclature in this report follows Stace (2019)¹⁰ for both scientific and common names.

The survey also included:

- A preliminary search for evidence of protected or important species and species groups, and for habitats and features likely to host them if direct evidence is absent;
- The identification of other constraints (e.g., invasive non-native plant species) and any further opportunities for ecological enhancement; and
- An assessment to identify any potential roosting features (PRF) of significant buildings and trees providing bat roost potential.

Protected and Notable Species

Badger

Field signs for badger (*Meles meles*) within or adjacent to the Site were recorded in accordance with the standard methodology outline (Harris et al 1989) which includes surveying for active sett entrances, as well as spoil, bedding, latrines, hairs, prints, foraging signs and pathways.

A walkover of the whole site (including land, where accessible, within approximately 30m of the Site boundary) was undertaken and signs of badger activity were recorded in accordance with the standard methodology outline¹¹. Signs of activity include:

- Sett entrances (entrances that are greater than 25cm in diameter with a flattened oval appearance);
- Presence of and size of any spoil heaps outside tunnel entrances;
- Presence of bedding material within or outside tunnel entrances;
- The degree of smoothness, or wear of the tunnel sides;
- The degree of any vegetation covering tunnel entrances, the presence of any debris within the tunnel;
- Faeces;

¹⁰ Stace, C (2019) *New Flora of the British Isles*. 4th edn. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

¹¹ Surveying Badgers, Harris S. et. al, 1989

- Paths between setts or leading to feeding habitats;
- Areas of scratching at the base of tree trunks or branches;
- Scrapes into the ground (snuffle holes) where badgers have searched for food;
- Bundles of vegetation where badgers may sleep above ground (day nests);
- Hair traces;
- Tracks.

When found, the activity level and status of the sett was based on the number of used, partially used and disused entrances. The definition of a badger setts “current use” is outlined in the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) and further in a guidance by Natural England¹²; mainly smooth-sided entrances, clear of debris and vegetation, with spoil heaps and sometimes bedding material and footprints outside.

If setts were located, then they were categorised according to **Table 2**, with the activity status categorised according to **Table 3**.

Table 2: Sett Categories

Sett Type	Definition
Main	Typically, several active entrances with large spoil heaps and obvious paths leading from and between sett entrances. Signs of frequent and constant high levels of activity. May contain inactive entrances.
Annexe	Normally close to a main sett (<50m), comprising several entrances with well-worn paths between the main and annex sett. May not be in use all the time, even if main sett is very active.
Subsidiary	Usually some distance from main sett (>150m) with several entrances, but no obvious paths connecting to other setts. May only be used intermittently.
Outlier	Often comprise one or two entrances with little spoil outside. No obvious paths connecting to other setts and only used sporadically. May also be used by foxes and rabbits.

Table 3: Entrance and Overall Sett Activity Status Criteria

Sett status	Definition	Field signs
Active	Where field signs indicate that the sett or entrance is currently being occupied by badgers.	Field signs include recently excavated spoil, bedding material, footprints, hairs, fresh latrines and with well-worn paths present between entrances and leading into surroundings, entrances generally clear of vegetation and look well used.
Inactive	Where field signs indicate a strong likelihood of no or limited badger activity within the previous three months.	Absence of fresh spoil, bedding or footprints, leaf build up in tunnel entrances, extensive cobwebs in tunnels, seedlings growing in tunnel entrances etc. Paths may be present but less well defined.
Disused	Where field signs indicate that the sett has not been used for some	Large amount of leaf litter / debris collected at tunnel entrances and vegetation grown up around or inside entrances. No obvious paths visible leading to

¹² Guidance on ‘Current Use’ in the definition of a Badger Sett, *Natural England 2009*,
https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140523111208/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/WMLG17_tcm6-11815.pdf

Sett status	Definition	Field signs
	considerable time, typically more than 3 months minimum.	and from entrance and spoil heap has dispersed / weathered and become re-vegetated. May be partially collapsed or blocked.

Bats

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken to determine the Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) which could support roosting bats. This was undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced Three Shires Ltd ecologists led by a suitably experienced ecologist for the complexity of the structure being surveyed and the assessment of the buildings and trees and their suitability for roosting bats were carried out from the ground using binoculars and torches (where necessary).

The external surfaces of any buildings were inspected to check for loose or lifted roof tiles, soffit boards, fascias, guttering or cracked brickwork. Internal inspections were also undertaken, where access was permitted, to give a broader understanding of the suitability of the building and to identify any potential features that may provide roosting opportunities.

An assessment of the trees and their suitability for roosting bats was also carried out from the ground using binoculars and torches (where necessary). These were assessed for features such as woodpecker holes, fissures, cracks, cavities, and loose bark that could be suitable for use by roosting bats.

Where features were identified, observations of evidence of bat use or activity, such as droppings, urine stains, odour, feeding remains, scratch marks, grease stains, or wear marks were recorded.

Table 4 below details the level of suitability for roosts and the features that classify each suitability level.

Table 4: Bat Roost Suitability Levels

Suitability Level	Typical Features / Evidence
Confirmed	Evidence or presence of bats within feature or on/within building/structure
High	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat.
Moderate	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
Low	A building/structure with one or more potential roost Sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost Sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e., unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Negligible	Negligible features present that are unlikely to support roosting bat species

Birds

The species of birds encountered during the survey were recorded and details of suitable habitats for nesting birds during the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive) were noted, with habitat suitability for

notable species or important assemblages being considered, including barn owl. Binoculars were used to aid vision and the presence of nests, where observed, was also recorded.

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

An assessment of all on-site waterbodies and those within the immediate vicinity of the Site boundary were surveyed for their potential to provide suitable habitat for GCN. If available to be surveyed, each pond was also given Habitat Suitability Index¹³ (HSI) score. This allowed a numerical value to be given to each pond based on its suitability based on variety of factors. These scores range from < 0.5 being poor to > 0.8 being excellent (Table 5).

Table 5: HSI Scores

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

Reptiles

Suitable habitat for grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), slow worm and adder (*Vipera berus*) was identified and recorded. Evidence for field signs for reptile (e.g. sloughs, burrows, eggs) and an assessment of habitat potential for reptiles (e.g. edges/ecotones, ridges, hummocks, sunny slopes, brash heaps) were recorded.

Riparian Mammals

The waterbodies on Site were searched for signs of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), European otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) and evaluated for suitability of habitat using binoculars where surveillance of the opposing bank was not possible. The aim of this survey was to look for and identify any signs of the presence of riparian mammal using field signs such as, visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, latrines, footprints, (although these on their own do not indicate a positive presence) food caches, burrows, gardens, runways through vegetation, nesting material pulled into and blocking the entrance to burrows.

Otter

The survey for otter was undertaken following best practice guidelines and consisted of a bankside survey 200 metres upstream and downstream of the proposed footbridge on both banks searching for any visible signs of otter activity including visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, scat, footprints, slides into the river, potential holt locations and any visible feeding remains.

Water Vole

The water vole assessment was undertaken following best practice guidelines and consisted of a bankside survey covering a distance of 200 metres upstream and downstream on both riverbanks. The aim of this survey was to look for and identify any signs of the presence of water vole using field signs such as, visual confirmation by way of seeing the animal, latrines, footprints, (although these on their own do not indicate a positive

¹³ <https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file>

presence) food caches, burrows, gardens, runways through vegetation, nesting material pulled into and blocking the entrance to burrows.

White-Clawed Crayfish

A bankside assessment of the river habitat and suitability for white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) was carried out. The stream substrate, form, flow, bankside structure, vegetation were noted, as well as any signs of feeding upon crayfish (in the form of remains on banks).

Freshwater and Migratory Fish

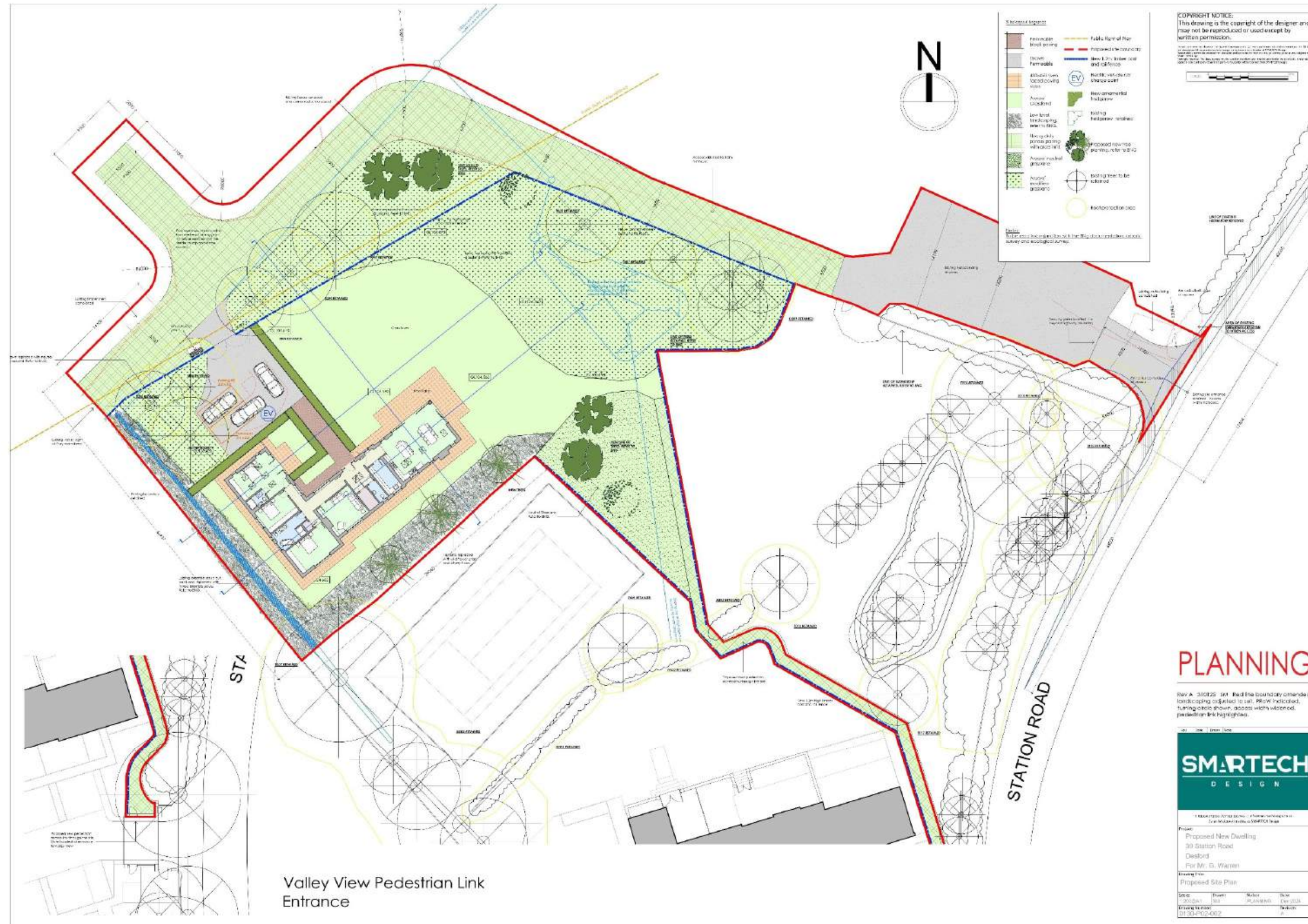
The waterbodies on Site were visually evaluated for suitability of habitat for fish and observed for the presence of any species.

Other Notable Species

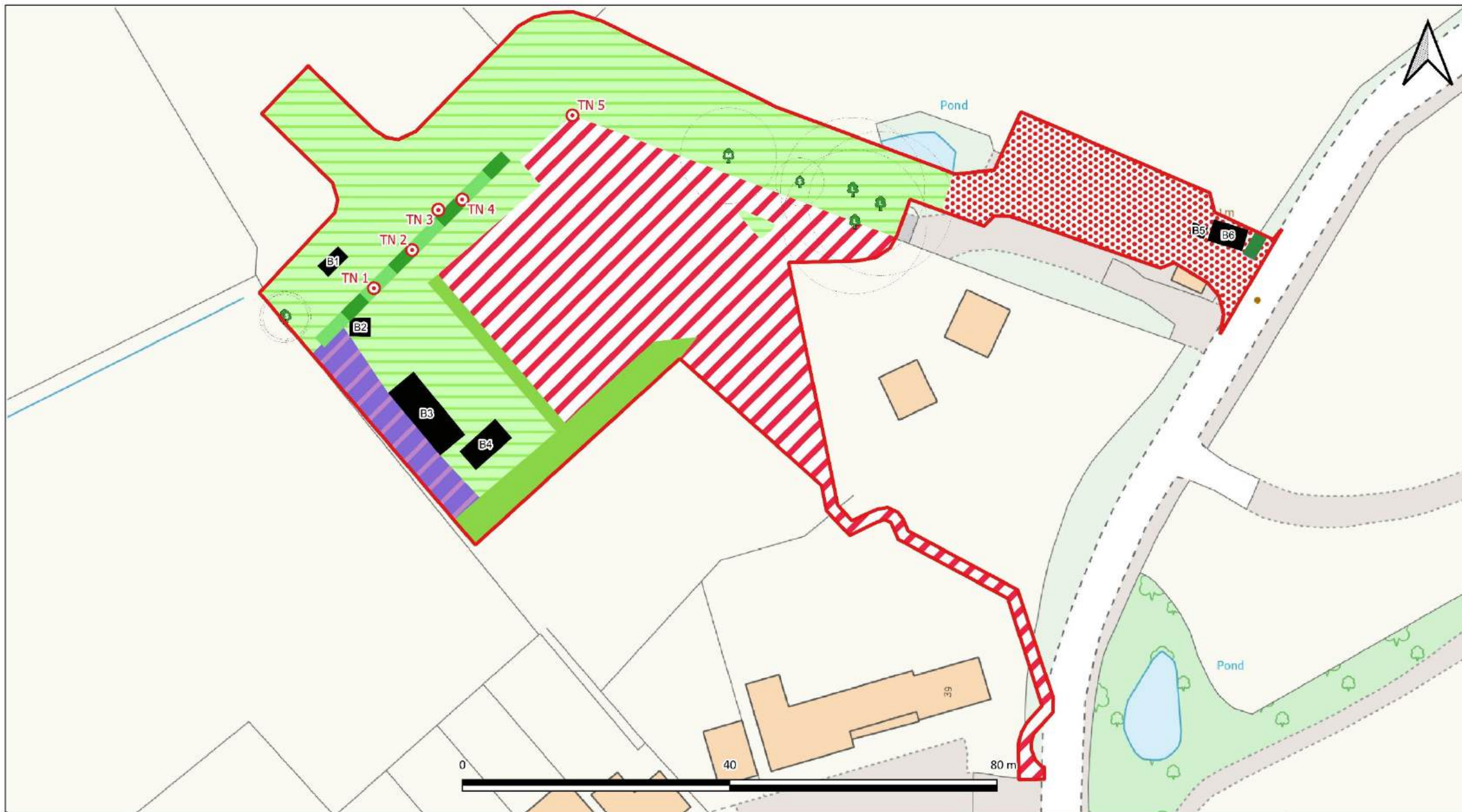
The Site was also assessed for suitability for other protected species such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

Appendix C A3 Maps

Post Development Plans



a Pre-Development Habitat Map



Pre-Development Habitat Map

Station Road, Desford

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  Small tree [4] |  33 - Line of trees |  u1b5 - Buildings |
|  Medium tree [1] |  g4 16 - Modified grassland, tall forbs |  u1c - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface |
|  Large tree [3] |  g3c - Other neutral grassland |  Target Notes |
|  h2a - Native hedgerow |  h3d - Bramble scrub | |
| |  u1 828 - Built-up areas and gardens, vegetated garden | |

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Drafted by:	MD
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