

Ecologyia Ltd.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report – Mythe Farm

Intended for:

Mr. & Mrs. J Garland

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1. This report presents an Ecological Appraisal in relation to and at Mythe Farm, Pinwall Lane, Sheepy Magna, Atherstone, CV9 3PF (the development site). The Appraisal was undertaken by Ecology Ltd. on behalf of Mr and Mrs J. Garland.
- 1.1.2. The aims of the study were to assess the conservation value of the survey area, the likely presence of rare, protected and / or notable species, and to identify any features, habitats or species which would constitute potential constraints to the development and provide an interpretation of potential historical habitats and ecological features prior to the construction of the development and provide an appraisal of any potential impacts the development may have had on these. Mitigation and enhancement measures are also discussed (where applicable).
- 1.1.3. The Ecological Appraisal comprises three elements: an extended Phase 1 habitat survey, desk-based study and evaluation of the historical impacts.
- 1.1.1. The development comprises an area of hard standing surrounded by a large earth bund and perimeter security fencing. The development has a portable site office and associated time-limited lighting present within the site. The biodiversity enhancement area comprises a section of arable land within the corner of an agricultural field. Vehicular access to the biodiversity enhancement area, is provided by existing farm access to the west.
- 1.1.4. The Application Site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated site and with the implementation of appropriate pollution prevention and control measures, no impacts on designated sites in the wider area are anticipated during the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area.
- 1.1.5. No impacts on protected and / or notable species are anticipated as a result of the works to create the caravan storage facility, with the exception of breeding birds which may have received a level of disturbance during construction, although this would be subject to the timing of works.
- 1.1.2. Precautionary measures are recommended to protect habitats and species during the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area, including Reasonable Avoidance Measures for birds, badgers and great crested newts (See existing report produced by Ecology Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_23082025_Iss_23082025). Woodland to the north of the site will be retained, and appropriate buffers applied within the development design to safeguard these features.
- 1.1.3. With appropriate layout and design measures in place, it is considered that adverse effects on protected / notable species and habitats have and can be avoided.

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2 INTRODUCTION

3.1. BACKGROUND

1.1.6. Ecologyia Limited. (EL) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs J. Garland on 22 March 2024 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Mythe Farm, Pinwall Lane, Sheepy Magna, Atherstone, CV9 3PF. The land is subject to a retrospective planning application in relation to the construction of a caravan storage facility, to include an area of hard standing, perimeter security fencing, portable site office, associated lighting (here on in known as ‘the development’) and a separate section of land to be utilized for biodiversity enhancement. The approximate center of the retrospective application lies at grid reference 431387, 299455 and the biodiversity enhancement area at grid reference 430876, 299634.

1.1.7. The objectives of the study were to:

- Provide baseline information on the current habitats and ecological features both on-site and in the immediate surrounding area;
- Provide an interpretation of potential historical habitats and ecological features prior to the construction of the development and provide an appraisal of any potential impacts the development may have had on these;
- Identify the presence or potential presence of any protected species or habitats and provide an appraisal of any potential effects the development may have on these;
- Identify the proximity of any sites designated for nature conservation interest and provide an appraisal of any potential effects the development may have had on these; and
- Provide recommendations for further survey work and / or mitigation measures, if required.

1.1.8. The study comprised a field survey, in combination with a desk-based review of existing data and freely available online resources. The areas of interest related to the footprint of the development itself and associated works and the biodiversity enhancement area, henceforth referred to as the development site (Figure 1).

3.2. DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

3.2.1. The Site subject to the retrospective planning application is a secure caravan storage facility, comprising an area of hard standing surrounded by a large earth bund and perimeter security fencing. The development has a portable site office and associated time-limited lighting within the caravan storage facility. The section designated for biodiversity enhancement is located within the corner of an arable field, with woodland to the north. The development is located some 389 m south of Pinwall Lane, accessed from internal farm tracks.

3.3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.3.1. The assessment comprises two elements: the development and access routes.
- 3.3.2. The development comprises an area of hard standing surrounded by a large earth bund and perimeter security fencing. The development has a portable site office and associated time-limited lighting present within the site.
- 3.3.3. An access route has been created to provide vehicular access to the secure area, running from an existing farm access to the east.
- 3.3.4. The wider landscape is characterized by a network of arable and grazed fields with occasional woodland blocks and hedgerows, marshland areas and the Rivers Anker and Sence to the south and south-east respectively, interspersed with small roads. The Town of Atherstone lies just over 560 m to the south of the development.
- 3.3.5. The biodiversity enhancement area comprises a section of arable land within the corner of an agricultural field. Vehicular access to the biodiversity enhancement area, is provided by existing farm access to the west.

3.4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK & PLANNING POLICY

3.4.1. Reference has been made to the following key pieces of legislation, policy and guidance listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Legislation, policy and guidance.

European
• Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (hereafter referred to as the ‘Habitats Directive’); and • Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds (codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended) (hereafter referred to as the ‘Birds Directive’).
National
• The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended (hereafter referred to as the ‘Habitat Regulations’); • The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); • Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; • Protection of Badgers Act 1992; • Hedgerows Regulations 1997; • Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006); • The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); • The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP); • Governments Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England’s Wildlife and Ecosystem Services (2020); and • ‘Birds of Conservation Concern 5’ (2021);
Local
• Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.4.2. Many species of animal and plant receive some degree of legal protection. For the purpose of this survey, legal protection primarily refers (but may not be limited) to:

- Species included on Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), excluding species that are only protected in relation to their sale (see Section 9[5] and 13[2]); and
- Species included on Schedules 2 and 5 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* (as amended) (the ‘Habitats Regulations’).

Legislation relating to bats

3.4.3. All British bat species are listed in Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*

2017. They are afforded full protection under Section 9(4) of the Act and Regulation 41 of the Habitats Regulations. These make it an offence, inter alia, to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal;
- Deliberately disturb any such animal, including in particular any disturbance which is likely:
 - to impair its ability to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young;
 - to impair its ability to hibernate or migrate; and
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of that species.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any such animal (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not);
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any of these animals while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that any of these animals uses for shelter or protection.

3.4.4. In addition, five British bat species are listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. These are:

- Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*);
- Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*);
- Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*);
- Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*); and
- Greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*).

3.4.5. In certain circumstances where these species are found the Directive requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to ensure that their populations are maintained at a favorable conservation status. Outside SACs, the level of legal protection that these species receive is the same as for other bat species.

Legislation relating to Badgers

3.4.6. The badger is widespread and common in many parts of the UK and as such is not considered a conservation priority.

3.4.7. Badgers are however protected under the *Protection of Badger Act* 1992. In essence this act makes it an offence to willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or to attempt to do so; or to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

3.4.8. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it. A sett is defined as ‘any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger’. Natural England has released guidance on the interpretation of disturbance in relation to badgers occupying a sett. This guidance is available in full on the Natural England website, but in summary Natural England believes that badgers are ‘relatively tolerant of moderate levels of noise and activity around their setts’ and that such levels of disturbance would not normally require a licence (Natural England, 2009). Examples are given for activities that are not considered likely to cause disturbance. This includes:

- Development, or other activities occurring close to badger setts (use of hand tools and/or machinery), where there is no reason to believe that the ‘disturbance’ will be greater than that which badgers commonly tolerate; and
- Vegetation removal (including felling small trees and shrubs) over or adjacent to setts (using hand tools and/or machinery).

3.4.9. Under Section 10 (1)(d) of the Protection of *The Badgers Act* 1992, a licence may be granted by Natural England to interfere with a badger sett for the purpose of development, where disturbance is unavoidable, during the period July to November.

3.4.10. A licence should be sought from Natural England where works likely to disturb badgers or interfere with a sett showing signs of current use cannot be avoided.

Legislation relating to Water Vole

3.4.11. The water vole is listed in Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act* 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a water vole;
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a water vole; or
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a water vole while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

3.4.12. Where offences under the Habitat Regulations 2010 cannot be avoided a European Protected Species (EPS) licence issued by Natural England may be required. A licence application requires full Method Statement and a Reasoned Statement of Application.

3.4.13. An EPS licence application cannot be made until full planning consent is obtained.

3.4.14. Water vole is also listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which makes them a priority species for conservation.

Legislation relating to Otter

3.4.15. The otter is protected under Schedule 5 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), see. The otter is also listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and therefore receives further protection: The Habitat Regulations 2010 make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill an otter;
- Deliberately disturb an otter (disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance to which they belong); or
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or rest place (otter holt).

3.4.16. An otter holt includes hovers and couches, which are otter resting places above ground. Artificial holts are not considered as holts under the legislation until they are known to be used by otters.

3.4.17. Where offences under the Habitat Regulations 2010 cannot be avoided a European Protected Species (EPS) licence issued by Natural England may be required. A licence application requires full Method Statement and a Reasoned Statement of Application.

3.4.18. An EPS licence application cannot be made until full planning consent is obtained.

3.4.19. Otter is also listed on the UK BAP which makes them a priority species for conservation.

Legislation relating to Great Crested Newts

3.4.20. See existing report produced by Ecology Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_17082025_Iss_17082025).

Legislation relating to Nesting birds

3.4.21. The primary legislation protecting wild birds in England is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (subject to a number of amendments, including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006). The basic principle of this Act is that all wild birds, their nests, and eggs are protected by law and some rare species are afforded additional protection from disturbance during the breeding season.

3.4.22. The Act creates the following offences:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;

- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- Have in one's possession or control any wild bird (dead or alive) or any part of a wild bird which has been taken in contravention of the Act;
- Have in one's possession or control any egg or part of an egg which has been taken in contravention to the Act; or
- Disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

3 METHODOLOGY

4.1. DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

- 4.1.1. A desk study was undertaken to identify statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest within a 5 km radius of the development through a review of the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) and Natural England (NE) websites.
- 4.1.2. Biological records data were requested from the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) and Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC).
- 4.1.3. The following data search parameters were used. Both the WBRC and LRERC data searches focused on the approximate center point of the development site (grid reference 431387, 299455):
 - All statutory designated sites within a 5 km radius;
 - Non-statutory designated sites within a 2 km radius;
 - Records for all protected and / or notable species within a 2 km radius.
- 4.1.4. Reference was also made to Ordnance Survey maps of the wider area and online aerial images (www.google.co.uk/maps) to Identify any feature of nature conservation interest in the wider landscape.

4.2. FIELD SURVEY

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 4.2.1. An extended Phase 1 habitat survey utilizing UKHab (V2.01, 2023) was undertaken on 05 May and 15 September 2024 by Dr. S. A. Graham MCIEEM, CEcol., CEnv.; a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (See Section 3.3). The extent of the survey area is detailed in Figure 1.
- 4.2.2. The methodology employed was based upon that outlined in the ‘Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey’ (JNCC, 2010) whereby all habitats within the study area are mapped and described using a series of ‘Target Notes’ (TNs) to provide an overview of the development Site. Habitats are mapped utilizing the system provided within UKHab (V2.01, 2023). This habitat survey method was extended through the additional recording of specific features indicating the presence, or likely presence, of protected species such as bats, birds, great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, badger *Meles meles*, otter *Lutra lutra*, water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and other species of conservation significance.
- 4.2.3. This survey does not constitute a full protected species survey, but enables experienced ecologists to obtain an understanding of the site such that it is possible either:

- To confirm the conservation significance of the development site and assess the potential for impacts on habitats / species likely to represent a material consideration in planning terms; or
- To establish the scope and extent of any additional specialist ecological surveys that will be required before such confirmation can be made.

Great Crested Newt Scoping Survey

- 4.2.4. A single pond is located immediately adjacent to the development footprint. Acknowledging that 250 m is the upper limit over which most great crested newts typically disperse from breeding ponds (English Nature, 2001; Langton et al., 2001); a desk-based assessment identified a further four ponds within 250 m of the development site boundary.
- 4.2.5. See existing report produced by Ecology Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_23082025_Iss_23082025).

Bat Scoping Survey

- 4.2.6. An assessment was made of the development Site's suitability to support bat species, with particular attention paid to any trees on or immediately adjacent to the site which may contain bat roosts. This included a ground-based daytime inspection of the development Site (including the exterior and surrounds of the trees), together with an assessment of the suitability of surrounding habitats for bat foraging, commuting and roosting. The survey included looking for the range of characteristic signs from which an experienced ecologist can assess current / recent use of a potential roost site by bats.
- 4.2.7. Bat surveys were undertaken utilizing a torch and binoculars, in accordance with practices detailed in both the Bat Conservation Trusts (BCT) Bat Surveys, Good Practice Guidelines (4th Ed.) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee Bat Workers Manual (3rd Ed.).
- 4.2.8. Highlighted features were visually assessed from the ground and were allocated to one of the following categories:
- **None:** Either no Potential Roost Features (PRF's) in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
 - **FAR:** Further assessment required to establish if PRF's are present in the tree.
 - **PRF:** A tree with at least one PRF present.
 - **PRF-I:** PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
 - **PRF-M:** PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

- 4.2.9. The assessment was undertaken on 05 May and 15 September 2024 by a Natural England Level 2 bat worker (Dr. S. A. Graham MCIEEM, CEcol., CEnv, Natural England Licence Number: 2015-13792-CLS-CLS) who satisfies all necessary field survey competencies as set out by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Badger Scoping Survey

- 4.2.10. The survey was undertaken by suitably qualified ecologist Dr. Stuart Graham MCIEEM, CEcol, CEnv, FLS on 05 May and 15 September 2024. The development footprint plus an approximate 50 m buffer of land, out with, was surveyed (outlined in blue on Figure 1). All parts of the site were accessed for survey.
- 4.2.11. The survey involved a walkover of the habitats within and immediately adjacent to the development area. The survey entailed searching favorable habitats including hedgerows, road / track verges, woodland, embankments and fence lines for evidence of badger activity. The walkover involved searching for acceptable badger field signs such as setts, footprints, dung pits, guard hairs and runs (Bang and Dahlstrom, 2001); field signs were recorded based on classifications described in CIEEM (2013), Neal and Cheeseman (1996), Harris *et al.* (1994) and within Andrews (2013).
- 3.1.1. For any badger setts identified, the number of entrances was noted. In addition, the setts were also classified into one of the categories provided in Table 3.1 and activity level noted into categories as per Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Badger sett classification.

Type of Sett	Characteristics
Main	Continuously used with many signs of activity around, such as a large number of holes and visible spoil mounds. Often with established paths at the entrances and marked with latrines.
Annexe	Commonly located close to the main sett, often within less than 150m, connected to it by well-used paths. Annexe setts may not be continuously occupied and can have several entrances.
Subsidiary	Comprising a few entrances and without associated well used paths. Subsidiary setts are not continuously occupied and are less frequently used.
Outlier	Usually consist of one or two holes with no obvious paths. Sporadic use, often inhabited by foxes or rabbits when not used by badger.

Table 3.2: Badger sett activity classification.

Sett activity	Characteristics
Well used	Clear of debris, trampled soil mound and obviously active with signs of presence such as footprints and guard hairs around entrances.
Partially used	Some associated debris around the entrances. Could be used with minimal excavation.
Disused	Partially or completely blocked sett entrances.

Water vole and Otter Scoping Survey

4.2.12. A single pond is located immediately adjacent to the development footprint. A further four ponds were identified within 250 m of the development site boundary, with the Rivers Anker and Sence located to the south and south-east of the development.

4.2.13. The survey was undertaken by suitably qualified ecologist Dr. Stuart Graham MCIEEM, CECOL, CEnv, FLS; a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (See Section 3.3). on 05 May and 15 September 2024.

Water vole

4.2.14. Water vole surveys were conducted adopting the guidelines in The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (2016) and Water Vole Conservation Handbook (Strachan and Moorhouse, 2006) which recommends two surveys be undertaken at least two months apart over the course of the breeding season. Two surveys were conducted at all ponds, each of which consisted of surveying 2 m up the bank (where applicable). The surveys were conducted from all banks and within the pond, where accessible. The surveys included searching for water vole field signs such as sightings, footprints, faeces, feeding remains and stations, latrines and burrows.

Otter

4.2.15. Whilst conducting the water vole surveys, surveys were extended to include the presence / likely absence of otter. Otter surveys were undertaken in accordance with the Competences for species surveys: Otter (CIEEM, 2013), and the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Mammals (JNCC, 2004). This was undertaken looking for habitats or suitability and field signs adapting methodologies described in Monitoring the Otter (Chainin 2003). The ponds and banks were searched for evidence of otter activity including spraints (otter dropping), footprints, runs and slides.

4.2.16. The survey also aimed to identify the presence of any Holts including any couches or other above ground resting places. Holts are places of covered shelter that are used on a permanent basis and are commonly located within riparian vegetation or root systems of bank side trees. Natal holts are used for rearing young and can be difficult to locate and can be some distance from river (Chanin 2003).

4.3. PERSONNEL

- 4.3.1. Surveys have been undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist;
- 4.3.2. Dr. S. A. Graham BSc (Hons), MSc, CEcol, CEnv, MCIEEM, FLS is A highly experienced Chartered Ecologist and Chartered Environmentalist with 18 yrs. of national and international experience in consultancy and scientific research.
- 4.3.3. Stuart has undertaken surveys and provided specialist technical advice for major infrastructure projects across the utility, rail, highways, renewable energy and industrial sectors. Furthermore, Stuart provides strategic / scientific advice to Governmental Panels and Statutory Agencies.

4.4. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

- 4.4.1. Some habitats and features of interest outside the development boundary were observed and recorded from within the client's land ownership boundary or from public access areas, using binoculars where necessary. Therefore, habitats outside of this were not subject to a full habitat survey, although broad habitat types were recorded.
- 4.4.2. No significant survey constraints were experienced. Surveys have been undertaken within the accepted survey seasons.
- 4.4.3. The lack of evidence of a protected species does not preclude their possible presence at a later date. This is particularly true for highly mobile species; their use of a particular feature can significantly vary, not only on a seasonal basis, but also from day to day. Any survey represents only a 'snapshot' of possible species activity. Importantly, lack of evidence of a species does not guarantee their absence and therefore consideration should be given to the need to update the data in the future in the event of substantial delay to the implementation of development.
- 4.4.4. This report is valid for a period of 24 months from the time of survey, not report production. Reliance on the findings of this report, post this period, should seek clarity from the report author, as per the CIEEM (2019) and LERC (2022) Guidance.

4 RESULTS

5.1. DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

Statutory Designated Sites

5.1.1. Biological records data was received from both Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) and Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) on 03 April 2024.

5.1.2. Four statutory designated site was identified within a 5 km radius around the approximate center of the development site as summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Statutory designated sites within 5 km. SSSI; Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
Sheepy Fields	SSSI	c. 3.45 km north-east of the development site boundary.	The site contains some of the best remaining examples of neutral grassland in Leicestershire and is representative of hay meadow plant communities developed on neutral soils in the English Midlands.
Bentley Park Wood	SSSI	c. 3.54 km south-west of the development site boundary.	This site is a large and important ancient woodland in north Warwickshire. It comprises Bentley Park Wood, sectors of the adjacent Monks Park Wood and a small, detached area out with the main wood known as the Birchleys. Bentley Park Wood lies mainly on Carboniferous sandstones, a substantial portion of which is overlain by boulder clay. In Monks Park Wood there are also areas of marl, sandstones and shales of the Coal Measures as well as earlier Cambrian shales with igneous intrusions. The majority of the wood lies on light, strongly acidic soils and is dominated by sessile oak, <i>Quercus petraea</i> . Alongside the deeply incised streams the soils are base rich and support alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> . The range of acid sessile oak on the better drained soils, and alder, on the wetter soils, found in Bentley Park Wood can be seen in only a limited number of other British Woods including Charnwood Forest, Chaddesley Woods and Wyre Forest. On this site there is an unusual and widespread juxtaposition of sessile oak and alder and there is a wider ecological range of alder woodland than possibly any other wood in Britain.
Birches Barn Meadow	SSSI	c. 3.84 km north-west of the development site boundary.	Birches Barn Meadows comprises two unimproved fields adjacent to the south bank of the River Anker. They are situated at the extreme north of Warwickshire near the town of Atherstone and have been managed as hay meadows since 1913. The meadows are on

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
			alluvium and overlies Keuper sandstone with ridge and furrow topography in part.
Woodlands Quarry	SSSI	c. 4.67 km south-east of the development site boundary.	This disused quarry exposes a sequence of rocks laid down beneath the sea some 570 million years ago, during late Precambrian to early Cambrian times, and is of international significance because of the early Cambrian fossils which are found here. Fossils of this age are exceptionally rare, and are found at no other locality in Britain, the nearest comparable assemblages being found in Siberia and Scandinavia. The site is of great importance because of the information which it yields concerning the evolution of Britain and Western Europe during this period.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.1.3. The desk study identified a total of 38 non-statutory designated sites within a 2 km radius around the approximate center of the development site as summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Non-statutory designated site within 2 km. LWS: Local Wildlife Site; pLWS potential Local Wildlife Site.

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
49/29 River Anker	pLWS	c. 210 m south.	The site supports a good range of aquatic plants and is important for nesting birds.
River Sence at Ratcliffe Bridge	LWS	c. 350 m east.	No recent survey data – not known if the site still has value.
Pinwall woodland	LWS	c. 400 m north-east.	No recent survey data – not known if the site still has value.
Pinwall Lane hedgerow	LWS	c. 435 m north.	Hedgerow
Pinwall Lane hedgerow	LWS	c. 515 m north-east.	Small river or stream
09/39E River Anker	pLWS	c. 550 m east of the development site boundary.	The River Anker in SP39 includes areas around the source/tributaries east of Nuneaton. This area is largely arable and improved grassland, although the river/streams are often tree lined and dotted along the length of the river are a series of species rich meadows from the source east of Nuneaton to Atherstone to the northwest. Evidence of otters <i>Lutra lutra</i> and water voles <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> has been recorded.
649/39 River Anker Meadows	LWS	c. 643 m south-east.	A series of meadows adjacent to the 'River Anker' pLWS. The middle part of the site is designated as 'River Anker Meadows' Local Wildlife Site

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
			(LWS). Meadow to the left of the LWS is identified as 'River Anker Meadows', (possible extension to SINC) pLWS. A large area of unimproved agricultural land adjacent to the River Anker. Some fields are grazed by cattle others by horses and some are cut for hay. More notable species present include pignut <i>Conopodium majus</i>, great burnet <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>, bulbous buttercup <i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>, lesser knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i>, bird's-foot trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i>, common vetch <i>Vicia sativa</i>, cuckooflower <i>Cardamine pratensis</i> and meadow saxifrage <i>Saxifraga granulata</i>. The hedges are also fairly diverse with hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i>, crab apple <i>Malus sylvestris</i>, elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> and dog rose <i>Rosa canina</i>.
Mythe Farm hedgerow & tree	LWS	c. 769 m east.	Small river or stream
Atherstone Road hedgerow, west	LWS	c. 795 m north-west.	Hedgerow
Farm hedgerow	LWS	c. 820 m south-east.	Hedgerow
Riverside Willow	LWS	c. 830 m north-east.	Hedgerow
Atherstone Road verge	LWS	c. 830 m south-east.	Hedgerow
Atherstone Road hedgerow, east	LWS	c. 840 m north-west.	Hedgerow, mature tree
White Gate hedgerow	LWS	c. 945 m south-east.	Hedgerow
B5000 hedgerows, tree & verge	LWS	c. 1.01 km north-west.	Hedgerow
Mythe Lane hedgerow 2	LWS	c. 1.04 km south-east.	No recent survey data – not known if the site still has value.
Crow Lane / Sheepy Road hedgerow	LWS	c. 1.14 km north.	Hedgerow
Parish hedgerow, Pinwall	LWS	c. 1.15 km north-east.	Woodland
09/39J River Anker	LWS	c. 125 km south-east.	The river in this section runs adjacent to species-rich meadows. Otters <i>Lutra lutra</i> and water voles <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> are known to be present.
90/29	LWS	c. 1.30 km south-west.	Site has been deferred by Local Wildlife Site (LWS) panel.

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
ALDI Warwehouse Gds & Atherstone Pool			The site consists of a series of grasslands and a pool. One of the grasslands is semi-improved, with the species including field woodrush <i>Luzula campestris</i>, pignut <i>Conopodium majus</i>, bulbous buttercup <i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i> and lesser stitchwort <i>Stellaria graminea</i>. Another of the grassland areas was seeded in the early 1990's with a wildflower mix. The pool is fringed with alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and willow <i>Salix</i> sp. on the banks and has good stands of marginal vegetation.
Mythe Lane hedgerow	LWS	c. 1.32 km south-east.	Hedgerow
Sheepy Pond	pLWS	c. 1.42 km north-west.	Mature Willow
Ratcliffe Lane hedgerow	LWS	c. 1.42 km north-east.	Hedgerow, mature tree
Crow Lane hedgerow	LWS	c. 1.44 km north-west.	Hedgerow
Newhall Farm hedgerow	LWS	c. 1.49 km north-east.	Mature tree
Frog Hall Oak	LWS	c. 1.52 km north-west.	Hedgerow
Sheepy Pond	pLWS	c. 1.54 km north-west.	Hedgerow
98/29 Atherstone Coal Wharf	LWS	c. 1.65 km south-west.	The south of the site has been destroyed. Wetland area originating as a coal-barge loading wharf, now filled in. Wetter areas are dominated by reedmace <i>Typha latifolia</i>, greater pond-sedge <i>Carex riparia</i> swamp with reed canary-grass <i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>, reed sweet-grass <i>Glyceria maxima</i>, water dock <i>Rumex hydrolapathum</i> and great willowherb <i>Epilobium hirsutum</i> at the edges. Elsewhere, meadowsweet <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> is dominant with frequent nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> and occasional angelica <i>Angelica sylvestris</i>, cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> and rosebay willowherb <i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>. The area is surrounded by hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> and willow <i>Salix</i> sp. scrub which encroaches into the wetland area in places. At one end is a canal arm with a very diverse mix of species at its edges. These include: Lady's-smock <i>Cardamine pratensis</i>, gipsywort <i>Lycopus europaeus</i>, water mint <i>Mentha aquatica</i>, water figwort <i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>, skullcap <i>Scutellaria galericulata</i>, remote sedge <i>Carex remota</i>, male fern <i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i> and rush <i>Juncus</i> sp. There are also areas of unvegetated coal spoil. The disused railway is mainly wooded with silver birch <i>Betula</i>

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
			<i>pendula</i> , hawthorn and elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> over nettle, dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> and rosebay willowherb. Part is more open and supports a diversity of species including common knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i> , creeping cinquefoil <i>Potentilla reptans</i> , mouse-ear hawkweed <i>Pilosella officinarum</i> , field wood-rush <i>Luzula campestris</i> and great mullein <i>Verbascum Thapsus</i> .
581/39 Grassland east of Thorn Spinney	pLWS	c. 1.68 km south-west.	Unmanaged and disturbed area between the canal and railway, with the remains of a concrete trackway and much fly-tipping. The area supports tussocky rank grassland, dominated by false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>, cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> and red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>, while flatter areas have scattered willow <i>Salix</i> spp. And bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg scrub and are species-rich, with, among others creeping cinquefoil <i>Potentilla reptans</i>, hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>, cut-leaved cranesbill <i>Geranium dissectum</i>, red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i>, common vetch <i>Vicia sepium</i>, beaked hawksbeard <i>Crepis vesicaria</i>, field wood-rush <i>Luzula campestris</i>, mugwort <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> and most notably goldenrod <i>Solidago virgaurea</i>. A damp area is dominated by yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i>, with clumps of pendulous sedge <i>Carex pendula</i> and hard rush <i>Juncus inflexus</i>. There is a strip of sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> woodland along the railway, which supports wood avens <i>Geum urbanum</i> and lady's smock <i>Cardamine pratensis</i>. More open parts have scattered hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, water dock <i>Rumex hydrolapathum</i>, bulrush <i>Typha latifolia</i>, gipsywort <i>Lycopus europaeus</i> and wild angelica <i>Angelica sylvestris</i>.
Sheepy Magna, Crow Lane, Old sand pit	pLWS	c. 1.74 km north-west.	Hedgerow
River Sence & tributary	LWS	c. 1.94 km north-east.	No recent survey data – not known if the site still has value.
Sheepy, Highfield farm pond	pLWS	c. 1.94 km north-west.	Mesotrophic grassland
46/29 Coventry Canal	pLWS	c. 2 km west.	An important wetland habitat with a range of aquatic plants, as with all linear features the site is likely to be used by a variety of wildlife.
37/29 The Outwoods - Merevale Park	LWS	c. 2.02 km south-west.	Parts of this site is designated as 'Merevale Park Grassland' Local Wildlife Site (LWS) (centre), 'Merevale Lake Woodlands' Local Wildlife Site (LWS) (south-east) and 'Wards Hill' (east).

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Reason for Designation
			Many other sections throughout the park have been identified as 'Monks Park Wood and Bratts Waste' pLWS (centre and south), 'Black Pool & Abbey Pool' pLWS (north-west) and 'Woods North of Mancetter Quarries' pLWS (north-east and east). Good mixed ancient woodland with lakes supporting mostly wildfowl. Grounds of a late 17th Century mansion and gardens. Parkland with many mature trees together with an area of acid grassland with harebells <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>. Some of the slopes are steep and covered with bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>. In 1996 some of the site was planted with conifers.
88/29 A5, Wych Elm Hedgerow	Unspecified	c. 2.06 km south-west.	Hedgerow with wych elm <i>Ulmus glabra</i> .
73/39 Merevale Park	LWS	c. 2.31 km south-west.	Parts of the site is designated as 'Wards Hill and Merevale Lake Woodlands' Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The remainder if the site is identified as 'Woods North of Mancetter Quarries' pLWS. The site has mixed ancient woodland with lakes in the grounds of a late 17th century mansion and gardens. There are also areas of parkland with many mature trees together with an area of acid grassland with harebell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>. Some of the slopes are steep and covered with bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>.
09/39I River Anker	pLWS	c. 2.70 km south-east.	The River Anker in SP39 includes areas around the source/tributaries east of Nuneaton. This area is largely arable and improved grassland, although the river/streams are often tree lined and dotted along the length of the river are a series of species rich meadows from the source east of Nuneaton to Atherstone to the northwest. Evidence of otters <i>Lutra lutra</i> and water voles <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> has been recorded.

5.2. HABITATS ASSESSMENT

- 5.2.1. The habitats identified across and immediately adjacent to the development site are detailed in Figure 2: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan. Photographs are provided in Appendix A.
- 5.2.2. The main habitats and land-use on or adjacent to the development site are summarized, ranged by size / location:

- **Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface** (UkHab classification: U1c);
 - **Pond – non-priority** (UkHab classification: R1 / 41);
 - **Ruderal or ephemeral** (UkHab classification: 81);
 - **Broad-leaved woodland screen planting** (UkHab classification: W1g Other broadleaved woodland);
 - **Arable field** (UkHab classification: C1c Cereal crops);
 - **Building** (UkHab classification: u1b5); and
 - **Built linear feature** (UkHab classification: U1e);
- 5.2.3. A number of these habitats have potential to support protected and notable species. A more detailed description of the habitats is provided below.
- 5.2.4. The development Site is immediately surrounded by arable fields, areas of semi-mature and mature woodland, hedgerows, amenity areas comprising grassland and hard standing associated with the adjacent farm. The surrounding wider landscape also supports a number of pockets of broad-leaved semi-natural woodland; residential and commercial buildings of an agricultural nature were present to the east.
- 5.2.5. The biodiversity enhancement area is proposed within an intensively managed arable field. The arable land would appear to have received a crop in 2024, with signs of dry stubble amongst the predominantly bare ground. Species which are starting to colonize this area include pineapple weed *Matricaria discoidea*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and slender speedwell *Veronica filiformis*.
- 5.2.6. The caravan storage facility now consists of a large area of permeable hard-standing surrounded by a vegetated bund and a pond surrounded by a remnant section of woodland; which has not been disturbed. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on and immediately adjacent to the site prior to the development would have been similar in nature to those currently present to the immediate west of the site. Habitats present in this area comprise a mixture of bare ground, small pockets of ruderal or ephemeral and unmanaged, other neutral grassland.
- 5.2.7. A permanent access track is already in place for both the caravan storage facility and the biodiversity enhancement area, from the adjacent Atherstone Road and adjacent farm complex (respectively). Access routes will utilize this existing network.
- 5.2.8. A single pond is located immediately adjacent to the development Site boundary of the caravan storage facility. No ponds were identified within the boundary of the biodiversity enhancement area. A further four ponds were located within 250 m of the development Site. No other ponds were identified from OS maps or identified on the ground at the time of survey.

5.3. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES ASSESSMENT

- 5.3.1. This section incorporates field observations and results from the data searches provided by WBRC and LRERC. Each species or species group is discussed in turn below.

Birds

- 5.3.2. The datasets provided by WBRC and LRERC identified 70 records of birds for 21 species within a 2 km radius of the development site. A full list of the species, their conservation status and distance from the development site is provided in Table 4.3. Some distances are listed as Confidential. Distances for these species can be provided upon request, with an appropriate justification, due to the sensitivity of the records.
- 5.3.3. A further ten species were recorded during survey, indicated as “on site” in Table 4.3.
- 5.3.4. The habitats present on and immediately adjacent to the development site offer a variety of suitability for nesting birds. The retained grassland, pond, trees and shrub layer around the pond and tall ruderal and grasses present on the earth bunds are likely to support common farmland and woodland species and have potential to be used by nesting birds in the breeding season. The arable field forming the biodiversity enhancement area have little in the way of nesting opportunity. These habitats were also observed to support the species” in Table 4.3 as a foraging resource.
- 5.3.5. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have similarly provided support to common farmland and woodland species and have potential to be used by nesting birds in the breeding season. Foraging habitat would also have been available. The arable field forming the biodiversity enhancement area remains constant as a habitat type.
- 5.3.6. Taking into account, the surface area of the hard standing which now occupies the development site and the probable surface area of the perimeter bunds, alongside the historical recreation use of the development site prior to the development, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in breeding and / or foraging habitat lost as a result of the development. Likewise, as for the area of arable field for the biodiversity enhancement site, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in foraging habitat as a result of the development.

Table 4.3: Bird species records by WBRC / LRERC. CONFIDENTIAL represents sensitive species information available on request.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Year	Distance from Site (m)	European protected	UK Protected	Principle Concern	Rare	Invasive
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	2015 - 2018	1201			✓	✓	
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Kingfisher	2012	CONFIDENTIAL	✓	✓			
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Apus apus</i>	Swift	2019	1380				✓	
<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Cuckoo	2012	1268			✓	✓	
<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Yellowhammer	2018 - 2022	1268			✓	✓	
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Reed Bunting	2018	1815			✓	✓	
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Merlin	2015	CONFIDENTIAL	✓	✓			
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine	2012	CONFIDENTIAL	✓	✓			
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Moorhen	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow	2014 - 2022	1201			✓	✓	
<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Linnet	2018	1881			✓	✓	
<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Red Kite	2018 - 2020	CONFIDENTIAL	✓				
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail	2022	1268			✓	✓	
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	On site	On site			✓	✓	
<i>Passer montanus</i>	Tree Sparrow	2022	1268			✓	✓	
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey Partridge	2022	1268			✓	✓	
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock	2020 - 2021	1240			✓	✓	
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch	On site	On site			✓	✓	
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Starling	2012 - 2021	1240			✓	✓	
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren	On site	On site				✓	
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	2019	1243			✓	✓	
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	2018	1595	✓		✓		
<i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl	2005 - 2020	CONFIDENTIAL	✓	✓			
<i>Phasianus coclicus</i>	Ring-necked Pheasant	On site	On site					

Bats

- 5.3.7. The datasets provided by WBRC and LRERC identified 19 records of bats for three species / species groups within a 2 km radius of the development site. Species records provided by WBRC and LRERC include Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii* (1 record), Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus* (1 record), Pipistrelle sp. (3 records), and 14 records of unidentified bats *Chiropter* sp. Species records date from 1997 – 2021, with the closest record located some 920 m south from the development site.

Tree scoping survey

- 5.3.8. A scoping survey of the trees immediately adjacent to the development Site (see Figure 1) was also undertaken, to assess their potential to support roosting bats.
- 5.3.9. No identifiable European Protected Species (EPS) derogation licences have been granted by Natural England within a 2km radius of the proposed scheme in relation to bats.
- 5.3.10. No trees were identified within or immediately adjacent to the development as providing suitable bat roosting features. Comprising of mature / semi-mature oak *Quercus robur*, willow *Salix alba*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and pine *Pinus sylvestris*.
- 5.3.11. A number of mature oaks, present along the farm track to the south of the development site did, however, contain features which would provide suitability for roosting bats. Likewise, two trees present along the woodland edge to the north of the biodiversity enhancement site contain features which would provide suitability for roosting bats. Features include tare outs, rot holes, loose bark and woodpecker holes. Trees along this farm track represent trees of PRF-I (only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats) to PRF-M (suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony).

Commuting and foraging habitat

- 5.3.12. Suitable foraging and commuting habitat are provided across and immediately adjacent to the development site through the presence of the pond and tall ruderal habitats present across the perimeter of the earth bund. The invertebrates these habitats attract are favorable as a prey species for bat species. In addition, the tall bund, and habitats present on it now provide connectivity to adjacent hedgerow networks.
- 5.3.13. Additionally, suitable foraging and commuting habitat are provided across habitats adjacent to the development site by the hedgerows and areas of immature screen planting to the east of the development Site. The biodiversity enhancement area provides little opportunity for foraging and / or commuting, but suitable habitat is provided along the woodland edge to the north.
- 5.3.14. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have similarly provided suitable foraging and commuting habitat. As no trees were

identified within the development as providing suitable bat roosting features, and no further trees identified from the historical aerial images, it is not anticipated that the development site would have provided habitats suitable for roosting. The arable field forming the biodiversity enhancement area remains constant as a habitat type.

- 5.3.15. Taking into account, the surface area of the hard standing which now occupies the development site and the probable surface area of the perimeter bunds, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in foraging habitat lost as a result of the development. Furthermore, the bunds now provide suitable linear features which might provide connectivity to the hedgerow systems to the north of the development site. Likewise, as for the area of arable field for the biodiversity enhancement site, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in foraging habitat as a result of the development.

Badgers

- 5.3.16. Three records of badger were provided by WBRC and LRERC within 2 km of the approximate Site center. Records comprised evidence of presence, with the nearest record located c. 595 m west of the Site boundary. The record originated from between 2007 and 2009, with two records representing sett locations.
- 5.3.17. No badgers and / or their signs were identified during the course of the site surveys.
- 5.3.18. The majority of the habitats present on site are not suitable for foraging badgers, being either hard standing or arable field. The development site does however provide suitable embankments, in the form of the earth bunds, for sett creation. Opportunity for sett creation is limited by the presence of the perimeter security fence, although there is a small possibility of entrance into the site under the entrance gates.
- 5.3.19. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have provided suitable foraging and commuting habitat. As it would appear that the development site was predominantly flat, with an absence of any earth mounds or ditches, it is unlikely that sett building locations were widely available, should badgers have been present.
- 5.3.20. Taking into account, the lack of access into the site due to the presence of the perimeter security fence, alongside the historical recreation use of the development site prior to the development, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in sett building locations as a result of the development. A loss of foraging and commuting habitat would have been experienced, should badgers have been present.

Otter and Water vole

- 5.3.21. The datasets provided by WBRC and LRERC identified 14 records of otter within a 2 km radius of the development site. The records are from between 2006 – 2022, with the closest record being 786 m from the development Site. No direct connectivity pathways between the development Site and location of records have been identified.

- 5.3.22. No records for water vole were provided within a 2 km radius of the development site.
- 5.3.23. A single pond is present immediately adjacent to the development site which is anticipated to dry annually. In general, the riparian habitats immediately adjacent to the application site comprised steep sided ditches (>45 – 90 deg) with earth banks. The bank side vegetation was dominated by tall grass with occasional or frequent short grass, herbs, mature trees and bushes. Submerged and / or aquatic vegetation is absent. The water is anticipated to be c. 1 m deep at its center. The adjacent land use consists of sheep grazed pasture, amenity grassland and small pockets of woodland, connected by a hedgerow network, with an absence of wet ditches.
- 5.3.24. No signs of otter or water vole were observed during surveys undertaken between 13 April and 15 June or on the 15 September 2024. A single brown rat *Rattus norvegicus* was observed swimming in the water on 13 April 2024. Rat and signs of bank vole *Myodes glareolus*, in the form of feeding remains were observed during all surveys, although burrows were not located.
- 5.3.25. A review of historical aerial imagery identified no significant change in aquatic habitats and / or their connectivity between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. It is not anticipated that suitable foraging and / or resting provision would have been available prior to the development.

Amphibians (including Great Crested Newts)

- 5.3.26. See existing report produced by Ecology Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_23082025_Iss_23082025).

Reptiles

- 5.3.27. No records of reptiles were identified within the datasets provided by WBRC and LRERC. An absence of records may not represent a true reflection of species presence / likely absence, being a typically under-recorded species group.
- 5.3.28. The habitats present on and immediately adjacent to the site do, provide moderate suitability for foraging, basking and resting / overwintering reptiles; specifically Common Lizards *Zootoca vivipara* and grass snakes *Natrix helvetica helvetica*. A review of aerial imagery shows limited connectivity with further areas anticipated to provide suitable habitat in the wider environment. The presence of a number of ring-necked pheasants does reduce their potential presence; being known to be a significant predator to native herpetofauna. No reptiles were identified during the course of the site survey.
- 5.3.29. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have similarly provided habitats to support common reptile species for foraging and commuting. As it would appear that the development site was predominantly flat, with an absence of any earth mounds or ditches, it is unlikely that hibernacula were widely available, should reptiles have been present.

- 5.3.30. Taking into account, the surface area of the hard standing and arable land in respect of the biodiversity enhancement area, which now occupies the development site and the probable surface area of the perimeter bunds, alongside the historical recreation use of the development site prior to the development and presence of a number of ring-necked pheasants, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in breeding and / or foraging habitat lost as a result of the development.

Other Notable Species

- 5.3.31. No other notable species were returned on and / or within 250m of the development site by WBRC and LRERC, with connectivity to the development site. Species recorded outside of this buffer include European eel *Anguilla Anguilla* and the European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.
- 5.3.32. No signs of either species were observed during survey. Habitats on site do provide a level of suitability for the European hedgehog, although opportunity for access to the site is limited by the presence of the perimeter security fence, although there is a small possibility of entrance into the site under the entrance gates. The site provides no suitability for the European eel due to the absence of suitable habitats and / or connectivity.
- 5.3.33. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would equally provide no suitability for the European eel due to the absence of suitable habitats and / or connectivity.

5 DISCUSSION

6.1. OVERVIEW

- 6.1.1. This section seeks to identify potential current and historical effects on protected and notable species. The proximity of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and potential effects on their qualifying interests is discussed. To this extent, recommendations are made for further survey work and / or mitigation, if required.
- 6.1.2. This section also introduces opportunities for habitat enhancement on and / or adjacent the development site for the benefit of local biodiversity, where applicable.
- 6.1.3. This section is based on the layout of the existing caravan storage facility and indicative location of the biodiversity enhancement area provided by CT Planning on 10 September 2024.

6.2. DESIGNATED SITES AND HABITATS

- 6.2.1. The development site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. The nearest site is located c. 210 m south of the caravan storage facility.
- 6.2.2. It does, however, fall within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for a number of SSSI's. It does not meet the development type description for any adjacent SSSI. Natural England will therefore not need to be consulted alongside the application.
- 6.2.3. Sheepy Fields SSSI lies approximately 3.45 km north-east of the development site and is designated for its neutral grassland – the best remaining examples of neutral grassland in Leicestershire and is representative of hay meadow plant communities developed on neutral soils in the English Midlands. The SSSI does not have mobile qualifying or associated species that would regularly use / would have utilized the habitats within the development site and the development site is considered sufficiently distant and separated from the SSSI to have no likely pathway for effect. The habitats of the SSSI are not considered to be ecologically or hydrologically linked to the development site.
- 6.2.4. The nearest pLWS designated for ecological interest is located approximately 210 m distance from the development site boundary and is not considered likely to have experienced / will experience any direct or indirect effects from the development due to the separation distances involved and lack of connectivity between them.
- 6.2.5. The caravan storage facility now consists of a large area of permeable hard-standing surrounded by a vegetated bund and a pond surrounded by a remnant section of woodland; which has not been disturbed. A review of historical aerial imagery identified a significant change in habitat between April 2020 and June 2021, as shown in Figure 3. From the historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have been similar in nature to those currently present to the immediate west of the site. Habitats present in this area comprise a mixture of bare ground, small pockets of ruderal or ephemeral and unmanaged, other neutral grassland. The biodiversity enhancement area is proposed within an intensively

managed arable field. The arable field forming the biodiversity enhancement area remains constant as a habitat type.

- 6.2.6. The intensively managed arable farmland forming the biodiversity enhancement area is generally of low value to wildlife with little structural or species diversity. Boundary habitats to the north (mature woodland) offer more valuable habitat at a local level. The development has been designed to retain these more valuable features and habitat loss associated with the proposed development footprint will be limited to arable habitats in this area.
- 6.2.7. It is anticipated that the caravan storage facility would have caused the loss of habitats present in this area, however, the creation and subsequent vegetation of bunds around the perimeter of the site have increased the vegetated structural diversity of the site. This may offer more valuable habitat at a local level. The development was designed and has retained the more valuable features, in the form of pond and mature trees immediately adjacent.
- 6.2.8. Site access will be via an existing farm entrance and track network from the adjoining farm to the east, adopting existing farm track through Mythe Farm to the caravan storage facility. No vegetation will be required to be removed during construction and is not considered to have a discernible effect on habitat availability or connectivity.
- 6.2.9. The development maintained a buffer from the adjacent pond and its banks during construction to protect the waterbody and wildlife within it.
- 6.2.10. To protect off-site habitats, particularly in relation to the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area, pollution prevention and control measures will be implemented during works, in line with Environment Agency guidance during the construction and operation phases of the proposed development. Onsite drainage measures, which have the potential to disrupt the quantity and / or quality of surface and groundwater linked to designated sites, are not proposed as part of this application.

6.3. BIRDS

- 6.3.1. No impacts are anticipated on the ornithological interests of any nearby statutory designated sites.
- 6.3.2. Construction effects are generally anticipated to be of short duration and relatively low impact however, there is potential for breeding birds to have been displaced by the construction phase of the caravan storage facility development, either directly or indirectly, via disturbance impacts.
- 6.3.3. The former habitat beneath the footprint of the development is anticipated to have been of limited value for most ground nesting birds, due to constant disturbance through it recreational and business use. Construction works could have directly impact small numbers of ground breeding birds if conducted during the breeding season. However, it is considered unlikely that these species will be significantly affected by the presence of development Site in the long term.

- 6.3.4. Some localised disturbance could also have occurred on nesting birds within adjacent field boundary vegetation or on any birds nesting in trees around the pond margin, again depending on the timing of works. In the long term, adjacent boundary habitat comprising the pond and woodland, field margins, hedgerows and trees will remain as part of the development and there will be no loss of these potential nesting habitats.
- 6.3.5. All birds receive some level of protection during the breeding season. In order to avoid impacts on nesting birds and to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Birds Directive and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is recommended that any initial ground works and any associated vegetation removal for the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area take place outside of the bird breeding season (March to September inclusive) thereby avoiding any potential impacts on breeding birds. If vegetation works are necessary during the breeding season, a nest-search of all suitable habitats would be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to works commencing.
- 6.3.6. Potential disturbance to nesting birds would have / will only apply where construction works were / are undertaken during the breeding bird season. In these circumstances suitable protection and mitigation measures should have / would be implemented.

6.4. BATS

- 6.4.1. The desk study returned numerous records for bat species, but this is not considered a reliable indication of the likely level of activity as it is likely that species are under recorded in the area. The arable farmland, hard standing and / or amenity grassland within and adjacent to the development Site generally provides limited opportunities for foraging and more favorable habitat comprising woodland and hedgerow corridors are widely available in the surrounding landscape. The waterbody and tall ruderal areas and adjacent planting to the south and east all provide opportunities as foraging and commuting habitat; however, these habitats out with the development Site boundary will remain unaffected by the proposed development.
- 6.4.2. No potential roosting sites have been identified within or immediately adjacent to the development site boundary. No impacts on potential roost sites are therefore anticipated to have occurred will occur during the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area.
- 6.4.3. Removal of well-structured vegetation is not anticipated to have been undertaken / is required to facilitate the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area. With no loss of adjacent hedgerows or trees, the severance of any commuting routes for bats is not anticipated to have been undertaken / will be undertaken as a result of the development.
- 6.4.4. The operational development site will not be permanently lit, with existing operational lighting on a timer and therefore no effects are anticipated in this regard.

6.5. BADGER

- 6.5.1. No badgers and / or their signs were identified during the course of the site surveys.

- 6.5.2. The majority of the habitats present on site are not suitable for foraging badgers, being either hard standing or arable field. The development site does however now provide suitable embankments, in the form of the earth bunds, for sett creation. Opportunity for sett creation is limited by the presence of the perimeter security fence, although there is a small possibility of entrance into the site under the entrance gates in the caravan storage facility area. No opportunity exists for sett creation in the biodiversity enhancement area.
- 6.5.3. A review of historical aerial imagery identified that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have provided suitable foraging and commuting habitat. As it would appear that the development site was predominantly flat, with an absence of any earth mounds or ditches, it is unlikely that sett building locations were widely available, should badgers have been present.
- 6.5.4. It is anticipated that the development would not have provide valuable habitat which is not widely available in the surrounding landscape for this species and no significant impacts are anticipated to have resulted from the development.

6.6. OTTER & WATER VOLE

- 6.6.1. No otter and / or water vole and / or their signs were identified during the course of the site surveys.
- 6.6.2. The development Site does not provide valuable foraging habitat or resting site opportunities for these species and no significant impacts are anticipated on otter and / or water vole as a result of the development.
- 6.6.3. With standard pollution prevention measures in place during the construction of the biodiversity enhancement area, in line with Environment Agency guidelines, the any waterbody in the wider environment is expected to experience negligible effects.

6.7. AMPHIBIANS (INCLUDING GREAT CRESTED NEWTS)

- 6.7.1. See existing report produced by Ecology Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_23082025_Iss_23082025).

6.8. REPTILES

- 6.8.1. No common reptiles and / or their signs were identified during the course of the site surveys.
- 6.8.2. From a review of historical aerial imagery, it would be anticipated that the habitats present on site prior to the development would have provided habitats to support common reptile species for foraging and commuting. As it would appear that the development site was predominantly flat, with an absence of any earth mounds or ditches, it is unlikely that hibernacula were widely available, should reptiles have been present.

6.8.3. Taking into account, the surface area of the hard standing and arable land in respect of the biodiversity enhancement area, which now occupies the development site and the probable surface area of the perimeter bunds, alongside the historical recreation use of the development site prior to the development and presence of a number of ring-necked pheasants, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant loss in breeding and / or foraging habitat lost as a result of the development.

6.8.4. No significant impacts are anticipated on reptile species

6.9. OTHER NOTABLE SPECIES

6.9.1. No other notable species were returned on and / or within 250m of the development site by WBRC and LRERC, with connectivity to the development site. Species recorded outside of this buffer include European eel and the European hedgehog.

6.9.2. No signs of either species were observed during survey.

6.9.3. There is limited potential for hedgehogs to be present in the wider area, including on a historical basis. Some habitats found across the development site provide suitable foraging for this species, although limited due to severance the perimeter security fence, limiting potential for any individual to gain access to the site. Care should be taken when the biodiversity enhancement area, which provides foraging but no resting places for this species, with any individual found during construction, moved to a suitable location in the wider environment.

6.9.4. No other species are considered pertinent to the proposed development.

6.10. SUMMARY – ECOLOGICAL PRIORITY MATRIX

Category	Status / Legal Protection	Recommended Further Survey Effort	Recommended Mitigation / Enhancement Measures
Designated Sites	Statutory and non-statutory sites	N/A	Pollution prevention measures during construction of biodiversity enhancement area following EA guidance.
General habitat	N/A	N/A	Pollution prevention measures during construction of biodiversity enhancement area following EA guidance.
Birds	WCA 1981	N/A	Vegetation clearance of biodiversity enhancement area to avoid breeding season (March to September inclusive) where possible.
Bats	WCA 1981, Habitat Regs. 2010.	N/A	N/A
Badgers	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	N/A	Pre-works check of biodiversity enhancement area.
Otter & Water vole	WCA 1981, Habitats Regulations 2010 (otter only)	N/A	N/A
Amphibians (incl GCN)	WCA 1981, Habitat Regs. 2010	See existing report produced by Ecologyia Ltd. for and on behalf of the Mr and Mrs J. Garland (doc ref: Mythe Farm Great Crested Newt Survey Report _CTPL_020_02_R2_17082025_Iss_17082025).	
Reptiles	WCA 1981	N/A	N/A
Hedgerows	Hedgerow regulation 1997	N/A	N/A
Other notable species	Species specific	N/A	N/A

Legal Protection: WCA 1981 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Habitat Regs. 2010 - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended); UKBAP – UK Biodiversity Action Plan

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<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse>

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FIGURE 1: DEVELOPMENT SITE

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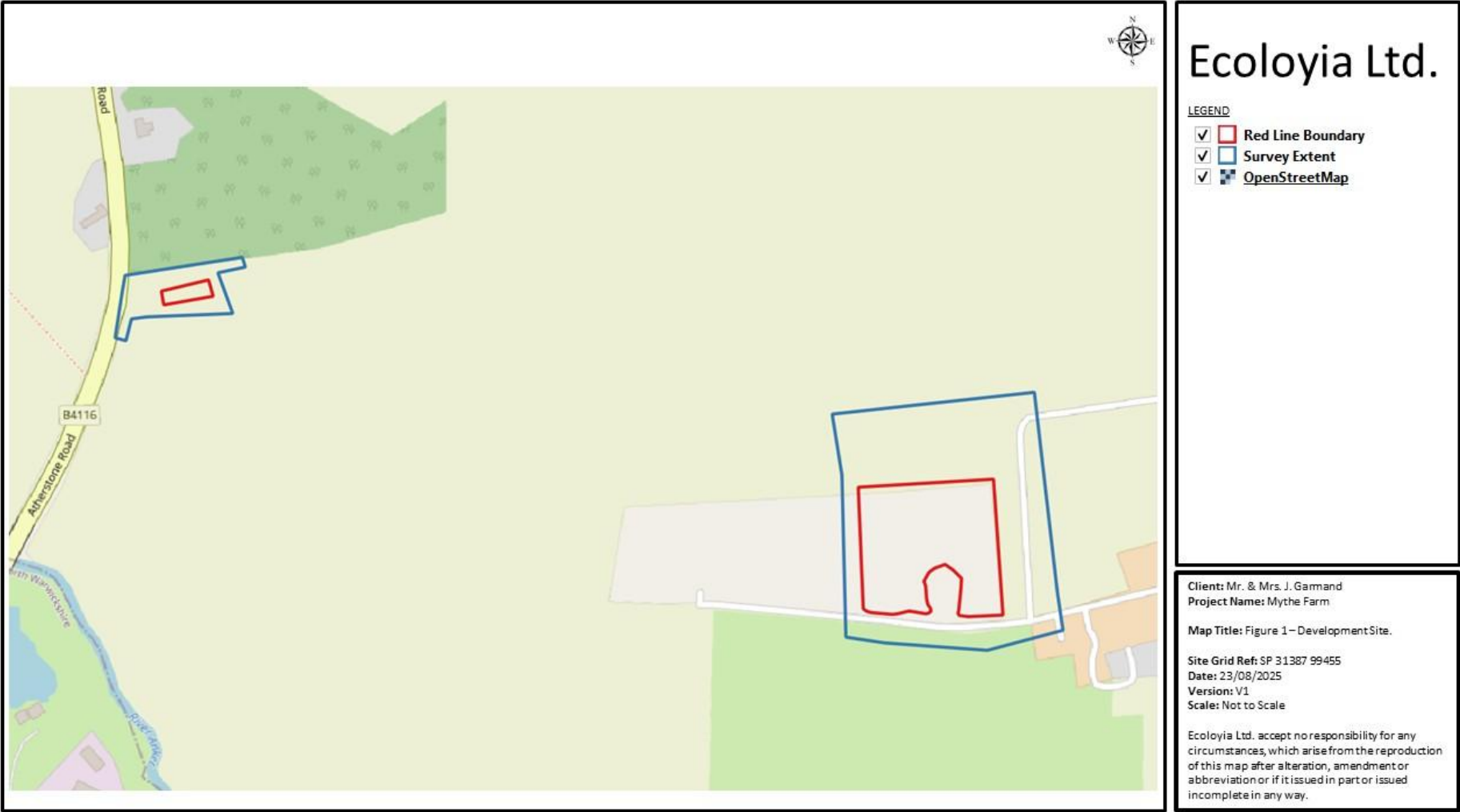


FIGURE 2: EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY PLAN

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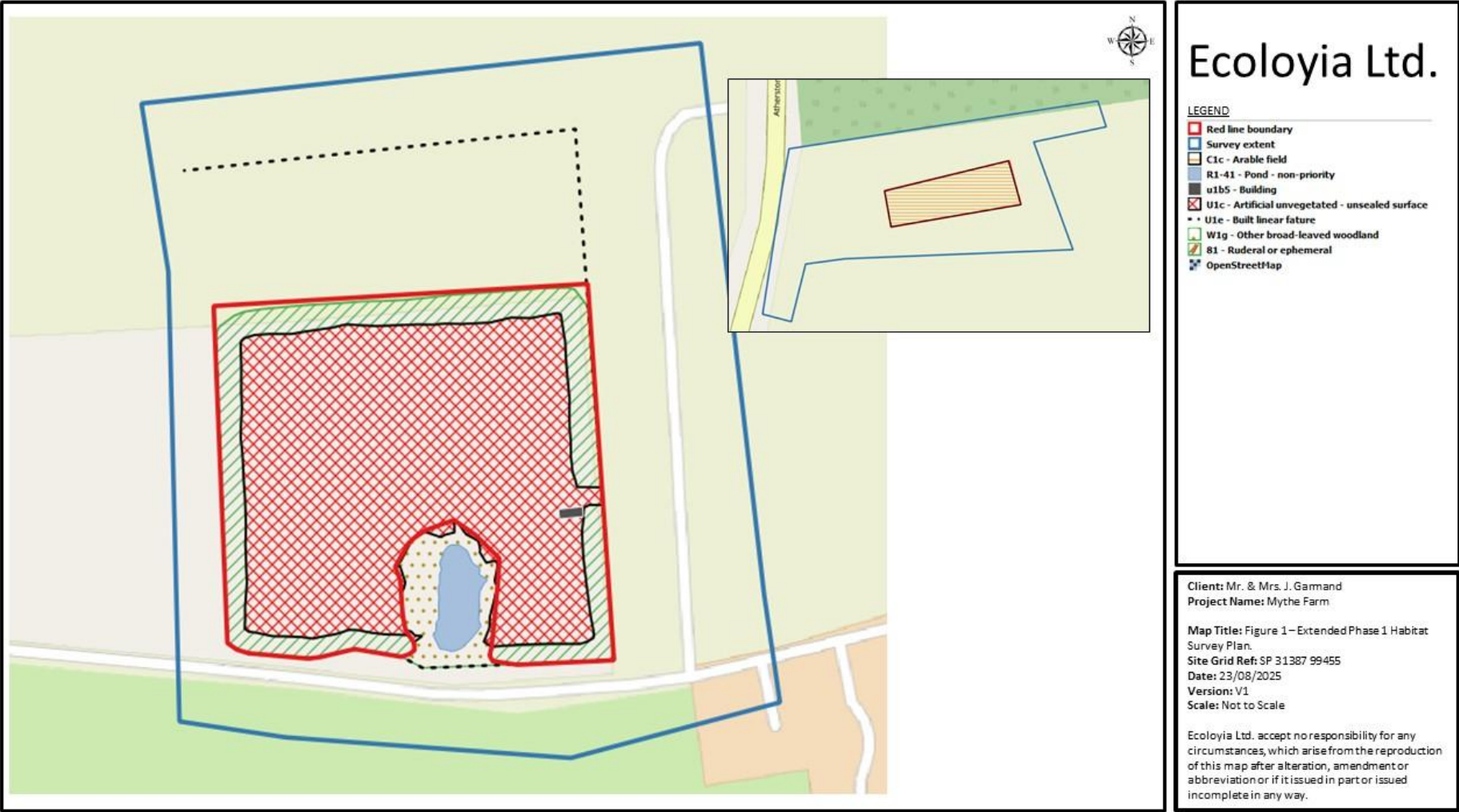


FIGURE 3: HISTORICAL AERIAL IMAGES

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APPENDIX A: SITE IMAGES

Image 1: Image looking west from the entrance of the caravan storage facility showing hard standing, office building and retained pond immediately adjacent to the site.



Image 2: Image looking north-west from the south-eastern corner of the caravan storage facility showing hard standing and office building.



Image 3: Image looking south from the entrance of the caravan storage facility showing hard standing, retained pond and trees immediately adjacent to the site and office building.



Image 4: Image looking north-west showing exterior of the entrance to the caravan storage facility showing security perimeter fence and vegetated bund.



Image 5: Image looking north shown interior of the caravan storage facility showing vegetated bund and hard standing.



Image 6: Image looking south showing western security perimeter fence and vegetated bund.



Image 7: Image looking west showing southern security perimeter fence and vegetated bund.



Image 8: Image looking north showing western security perimeter fence and vegetated bund.



Image 9: Image looking east showing amenity grassland to the north of the caravan storage facility.



Image 10: Image looking west showing the pond and mature trees present immediately adjacent to the site the caravan storage facility.



Image 11: Image looking north showing the pond and mature trees immediately adjacent to the site the caravan storage facility.



Image 12: Image looking north showing the pond and mature trees immediately adjacent to the site the caravan storage facility.



Image 13: Image looking east showing the entrance to and arable field where the biodiversity enhancement area is proposed.



Image 14: Image looking east showing the entrance to and arable field where the biodiversity enhancement area is proposed.



Image 15: Image looking east showing the mature tree line to the north where the biodiversity enhancement area is proposed.

