

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Wolfdale School, Desford Road, Ratby,
Leicester LE6 0LE

Issue Date: 24 August 2026

Report No. 260520.Wolfdale School.PEA.v1.4

Report Details

Report	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Site Address	Wolfdale School, Desford Road, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0LE
Central OS Grid Reference	SK51090569
Client	Wolfdale School

Document Control

Author	Reviewer	Comments	Report Version	Issue Date
Imogen Holloway	Katy Clark-Goddard	First issue	v1.0	08/07/2026
Katy Clark-Goddard		Minor amendments	v1.2	29/07/2026
Imogen Holloway	Katy Clark-Goddard	Minor amendments	V1.4	24/08/2026

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Disclosure:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Topic	Conclusion
Introduction	Croft Ecology was commissioned by Wolfdale School to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Wolfdale School, Desford Road, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0LE in relation to the development of a new educational facility, play area and associated pathways and soft landscaping.
Surveys undertaken	A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken on 3 June 2026. 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
Key Results	There are no priority habitats within the Site. The Site comprised largely areas of sealed surface, buildings, bare ground and a small area of introduced shrub. The Site had low potential for amphibians, badger, bats, invertebrates, reptiles and hedgehog, and negligible potential for breeding birds. The adjacent tree to be removed was graded PRF-I for bats and supported nesting bird opportunities.
Further surveys	No further surveys are required or recommended.
Recommendations	• The scheme should incorporate a sensitive design for any lighting proposed on or around the new building. • Sensitive working practices are recommended to minimise potential harm to herpetofauna and mammals that may use the Site, alongside appropriate timing restrictions to avoid impacts on nesting birds that may be using the adjacent tree.

Recommendations (continued)	• Retained trees and hedgerows adjacent to the Site will be protected from accidental damage during the works. • Any excavations should have a scaffold plank or similar placed in them to provide a means of escape for any trapped animal. • Soft felling of the dead willow tree should take place to ensure no bats potentially roosting within the structure would be harmed in the process. • The area of bare ground should be maintained in its current condition to ensure it does not become more suitable for reptiles and amphibians in the interim to the work taking place.
Compensation and enhancement	• Ecological enhancement recommended for the Site includes new native planting, 1no. bat boxes, 2no. bird boxes and 1 insect house.

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1 Introduction

Croft Ecology was commissioned by Wolfdale School to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Wolfdale School, Desford Road, Ratby, Leicester LE6 0LE (central grid reference: SK51090569) (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

The recommendations in this report are made on the understanding that the proposals will take place as initially advised. If any amendments are made, the survey findings and subsequent recommendations are likely to also require review and amendment.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

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

1.2 Site Location and Context

The Site is located on the southwestern edge of the village of Ratby, 780m southwest of the M1. The surrounding landscape consists of urban development to the north and east and agricultural fields to the south and west. A tributary to Rothley Brook runs 75m south of the Site. The wider site contains teaching units and a cricket green which border the Site to the east and south.

1.3 Proposed Development

At the time of writing, it is understood that the proposals are for the development of a new two-storey educational facility, to replace the existing mobile classrooms, as well as a play area and associated pathways and soft landscaping (the 'Proposed Development').



Figure 1. Site Location (basemap source: Open Street Map)

1.4 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 habitats 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 and Competence

The PEA survey was undertaken by Imogen Holloway, Assistant Ecologist at Croft Ecology, and Katy Clark-Goddard, Senior Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Imogen has 3 years of experience working in the ecology sector, including carrying out baseline habitat surveys and writing a number of different report types. These include PEA reports, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) technical notes and Landscape and Ecological Management Plans (LEMP).

Katy has 6 years of experience working in ecological consultancy including undertaking Preliminary Roost Assessments, PEAs, Ecological Impact Assessments and BNG assessments, on small to medium scale private, MOD and railway sites. Katy holds protected species licences for bats (level 2 2025-84727-CL18-BAT), dormouse (level 1 2025-12751-CL10A-DOR) and GCN (level 1 2025-80821-SCI-CL08).

The report was prepared by Imogen and reviewed by Katy.

2.2 Desk Study / Data Search

The Government's website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was accessed on 10 June 2026 to conduct an initial search for designated nature conservation sites, priority habitats and Natural England European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences issued within 1km of the Site, and to determine whether the Site was located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ).

Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Record Centre also provided details on statutory and non-statutory sites, as well as protected and notable species records, within a 1km radius of the Site boundary on 27 May 2026. Records pre-dating the year 2000 were considered to be historical and not included in the assessment.

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 Site Survey Date and Conditions

The Site was visited on 3 June 2026 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 survey were dry with a fresh breeze, 70% cloud cover and a temperature of 15°C.

2.4 Habitat Survey Method (UKHab)

A UK Habitat (UKHab) 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 (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), 2018) and Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017).

A fine-scale minimum mapping unit (of 2m² or 5m) was deemed appropriate for use at the Site given its relatively small scale, consequently, only habitats with an area of 25m² or greater, or linear features 5m in length or greater, were mapped.

The UKHab 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 at the Level 4 hierarchy and secondary codes were applied where these could provide greater context¹.

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

2.5 Protected / Notable Species Assessment Method

The UKHab field survey was extended to identify any protected or notable species as per CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). Where relevant, specific industry standard sub-surveys were completed under the remit of this overarching PEA, as detailed below.

A thorough search was also conducted to detect the presence, or potential presence of other notable and protected species, such as badger *Meles meles*, breeding birds, reptiles, amphibians, notable mammals, invertebrates and any invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Otter *Lutra lutra*, water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* were all scoped out due to a lack of records and suitable habitat within or adjacent to the Site and are therefore not considered further within the report.

2.5.1 Bats: Ground Level Tree Assessment

Where trees have the potential to be impacted by works, as per best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023), these trees should be subject to survey to identify their potential to support roosting bats to ensure that impacts to this mammal group can be appropriately considered within development proposals.

A Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) therefore consists of a suitably qualified ecologist standing at the base of trees examining their entirety with binoculars and a high-powered torch to identify any Potential Roost Features (PRFs) such as lifted bark, woodpecker holes, knot holes and cracked limbs/branches.

Should any tree have PRFs, it is assigned one of the categories as detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Assessment of bat roosting potential in trees²

Roosting Potential Category	Description
None	No PRFs identified.
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to their size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

2.6 Survey Limitations

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

2.7 Evaluation Approach

All potential ecological constraints to the Proposed Development were identified. In the context of the Mitigation Hierarchy³, consideration was given as to how any significant effects could be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Following this, appropriate compensation and enhancement measures are outlined within this report.

Where additional surveys are required to better understand the likely presence of a protected species, or the value of a habitat and the impact of the proposals on this ecological feature, these are detailed in Section 4 of this report. Opportunities for ecological enhancements are also provided in Section 4 of this report.

² Based on Table 6.2 in the *BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. 2023).

³ “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)

3 Results

3.1 Desk Study Summary

3.1.1 Statutory Sites

No statutory designated sites were present within 1km of the Site.

The Site lies within a SSSI IRZ for four SSSI. These being Groby Pool and Woods, Botcheston Bog, Sheet Hedges Wood, and Bradgate Park and Cropston Reservoir. The closest SSSI was Groby Pool and Woods which was location 2.3km northeast of the Site. The risk criteria for two of the SSSIs includes any developments involving transport proposals such as the creation or extension of footpaths. While the development does involve the creation of footpaths, these footpaths will only be used privately and will not be available to the public. Therefore, the proposals do not meet any of the risk criteria that require further investigation.

3.1.2 Non-statutory Sites

A total of 11 locally designated sites were identified within 1km of the Site, comprising Notified, Candidate and Potential Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), and Potential/Historic LWS. A notified LWS is a non-statutory designation identifying areas of significant biodiversity value. A candidate LWS is a parcel of land that has been identified as having potential nature conservation value but has not been formally designated. A potential LWS is likely to meet the criteria for a LWS but needs further survey work to confirm.

These designations primarily relate to mature trees, ancient & semi-natural woodland, rivers or streams, and grassland within the surrounding agricultural landscape. The closest designated site was Ratby, tributaries of Rothley Brook LWS, located approximately 76m south of the Site. Other LWS within 1km include Martinshaw Wood, Rothley Brook, Ratby, Church Ponds Close open space, a mature poplar and four ash trees. One Potential but Historic LWS has not been surveyed since 1990 and its current status is unknown.

A number of parcels of priority habitat were identified within 1km of the Site, using the MAGIC layer. These all related to coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, deciduous woodland and ancient woodland, with the closest being deciduous woodland located approximately 425m west of the Site.

No impacts to priority habitats or designated sites are anticipated by the proposals due to its small scale and localised nature.

3.2 Habitats

3.2.1 Site Description

The Site consisted of four temporary teaching units and two raised planters sited on hard standing, a small play area and an area of bare ground. The hardstanding continued to the east into the car park, with a metal fence separating the units from the car park. The fencing continued around the perimeter of the Site to the north and southeast, though the southeastern boundary was only partially installed at the time of survey. There was no physical boundary at the eastern edge of the car park, which continued into the wider site. A hedgerow with trees ran adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site, with some of the branches encroaching onto the Site, overhanging the teaching units.

3.2.2 Developed Land; Sealed Surface

A large proportion of the Site, predominantly the northern section, comprised a hardstanding surface consisting of asphalt (Figure 2). The condition of the asphalt varied, with some colonising species, such as pineapple weed *Matricaria discoidea*, garlic mustard *Alliaria petiolata*, fleabane sp., nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, white dead-nettle *Lamium album* and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatium*, growing through the asphalt in places.

In the northeast of the Site (Figure 3) a large area of sealed surface was present being used for parking. The area consisted of asphalt with loose gravel on top. The asphalt was in fairly good condition with little vegetation growing through; perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and pineapple weed encroached around the edges.

A path was also present leading to an area of sealed surface that contained a fixed play area. The path and play area were newly installed and in good condition.



Figure 2 Sealed surface in the north of the Site (facing east)



Figure 3 Asphalt sealed surface in the northeast of the Site (facing west)



Figure 4 New pathway leading to the play area (facing west)

3.2.3 Buildings

Three temporary units were located along the northern boundary of the Site with a fourth in the northwest corner. The units were raised on concrete stilts situated over the hardstanding surface. The units were pre-fabricated metal and plastic and supported no void spaces. Superficial gaps were present between the frames and elevation panels but were generally tight fitting and would be too small for bats or nesting birds to utilise.

Due to the units' simple design and materials used, they were considered wholly unsuitable for roosting bats, therefore a full Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was not carried out.



Figure 5 Teaching units located along the northern and western boundaries of the Site (facing northwest)

3.2.4 Bare ground

A fenced area in the south of the Site had been recently cleared and was predominantly bare ground with a few herbaceous and woody species present that had started to grow back (Figure 6). The species present consisted of rarely occurring barren brome *Anisantha sterilis*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, smooth meadow-grass *Poa pratensis*, prickly sow-thistle *Sonchus asper*, mallow sp. (likely common mallow *Malva sylvestris* which was recorded within the wider site), common nettle *Urtica dioica*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.



Figure 6 Area of bare ground in the south of the Site (facing southeast)

Historical satellite imagery was used to assess the vegetation that was present prior to clearance, in conjunction with the remaining vegetation present within and adjacent to the Site. Satellite imagery from 2024 (Figure 7) showed vegetation that was denser than the adjacent managed grassland however, while bramble was recorded it was minimal, and the parcel itself was too sparse to be dense scrub. Therefore, the previous habitat was assessed to be rough grassland and ruderal vegetation with scrub species encroaching at the boundaries.



Figure 7 Satellite imagery from May 2024 of the bare ground prior to clearance

3.2.5 Introduced shrub

Two small, raised planters were present situated on the area of hard standing in the north of the Site. The planters supported occasional common poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, chamomile *Chamaemelum nobile*, garden cress *Lepidium sativum* and cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*.



Figure 8 Raised planters sited on the area of hard standing in the north of the Site (facing southeast)

3.2.6 Hedgerow with trees – Adjacent to the Site boundary

One hedgerow with trees was present just outside the Site boundary to the north. One of the trees present within the hedgerow was dead and contained branches overhanging the Site, therefore the hedgerow is included within this report as works will likely need to be carried out to ensure the dead tree does not pose a health and safety risk.

The hedgerow was 2m in height and 1.5m wide, continuous with no gaps and returned a moderate condition score. On the southern side of the hedgerow the ground was unvegetated, consisting of the sealed surface on the Site, while to the north was modified grassland and a patch of common nettle. Its species mix consisted of abundant hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, frequent ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, occasional hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and willow sp., and rarely occurring elder *Sambucus nigra*. The trees present were mature hornbeam and willow and semi-mature sycamore and ash.

The dead willow tree was closely inspected for features that may indicate it to be a veteran tree. Flaked bark was present, though not with large gaps underneath. A crack was present facing southwest, which seemed to narrow off quite quickly creating a superficial feature only. While the tree provides some limited features for roosting bats, these were not holes or wounds which would be considered important for wildlife, which are features associated with veteran trees. Therefore, the tree was not graded as a veteran tree and as such not identified as a priority habitat.



Figure 9 Hedgerow with trees adjacent to the Sites northern boundary, with the dead willow tree highlighted in yellow (facing southeast)

3.3 Species

3.3.1 Amphibians

The data search returned a single record for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) and 40 records for other amphibians within 1km of the Site, the closest of which was a common frog *Rana temporaria* record 71m northwest from the Site. The only GCN record returned was from a

pond 413m west of the Site, from 2024. Two records for common toad were located 89m southwest of the Site dating from 2020. Six records for smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and common frog all came from a pond at in a garden in Ratby 239m northeast of the Site dating from 2012-2015. A further 12 records for smooth newt all came from a pond, 244m northeast of the Site in a garden in Ratby from 2014 to 2023. Two records for smooth newt and common frog came from a pond within a garden, 252m northeast of the Site from 2009 and 2017. The remaining 17 records for common frog, common toad and smooth newt were all over 290m from the Site.

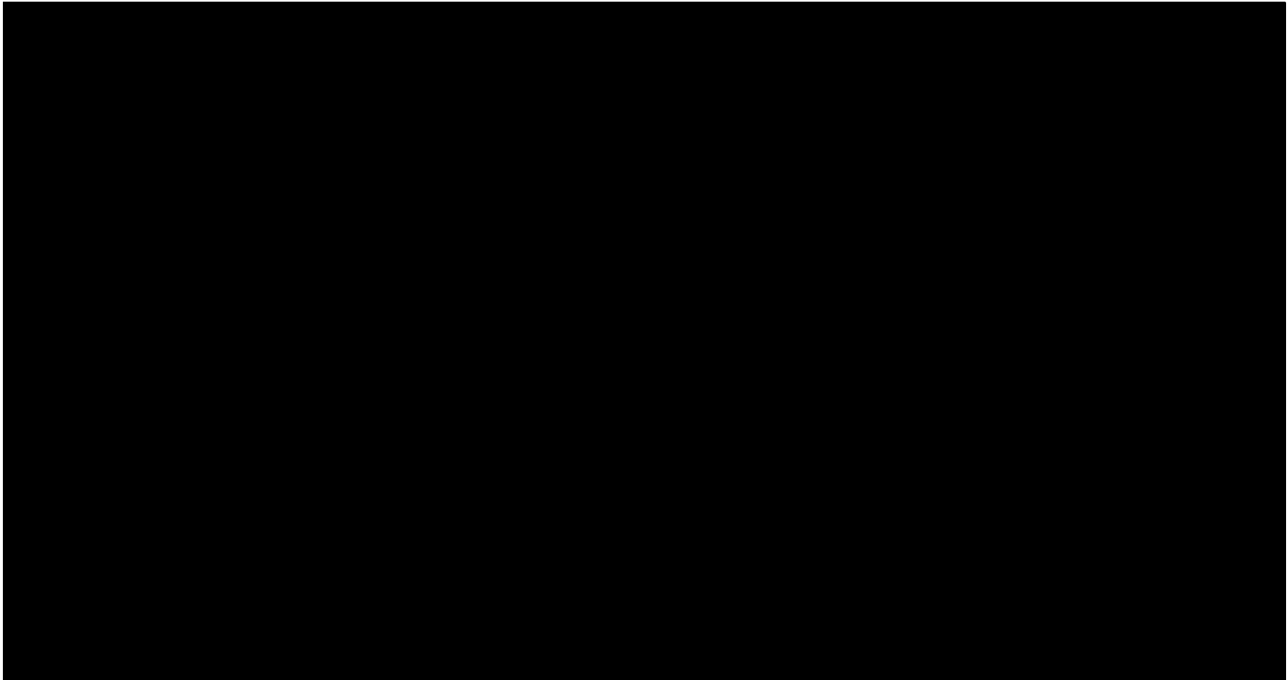
There were six ponds within 250m of the Site. Three of these were identified by MAGIC all to the southwest of the Site, with one being separated from the Site by Rothley brook tributary. One pond was known to be present to the southeast of the Site, it was identified and subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment during a PEA carried out on a nearby site by Croft Ecology (2026). The remaining two were located 230m to the northeast of the Site within the residential development and were identified through the data search returns.

There were no EPS licences for GCN on the MAGIC website within 1km of the Site and the Class Survey Licence Returns and Pond Surveys 2017-2019 datasets also returned no records for GCN.

The Site in its current condition offered very limited suitability for GCN or common amphibians due to the lack of vegetation. The surrounding hedgerows, scrub and woodland blocks provide more suitable habitat for foraging and sheltering amphibians. With the Site being surrounded by heavily managed grassland of the wider site to the south and the hardstanding to the east, there was limited potential for amphibians to access and therefore pass through the Site, however with connectivity provided by the adjacent hedgerow and ponds present to the south, southwest and northeast, it cannot be ruled out that amphibians may pass through on occasion.

Prior to the clearance of the area of bare ground, the Site would have been slightly more favourable for foraging amphibians, with the ruderal vegetation and grassland providing opportunities for foraging. However, given its small size, and more suitable habitat being present within the surrounding area, this would not have been a significant resource for any local populations.

Overall, the Site is considered to have **low** value for foraging or sheltering amphibians.



3.3.3 Bats

The desk study returned 52 bat records for 'bat' Chiroptera, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, pipistrelle bat species *Pipistrellus* spp., noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, nyctalus bat species *Nyctalus* spp., Myotis bat species *Myotis* spp., and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*. These are all species that would be expected in the County and in a rural area. All are fairly widespread and relatively common. The closest record was from 2022 and 2023 for noctule, pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and common pipistrelle, for a location 152m to the southwest of the Site. The closest record for a roost was for 'bat', pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat roosts located 180m to the southwest of the Site.

The Site did not offer suitability for roosting bats with the design of the buildings rendering them unsuitable for roosting bats.

All the trees within the hedgerow just beyond the northern boundary were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. The dead willow tree supported flaked bark though any gaps underneath were largely superficial. A crack was present facing southwest, which seemed to narrow of quite quickly creating a superficial feature only. Overall, this tree was graded PRF-I for roosting potential. While the tree was dead and provided some limited features for roosting bats, these were not hollowing, holes or wounds which would be considered important for wildlife, which are features that would be required for the tree to be considered veteran.

No PRFs were recorded on any other trees within the hedgerow.

The Site does have potential for foraging bats with the hedgerows running alongside the north and west Site boundaries providing ideal flight lines. Overall, the Site has '**none**' potential for roosting bats and **low** potential for foraging and commuting bats, with an adjacent tree graded **PRF-I**.

3.3.4 Birds

The desk study returned 28 records for birds within 1km of the Site, relating to barn owl *Tyto alba*, fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, red kite *Milvus milvus*, greylag goose *Anser anser*, Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti* and redwing *Turdus iliacus*. The closest record returned was for fieldfare from 2013, for a location 236m northeast of the Site.

The Site provides very limited opportunities for nesting birds due to the absence of vegetation, trees or structures suitable for nesting, however, the adjacent hedgerows, including the dead tree, do provide opportunities for nesting birds. The surrounding buildings, farmland, hedgerows and woodland blocks provide more suitable habitat for a range of bird species. Birds may occasionally use the Site for foraging and are likely to pass over the Site given the surrounding habitats, although it does not provide suitable nesting habitat.

Overall, while there were records in the local area, with the lack of opportunities on Site, the Site itself is considered to have **negligible** potential for nesting birds, however they could be nesting in the adjacent habitats.

3.3.5 Invertebrates

The desk study returned three records for invertebrates within 1km of the Site. All three records were for white-letter hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* with the closest record located 851m southeast of the Site, from 2002. The habitats present on Site provide limited opportunities for notable invertebrates due to the predominance of artificial hardstanding and lack of vegetation.

Small patches of recolonising ruderal vegetation may provide minor opportunities for common invertebrate species, although overall the Site is considered to have **low** ecological value for this species group.

3.3.6 Reptiles

The data search revealed four records for reptiles within 1km of the Site. All of the records were for slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, with the closest record located 856m north of the Site from 2001.

The habitats on Site were not considered to be suitable for reptiles due to the lack of suitable foraging and sheltering habitats. With well managed grassland to the south and developed land to the east it is unlikely they would leave more favourable habitat to pass through these areas to reach the Site, therefore connectivity is limited to the western hedgerow.

In its previous condition the habitat of ruderal vegetation and grassland would provide a higher suitability for reptiles, however, in its current condition the Site is considered to have **low** potential for reptiles.

3.3.7 Other Mammals

The desk study returned no records for hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* or other mammals within 1km of the Site. The habitats present within the Site boundary consist predominantly of hardstanding and bare ground with very limited vegetation, which provides limited opportunities for sheltering or foraging hedgehogs. More suitable habitat for this species is present within the surrounding landscape, including hedgerows and residential gardens. In addition, connectivity to the Site was limited by the around the majority of the Site boundary. Overall, the Site is considered to provide **low** suitability for hedgehog.

3.4 Invasive Species

The desk study revealed no records for invasive species within 1km of the Site and none were recorded during the survey. Therefore, invasive species are not considered further in this report.

4 Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Proposed Development

The proposed development is for the development of a new two-storey educational building, to replace the existing mobile classrooms, as well as a play area and associated pathways and soft landscaping at the Site (Figure 11).

The proposals will result in the four mobile classrooms being removed, along with some of the hard standing. The loss of the ruderal/rough grassland vegetation has already occurred. In addition, due to health and safety, a degree of management or removal is likely to be required to the dead willow tree within the adjacent hedgerow to the north.

4.2 Designated Sites Assessment

It is not considered likely that the statutory or non-statutory designated nature conservation sites, or priority habitats, within 1km of the Site will be impacted by the Proposed Development due to its small footprint and scale. As a result, no specific mitigation is required.

4.3 Habitat Impacts and Measures

As the vegetated habitats in the south of the Site have already been cleared, reducing the Site's biodiversity value, compensation will need to be carried out in the form of replacement landscape planting.

Hedgerows and trees adjacent to the Site boundary should be retained and protected within the proposals, except for any management required for health and safety. Tree protection fencing will be installed on the Site prior to clearance, in line with BS 5837:2012: Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations, and left in place for the duration of construction activities.

Replacement landscape planting within the area to the south of the Site would provide compensation and enhancements for any lost opportunities for protected or notable species with some potential to be present on the Site, namely foraging and commuting bats, foraging birds and hedgehog.

4.4 Species Impacts and Measures

Construction of the proposed building is likely to require the stripping of existing surfaces and topsoil and localised excavation to create a suitable sub-base and surface finish, with additional shallow excavations for drainage infrastructure where required. While the potential for species to be present on Site was at most low, with low potential for common reptiles, amphibians, GCN, badger, and other mammals, as well as nesting birds within the adjacent habitats, general precautionary working methods are considered to be a proportionate approach to avoid harm to these species.

The area of bare ground should be maintained in its current 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.

To ensure no harm to animals (such as hedgehog and badger) that may move through the Site, any trenches left open overnight should have a scaffold plank or similar placed in them to provide a means of escape for any trapped animal.

If removal of the dead tree within the adjacent hedgerow to the north of the Site is to be carried out, the tree should be soft felled due to supporting PRF-I features.

Sensitive timing and methods of works, or pre-works check by a suitably qualified ecologist would ensure that potential impacts to nesting birds in the adjacent hedgerows would be avoided during Site clearance. If clearance or maintenance works are carried out on the dead willow tree within the adjacent hedgerow to the north, nesting bird checks should also be carried out prior to this.

There is potential for increased lighting on the Site, as a result of the proposals, to cause disturbance to foraging and commuting bats passing over the Site or using adjacent habitats such as the lines of trees. As a result, a sensitive lighting strategy should be designed and implemented in order to keep lighting to the minimum levels required and away from habitat features of greatest potential, namely the off-site hedgerows. No lighting is anticipated during construction activities, as a result, potential impacts during the construction phase of the Proposed Development are unlikely.

4.5 Further Surveys Required

No further surveys are required at this stage.

4.6 Mitigation Requirements

- Retained trees and hedgerows adjacent to the Site will be protected from accidental damage and compaction within their root protection areas in accordance with BS 5837: 2012.
- As the overhanging branches of the dead willow tree adjacent to the Site are a health and safety concern the dead willow tree will likely need to be cut back or felled. These works, along with any maintenance of adjacent hedgerows, should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (i.e. October – February). If this is not possible, and works are timed during the bird breeding season (considered March – September), works must be preceded by a nesting bird check (within 24 hours) by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure no bird 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.
- If the dead tree is to be felled, it must be soft-felled, whereby it will be cut into sections, with cuts made at least 30cm from the features identified, and gently lowered to the ground. The sections containing the features will then be left on the Site, with the opening facing upwards, for at least 48 hours (this is so that in the very unlikely chance a bat is present, it will be able to exit the roost unharmed).
- The area of bare ground should be maintained in its current well managed 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.
- If any common amphibians or reptiles are encountered during the works, they should be allowed to move away of their own accord or safely moved to an undisturbed area of the Site. In the unlikely event that a GCN is encountered on Site, works must stop immediately, the GCN left untouched, and advice sought from a qualified ecologist and Natural England.
- To ensure no harm to animals (such as badger and hedgehog) moving through the Site, any trenches left open overnight will have a scaffold plank or similar placed in them to provide a means of escape for any trapped animal. Likewise, any open pipes with a

diameter of 300mm or greater should be temporarily sealed overnight to prevent any trapped animals.

- 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. Lighting will avoid light spill towards the hedgerows along the north and west Site boundaries and any planted trees within the Site. Further advice concerning light-spill, column height and glare should be discussed and agreed with an ecologist.

4.7 Compensation and Enhancement

- Proposed planting within landscaped areas will compensate for lost opportunities for protected and notable species with potential to be present on the Site. Inclusion of native species or those with a known value to wildlife will enhance opportunities for such species. This should include species to attract pollinators and other invertebrates, which in turn would provide increased foraging opportunities for other species such as bats, nesting birds and hedgehog.
- The provision of 1no. 'insect house' such as the National Trust Apex Insect House will provide enhanced opportunities for sheltering invertebrates on the Site. This could be sited within the proposed planting beds in the south of the Site.
- One integrated bat box should be included on the proposed building, to provide enhanced roosting opportunities for bats. This should be installed on the southwest elevation, at least 4m above the ground, away from artificial light sources. Further details on type and location of the box should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist.
- Two integrated bird boxes should be included within the proposed building to provide nesting opportunities for species such as house sparrow or swift. These should be installed in pairs of the same box type, sited between the north and east elevations, side by side at least at eaves height and away from artificial light sources and obstructions. Further details on suitable box types and locations should be discussed and agreed with the architect and ecologist.

5 References

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6 Appendices

6.1 APPENDIX A – Legislation and Planning Policy

6.1.1 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 Region are listed below.

- 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 2024
- Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2020-2041; Local Plan Policy SP25

Note: Although summaries are provided, it is recommended to seek the full legal or policy wording separately for more information.

6.1.2 UK Legislation

In Britain, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁴ 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

⁴ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

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.

Additionally, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017⁵ 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.

6.1.3 Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's planning policies for England and how local planning authorities should incorporate them into their own policies and plans. Chapter 15 of the NPPF contains several policies aimed at enhancing the natural environment. The updated NPPF 2024 has a policy on biodiversity net gain that mandates development to improve biodiversity by achieving measurable gains.

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain post-development.

6.1.4 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.

6.1.5 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.

6.1.6 Protected Species

6.1.6.1 Bats, Great Crested Newts, Otter and Dormice

All British bat species (Rhinolophidae and Vespertilionidae), great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, otter *Lutra lutra* and 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.

6.1.6.2 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.

6.1.6.3 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).

6.1.6.4 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.

6.1.6.5 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.

6.1.6.6 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.

6.1.6.7 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).

6.2 APPENDIX B – Baseline Habitats Map

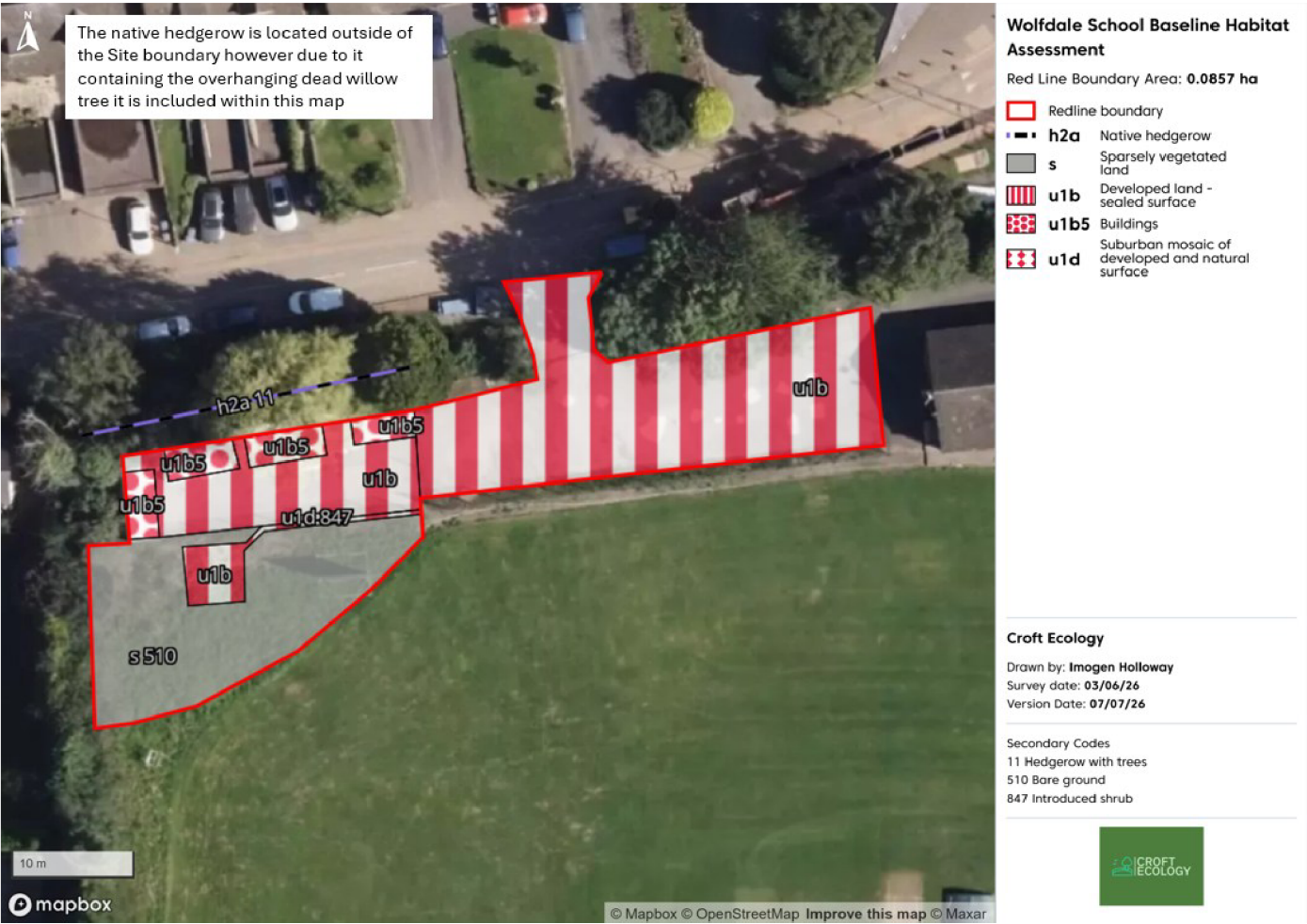


Figure 10. Baseline Habitats Map

6.3 APPENDIX C – Post-Development Proposals

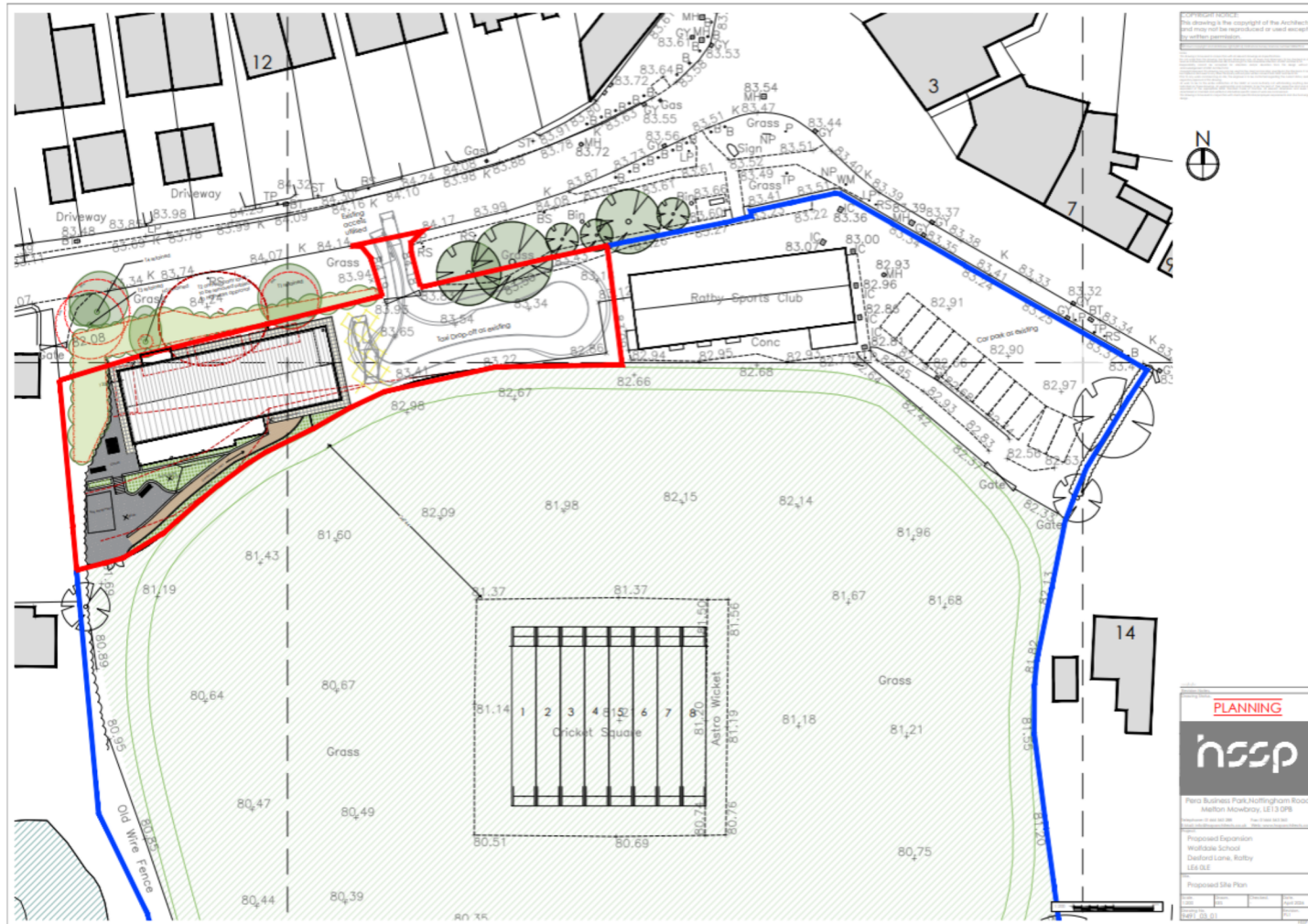


Figure 11 The Proposed Site Plan – HSSP, April 2026, drawing no. 9491_03_01