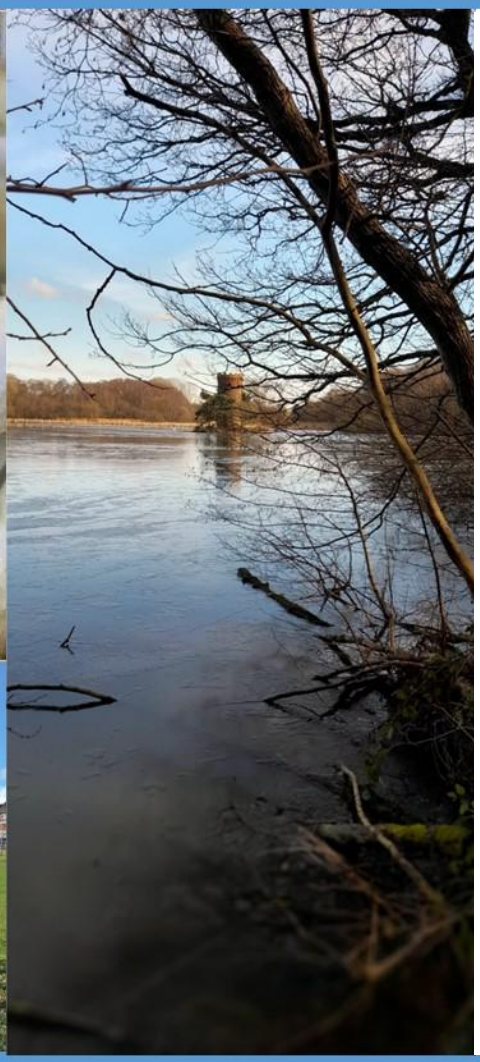

Land at High Street,
Stoke Golding, Nuneaton

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Statement

Prepared by
Griffin Ecology Ltd.

On behalf of
A.R. Cartwright Ltd

Project: GE 0866

We assist our clients to deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity.

Quality Management		
Client	A.R. Cartwright Ltd	
Project	Land at High Street, Stoke Golding, Nuneaton	
Report Title	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Biodiversity Statement	
Project No	GE0866	
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Author	Casey-Ruth Griffin BSc (hons) MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist	
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Approved by	Ian Griffin, Commercial Director	

Legal Guidance

The information set out within this report in no way constitutes a legal opinion on the relevant legislation (refer to the relevant Appendix for the main provisions of the legislation). The opinion of a legal professional should be sought if further advice is required.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Griffin Ecology Ltd. have been commissioned to undertake an updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land to the rear of High Street, Stoke Golding, Leicestershire, to inform a forthcoming planning application for residential development.

An earlier PEA for the site was completed by Dr. Stefan Bodnar MCIEEM in October 2021 (report ref. *Stoke1121_PEA*). That assessment concluded that the site was of generally low ecological value, comprising improved horse-grazed grassland with sections of native hedgerow and boundary trees of moderate ecological importance. No significant constraints were identified at that time.

Since the previous assessment, the proposed site boundary has been revised, most notably to include the residential property known as Springbank, a dormer bungalow on High Street, which is now proposed for demolition to facilitate access to the main development area. This inclusion introduces built fabric not previously assessed, and has triggered the need to revisit the potential for roosting bats, as well as to update the ecological baseline in line with current survey standards and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.

In addition, the presence of a partially culverted ditch along the eastern site boundary was confirmed during this updated survey. As this may now be relevant under the Watercourse module of the BNG metric, opportunities for enhancement of this feature are also considered.

This updated PEA therefore draws upon and revises the 2021 findings to reflect the current site boundary and ecological conditions, providing updated advice on any further survey requirements, constraints, and opportunities for ecological enhancement.

For the purposes of this report the “site” refers to the land within the red line boundary as illustrated by Figure 1.

1.2 Site description

The site is located to the rear of residential properties fronting High Street on the northern edge of the village of Stoke Golding, Leicestershire. The site lies at central Ordnance Survey grid reference SP 39361 97255 and encompasses an area of approximately 0.8 hectares. The red line boundary has been recently revised and now includes the residential property known as Springbank, which is proposed for demolition to provide vehicular access into the site.

The main development parcel remains largely unchanged since the previous assessment in 2021. It comprises a grazed improved grassland field, which continues to be horse-grazed. The field are enclosed by native hedgerows, primarily hawthorn and elder, with occasional standard trees. The hedgerows are currently unmanaged, showing evidence of outgrowth and occasional gapping but remain ecologically valuable.

The newly incorporated land at Springbank comprises a dormer-style residential bungalow set within a typical suburban curtilage. It includes managed rear gardens, ornamental shrub planting, and a surfaced driveway and parking area to the front. To the east, the site is bordered by a partially culverted ditch.

In terms of landscape context, the site sits at the interface between built development and open countryside, bounded to the south and west by residential properties and to the north and east by agricultural fields. The wider setting is semi-rural, characterised by a mosaic of improved pasture, arable fields, and hedgerow networks.

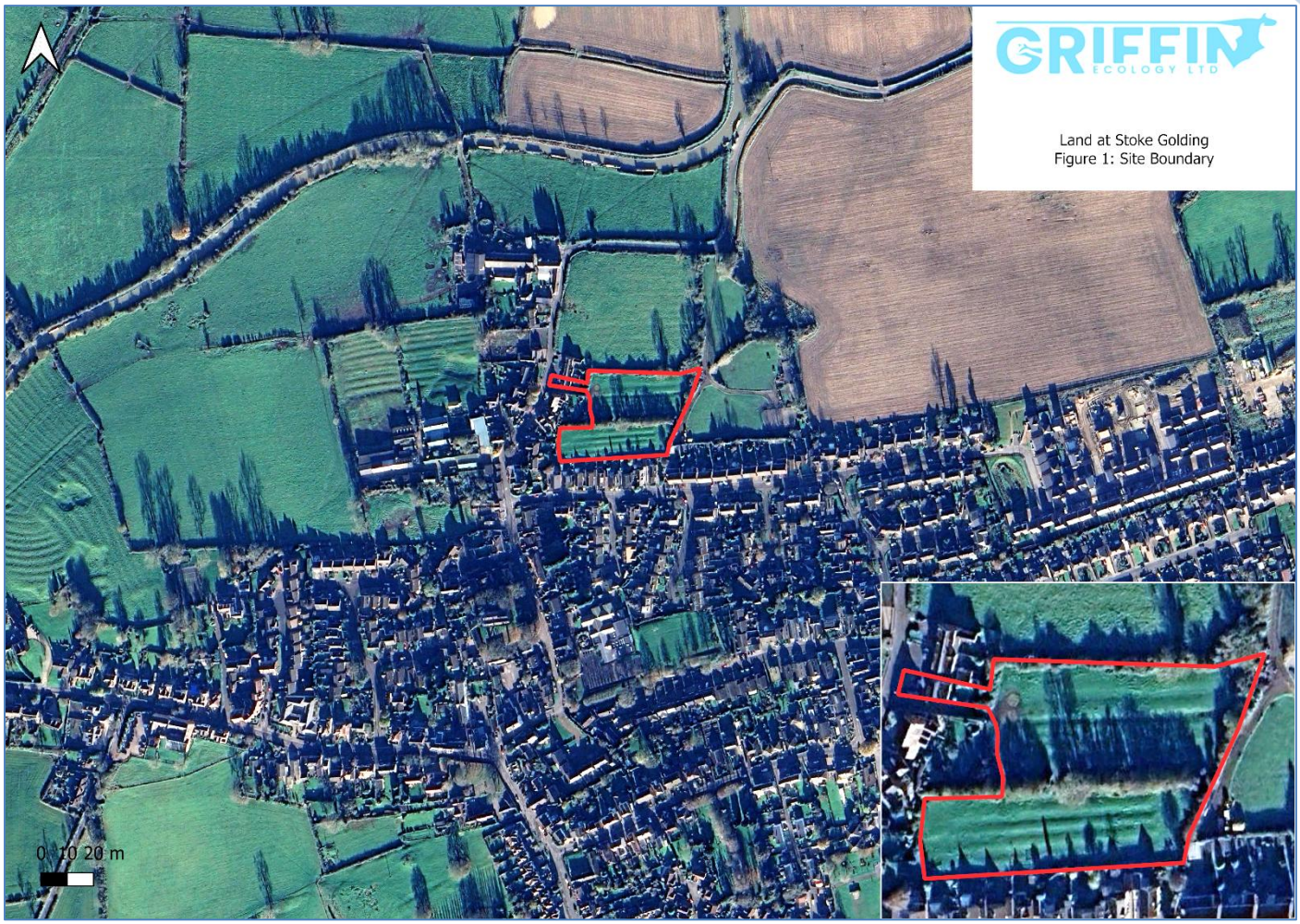


Figure 1: Site boundary and surrounding habitats (Google 2025).

1.3 Survey Purpose

The purpose of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is to provide an up-to-date assessment of the baseline ecological conditions within the revised site boundary, and to identify any potential ecological constraints or opportunities that may inform the proposed development of the land at High Street, Stoke Golding.

This assessment is based on the updating ecological survey and takes into account the findings of the earlier PEA completed in October 2021 by Dr. Stefan Bodnar MCIEEM. The updated PEA reflects changes to the site red line boundary — most notably, the inclusion of Springbank, a residential bungalow now proposed for demolition — and includes updated observations on habitats, species potential, and additional ecological features such as the eastern boundary ditch.

Specifically, the objectives of the survey are to:

- Identify and classify the broad habitat types present within the site using UKHab and Phase 1 methodologies;
- Evaluate the suitability of habitats for protected or notable species;
- Assess the value of the site in a local and landscape-scale ecological context;
- Determine whether additional species-specific surveys (e.g. for bats) are required to inform further assessment;
- Identify potential ecological constraints and risks to inform site layout, timing, and mitigation strategies;
- Highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement in line with the aims of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG);
- Provide initial recommendations for mitigation, precautionary measures, and management as appropriate.

This PEA is intended to support the planning process by providing early-stage ecological advice in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017) and best practice standards.

1.4 Proposed Plans

The following plans have been provided by the client for consideration as part of this preliminary ecological assessment:

- **Proposed Site Layout (Sketch Plan)** – Drawing No. **25-31-SK01-C**, dated April 2025.

The proposed development includes the following components:

- Demolition of the existing bungalow (Springbank) to facilitate a new vehicular access into the site from High Street;
- Construction of 18 new residential dwellings, including a mix of affordable and market housing, arranged around a central access road and private drives;
- Provision of a central public open space (POS) area, situated toward the eastern edge of the site adjacent to the retained ditch and mature boundary vegetation;
- Associated infrastructure, including access roads, parking areas, private gardens, boundary treatments, and landscape planting;
- Retention of key boundary vegetation, where feasible, including sections of hedgerow and mature trees;
- Removal of sections of existing hedgerow to accommodate new access and site visibility splays, with compensatory planting anticipated;
- Potential incorporation of SuDS features, subject to detailed drainage design (noted as a possible balancing pond area adjacent to the POS).

This assessment considers the likely ecological implications of the above proposals in relation to both the baseline conditions identified during the July 2025 walkover and the previous 2021 survey.

1.5 Relevant Planning Policies

The ODPM Circular 06/05 makes the presence of a protected species a material consideration within the planning process and therefore it is essential for the presence of protected species and the extent they may be affected by proposed development be established through appropriate surveys. These are required prior to the planning permission being granted. The ODPM Circular 06/05 also encourages the use of planning conditions to secure the long term protection of such species.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated 2024) section 15 sets out applications to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

Paragraph 187 states:

"*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states:

"When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

Environment Act 2021

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of at least 10% will apply to most developments under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 from January 2024. This appraisal is consistent with emerging requirements under the Act.

Local Policy:

The site falls within the administrative area of **Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC)**, which forms the relevant Local Planning Authority (LPA). The following local policies are particularly relevant:

Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy (Adopted 2009)

While an older document, this still contains applicable ecological policies:

- **Policy 20: Green Infrastructure**
  Requires development proposals to retain, protect and enhance the existing green infrastructure network and contribute to its improvement.

- **Policy 21: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**
  Requires that development proposals:
  - Avoid negative impacts on biodiversity;
  - Protect and enhance sites of biodiversity value;
  - Deliver enhancements in line with local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs);
  - Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity.

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (Adopted 2016)

- **Policy DM6: Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest**
  Requires ecological assessments for proposals likely to impact designated or priority habitats/species. It supports habitat connectivity and local biodiversity initiatives.

- **Policy DM7: Preventing Environmental Pollution**
  Although broader in scope, this policy encourages the protection of watercourses and soil resources, relevant to your site due to the presence of a partially culverted ditch.

Stoke Golding Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted March 2021)

This is highly relevant and carries weight in planning decisions.
Key policy:

- Policy ENV1: Protection of Local Wildlife Sites and Habitats
  Requires protection and enhancement of existing habitats, supports the use of native species in landscaping, and promotes habitat connectivity.

- Policy ENV2: Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors
  Development should not harm wildlife corridors and should include measures that provide a net gain in biodiversity, particularly along hedgerows, ditches, and other green features.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

A desk-based data review was undertaken to inform the baseline ecological assessment and to identify any known ecological receptors or designations that may influence the proposed development.

Biological Records Search

Ecological data for the site and surrounding area were obtained from the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC). The data search covered a 2km radius from the central site grid reference (SP 39361 97255) and included records of:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated sites (e.g., SSSIs, LNRs, Local Wildlife Sites);
- Records of legally protected and notable species, including those listed under:
    - Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended),
    - Section 41 species of principal importance under the NERC Act 2006,
    - UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs);
- Habitats of principal importance and local habitat networks.

These records were used to identify known ecological sensitivities, inform species constraints, and assess ecological connectivity in the wider landscape.

MAGIC Map Review

In addition to the records search, publicly available datasets were consulted via the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online resource, maintained by Natural England. This included a review of:

- Statutory designated nature conservation sites within a 2km radius, including:
    - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs),
    - National Nature Reserves (NNRs),
    - Local Nature Reserves (LNRs);
- Habitats of Principal Importance (e.g., deciduous woodland, traditional orchard, lowland meadow) and their spatial relationship to the site;
- Historic records of European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) granted within a 2km radius,

The information obtained from these sources was used to supplement field observations, assess likely species presence, and determine the requirement for further surveys or mitigation.

2.2 Site Visit

The site has been visited by a suitably experienced and licensed surveyor, Casey Griffin (Principal Ecologist) on 7th July 2025. Casey is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and holds Natural England class licences for bats class 2 (CL18), great crested newt class 1 (CL08) and hazel dormouse. Weather conditions at the time of survey have been recorded. An informing walkover survey has been undertaken to cover the extent of the site and the adjoining habitats, where accessible.

2.2.1 UK Habitats Classification Survey

A walkover survey of the site has been carried out in accordance with the standard methodology published in the UK Habitat Classification User Manual and the CIEEM's guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals. The survey covered all areas of the site as well as surrounding habitats, where accessible. This survey sought to identify, describe and map habitats present within the site up to level 3 within the habitat key. The principal aim of UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) is to provide a rapid system for recording and classifying habitats. The system comprises a principal hierarchy (the Primary Habitats) - which include ecosystems, broad habitats, priority habitats and Annex 1 habitats - and non-hierarchical Secondary Codes. All habitats present on-site were recorded on a UKHab map (Appendix 2). Any Habitats of Principal Importance, or habitats that may support rare or scarce plant communities and/or invertebrate assemblages, were recorded during this site visit. Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 has been used to identify habitats that are considered a national conservation priority. The value of these habitats is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2019).

The habitats identified during the walkover survey have then been evaluated against the CIEEM EIA evaluating habitats and species guidelines (2018) in order to give them a scale of importance from low to high value in the context of the site (unless otherwise stated). Such criteria include size, species diversity, and presence of species or habitats.

The method for this assessment is based on the guidelines published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018). These guidelines provide a robust framework for ecological assessment.

2.2.2 Habitat Condition Assessment

During the walkover survey undertaken in July 2025, all habitats and linear features present within the site have been subject to a condition assessment in accordance with the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 (Statutory Version) methodology, as set out by Natural England.

The assessment considered:

- **Habitat type and distinctiveness** (based on UKHab classification);
- **Extent** (area or length), determined using **QGIS mapping software** and **GPS field data**;
- **Condition**, assessed against the published habitat condition criteria tables accompanying the Biodiversity Metric Technical Supplement and User Guide.

Habitats have been mapped in the field using a combination of aerial imagery, base mapping layers, and real-time GPS tracking. Each habitat parcel and linear feature (e.g. hedgerows and ditches) has been digitised within a GIS environment, enabling the calculation of baseline habitat units and watercourse/hedgerow units as appropriate.

Condition assessments have beeen undertaken with reference to the relevant habitat condition sheets, with each feature assessed against its required number of 'Pass' criteria to be classified as Poor, Moderate, or Good condition.

These data form the baseline for any future Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and support the identification of potential enhancement opportunities and mitigation measures to be incorporated into the site's ecological design.

2.2.3 Preliminary Roost Assessment

An external Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the building known as Springbank has been undertaken during the site walkover survey in July 2025, in accordance with guidance set out in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition, BCT, 2023).

The assessment involved a thorough external inspection of the building to identify any Potential Roost Features (PRFs) and to search for signs of current or historic bat activity. The survey has been undertaken using appropriate equipment to maximise detection, including:

- A one million candlepower torch for detailed crevice inspection;
- Binoculars for inspection of high and inaccessible features;
- Extendable ladders to access lower roof elevations;
- A rigid endoscope, used where appropriate for probing accessible crevices and gaps.

Search for Evidence
The external fabric of the building has been examined for signs of bats, including:

- Live or dead bats;
- Bat droppings;
- Staining or urine marks around potential access points;
- Feeding remains such as insect wings.

Areas of interest included lifted tiles, soffits, eaves, ridge tiles, bargeboards, hanging tiles, and any structural gaps or crevices in brickwork or timber.

In line with BCT guidance, the building was assessed in relation to:

- The type and number of PRFs;
- The suitability of construction materials (e.g. hanging tiles, gaps beneath lead flashing);
- The aspect, shelter and access to features;
- The building's position in the landscape context (i.e. proximity to foraging and commuting habitats);
- The likelihood of different roost types (e.g. day roosts, transitional roosts, maternity or hibernation sites);
- The potential species likely to use the building based on structure and location.

Following this assessment, the building has been assigned a suitability category (Negligible, Low, Moderate or High) in accordance with the BCT Guidelines (2023). This categorisation informs the need for and scope of any follow-up emergence/re-entry surveys and ensures that appropriate mitigation measures are developed in line with current best practice and legislation.

2.2.4 Protected Species Survey

The informing walkover survey has also sought to enable the surveying ecologist to search for any evidence of protected species activity or the potential for the site to support protected and/or notable species.

Bats –The wider site has been assessed for suitability to support foraging and commuting bats, in accordance with the BCT guidelines (BCT, 2023).

Nesting birds – the site and building have been searched for areas of habitat that could be used for constructing a nest or for foraging, as well as any evidence of current or historic nesting.

Reptiles – the site has been searched for areas that could be used for sheltering, hibernating, basking, foraging and breeding (Froglife, 1999).

Amphibians – A review of aerial imagery and Ordnance Surveys maps for ponds within a 250m radius of the site has been undertaken. It is also possible that smaller ponds may exist locally and not be recorded on aerial imagery or map resources.

Badger *(Meles meles)* – the site has been searched for areas that might be used for foraging and sett building. Incidental foraging signs, tree scratching, paths, dung pits, latrines and setts have been recorded if found (Harris *et al.*, 1989). The site itself and land immediately adjacent (30m radius where accessible) to the site and visible from the site boundaries have been included within the survey.

Western European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) – the site has been searched for evidence of this species including droppings, foraging signs and footprints. The habitats on site have also been assessed for their suitability to support this species.

Notable mammals – the site has been searched for evidence and suitable habitat for BAP/Priority Species mammals (Cresswell et al., 2012).

Invertebrates – the site has been searched for areas of habitat that may be used for shelter, basking and egg laying. An assessment of food plants present and species suitable for egg-laying has been undertaken.

Invasive species – the site has been searched for evidence of species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Other protected and notable species have been scoped out of this assessment due to an absence of records and lack of suitable habitat within the surrounding area.

The potential of the site to support protected or notable species has been assessed through field observations and desk study information. The likely presence of a species is ranked as follows:

> ***Negligible*** – while presence cannot be absolutely discounted, the site supports very limited or poor-quality habitat for a species or species group.
>
> ***Low*** – habitats within the site are of poor to moderate quality for a given species or species group, but presence cannot be discounted based on the national distribution, opportunities within the surrounding landscape and the results of the desk study.
>
> ***Moderate*** – habitats within the site are of moderate quality and provide opportunities for a given species or species group. The desk study has returned historic records and suitability is identified within the surrounding landscape.
>
> ***High*** – habitats within the site are of high quality for a given species or species group. The desk study returns historic records of local occurrence.

2.3 Survey limitation

The desk study is an important tool for identifying ecological constraints and opportunities but is subject to the following limitations:

Data Availability and Coverage

- Biological records are provided voluntarily and may not reflect all species present in the local area.
- Absence of records does not confirm absence of a species or habitat; it may simply indicate a lack of survey effort in that location.

Spatial Accuracy

- Some records may have imprecise or outdated grid references (e.g., 1 km or 10 km square), limiting their usefulness for site-specific assessments.
- Records are typically filtered to within 2 km of the site, which may exclude some wider ecological connections or mobile species.

Temporal Relevance

- Records may be up to 10–15 years old or more. While still valuable, these do not always reflect current species distributions, particularly for ephemeral or rapidly changing populations.

Confidentiality and Redaction

- Certain sensitive species (e.g. badger, barn owl, rare bat species) may be redacted or given coarse location references to prevent disturbance, limiting spatial interpretation.

Habitat Datasets

- GIS-based habitat maps (e.g., Priority Habitat Inventory) are indicative and do not always reflect current ground conditions. In some cases, habitat boundaries are generalised or under-mapped.
- Features like veteran trees, hedgerows, and smaller waterbodies are often omitted from national datasets unless independently mapped.

Field survey limitations:

- Limited access to building interior: The internal spaces of Springbank were not accessible at the time of the survey due to the property being occupied. As such, the bat roost assessment was restricted to a ground-based external inspection only.
- Many species of bat in the UK are crevice-dwelling, therefore signs of bat occupation may be obscured from view. As such a precautionary view has been adopted. The external inspection of the buildings have been undertaken from ground level.
- As is the nature of ecological surveys, the observations made during this assessment represent a snapshot in time and may not reflect seasonal changes in species presence, behaviour, or habitat condition. Mobile and transient species (e.g. badgers, birds, bats) may use the site intermittently and were not necessarily present or detectable at the time of survey.

Despite these limitations, the findings provide a robust baseline suitable for preliminary assessment and determining the need for further survey work, particularly in relation to potential bat roost features.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

Overview

A review of ecological data obtained from the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) and publicly available datasets via the MAGIC interactive mapping service identified a number of statutory and non-statutory designated sites within a 2 km radius of the proposed development site. These include:

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

Designated sites within 2 km of the site include:

Statutory Sites

- Kendall's Meadow SSSI - Located approximately 710 m north of the site, this statutory Site of Special Scientific Interest is designated for its species-rich mesotrophic grassland. No direct hydrological or ecological connectivity is expected due to intervening land use.

Non-Statutory Sites

Within a 2 km radius of the application boundary, the desk study identified 58 non-statutory designated sites, including Notified, Candidate, Potential, and Historic Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). These sites encompass a wide range of habitat types, such as:

- Mesotrophic and wet grasslands
- Species-rich and unmanaged hedgerows
- Mature/veteran trees
- Canals and associated marginal vegetation
- Ditches, road verges, and ponds

These sites are ecologically significant at the local and regional level, contributing to landscape-scale connectivity and ecological coherence. Many lie within 1 km of the development boundary and may be functionally linked to the site through hedgerow and ditch networks.

Notified LWS

- *Meadow and Pond, Brook Farm* (946 m): A mesotrophic grassland and pond system surveyed in 2006. This site represents one of the closest confirmed LWS designations and may offer suitable habitat for amphibians, birds, and invertebrates.

Potential/Candidate LWS

A further **23 sites** within 1 km are recognised as Candidate or Potential LWS. These include a variety of habitat types of high local biodiversity value. A selection is summarised below:

- ***Stoke Lane Hedgerow*** *(187 m) – Species-rich hedgerow with 11 species. Not surveyed.*
- ***Mature Ash at Mulberry Farm*** *(197 m) – Veteran ash (1,250 mm DBH) with large basal cavity and fungal fruiting bodies (Inonotus hispidus).*
- ***Ashby Canal Bridge 23 to Stoke Golding Moorings*** *(224 m) – Canal with marginal vegetation and bridge with ferns.*

- ***Ashby Canal & Sutton Wharf Grassland*** *(328 m) – Canal habitat, mesotrophic/marshy grassland with 8 indicator species, one Red Data Book (RDB) orchid (Anacamptis morio), species-rich hedgerow, and mature trees (ash and willow).*
- ***Stoke Golding Old Cemetery*** *(355 m) – Mesotrophic grassland with scattered trees. Surveyed 2015.*
- ***Hinckley Road Oak*** *(366 m) – Mature oak tree. Not measured.*
- ***Wykin Lane Oak*** *(523 m) – Mature oak in hedgerow. Not measured.*
- ***Higham Lane Ash*** *(581 m) – Mature ash. Not measured.*
- ***Crown Hill Grassland*** *(587 m) – Grassland with six LWS indicator species. Not surveyed.*
- ***Stoke Golding New Cemetery*** *(685 m) – Mesotrophic grassland, species-rich hedgerow, pond, and plantation.*
- ***Playing Field Oak*** *(686 m) – Mature oak tree in boundary hedgerow.*
- ***Hinckley Road Grassland*** *(707 m) – Mesotrophic grassland with seven indicator species.*
- ***Hinckley Road Hedgerows*** *(737 m) – Two adjoining species-rich hedgerows with standard trees.*
- ***Dadlington Main Street Grasslands*** *(756 m) – Mesotrophic and wet grassland with 12 indicator species.*
- ***Stoke Golding Trees North of Wykin Road*** *(811 m) – Three mature trees (2 ash, 1 oak) with large girths.*
- ***Wykin Lane Hedgerow*** *(825 m) – Species-rich hedgerow with trees.*
- ***Stoke Road Hedgerow 1*** *(876 m) – Species-rich hedgerow with standards.*
- ***Wykin Lane Ash*** *(888 m) – Veteran ash (4.08 m girth) with significant deadwood.*
- ***Upton Lane Ash*** *(903 m) – Mature ash tree. Recorded in 2011.*
- ***Broadlands Farm Ash*** *(928 m) – Veteran ash tree with estimated girth >3 m.*
- ***Hedgerow E of Higham Lane & 4 Mature Trees*** *(944 m) – Species-rich hedgerow with 2 oaks and 2 ash trees.*
- ***Sutton Lane/Fenn Lanes Hedgerows*** *(982 m) – Eight species-rich hedgerows (9–11 species each).*
- ***Lodge Farm Track Oaks*** *(995 m) – Four mature oak standards in hedgerow. Not measured.*

These non-statutory sites enhance ecological connectivity across the landscape, functioning as stepping stones, or corridors for local wildlife. Several support features of value to bats, amphibians, birds, and botanical interest, and should be considered in relation to potential indirect impacts and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) design opportunities.

Protected species

Species records obtained from the Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC) indicate a diverse assemblage of legally protected and notable species within the 2 km search area.

Bats:

Multiple records of bat species have been returned, confirming the presence of several species known to roost sites and forage habitat in the wider landscape. Species recorded include:

- *Common pipistrelle* (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- *Soprano pipistrelle* (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- *Nathusius's pipistrelle* (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)
- *Brown long-eared bat* (*Plecotus auritus*)
- *Noctule* (*Nyctalus noctule*)
- *Lesser noctule* (*Nyctalus leisleri*)

- *Serotine* (*Eptesicus serotinus*)
- *Natterer's bat* (*Myotis nattereri*)

The presence of confirmed roosts within the search area demonstrates the local importance of the landscape for bat conservation. Notably, the nearest confirmed roost is located at St Margaret's Church, approximately 210 m from the site.

A search of the MAGIC interactive map database identified one historic European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) granted within 2 km:

- Licence reference: EPSM2013-6503
  Location: Approx. 710 m south-east of the site
  Species: *Common pipistrelle* and *brown long-eared bat*
  Details: Licence issued for the destruction of a bat roost (resting place)

No other EPS licences for bats have been identified within the search radius.
This information supports the precautionary approach adopted for bat assessments on-site and informs the requirement for further survey or mitigation in relation to potential roost features identified at Springbank.

Reptiles:
The data search returned two records of reptile species within a 2 km radius of the application site:

- Grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*)
- Adder (*Vipera berus*)

Both records are located at distances greater than 1 km from the site and are not associated with habitats that are directly similar to or connected with those present within the red line boundary.

Notable birds:
The data search returned numerous records of bird species of conservation concern, including:

- Schedule 1 species listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- UK Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Although none of the records are directly associated with the site itself, several species of interest have been recorded within close proximity:

- Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) and Red kite (*Milvus milvus*) have both been recorded within 200 m of the site. These raptors are likely using the surrounding landscape for foraging, taking advantage of open grassland and edge habitats.
- Barn owl (*Tyto alba*) has been recorded within 1 km of the site.
  This species is known to hunt over grazed grassland, hedgerow corridors, and field margins such as those found locally, and may utilise the wider site for occasional foraging.

Amphibians:
The desk study identified three amphibian records within the 2 km search area:

- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) – Recorded approximately 1.6 km from the site.
- Common toad (*Bufo bufo*) – Recorded approximately 1.8 km from the site.
- Common frog (*Rana temporaria*) – Recorded approximately 1.8 km from the site.

Great crested newt is protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, making it a European Protected Species (EPS). Common toad is listed as a UK Priority Species, while common frog is widespread but not of conservation concern.

No ponds or known waterbodies occur within or within a 250m radius of the site. The nearest pond is located some 260m to the south west of the site and is separated by residential development and associated hard infrastructure.

Notable plants:
The desk study returned a record of a single notable plant species within the 2 km search radius:

- Native bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)

This species is protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to intentionally uproot or destroy it in the wild. It is also listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 due to national declines linked to hybridisation and habitat loss.

Notable mammals:
The desk study returned multiple records of protected and notable mammal species within a 2 km radius of the site, including species afforded protection under UK legislation and recognised as priorities for conservation.

Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)
Records of water vole are associated with the Ashby Canal, a linear aquatic corridor located some 200m to the north west of the site at its closest. The nearest watervole recorded is recorded in Dadlington, some 434m from the site. Further records for this species are noted at Higham Lane Fisheries, some 737m from the site.

Water vole is fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

The partially culverted ditch along the eastern site boundary is unlikely to support this species in its current form, but future habitat enhancements could strengthen local ecological connectivity with the wider water vole network.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
Otter records were also associated with the Ashby Canal and a Rive Sence tributary in Higham on the Hill, indicating that these waterbodies support or facilitate otter movement and foraging activity. The nearest otter record is noted to be some 302m from the site.

Otter is protected under both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, making it a European Protected Species (EPS).

While the site itself does not support suitable resting or breeding features for otter, downstream hydrological links and indirect disturbance pathways should be considered in relation to ditch modifications or surface water discharge.

Badger (*Meles meles*)
Multiple records of badger and badger setts were returned from the local area. No badger records are associated with the site or directly connected habitats.

The species is protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Notable invertebrates:

The desk study identified a limited number of directly reported invertebrate records within 2 km of the site.

- White-letter hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*) – recorded approximately 1.8 km from the site.

This butterfly species is listed as a UK Priority Species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, due to widespread population declines linked to the loss of mature elm (*Ulmus* spp.) trees, which are its larval foodplant.

3.2 UK Habitats Survey and Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site has been visited by suitably experienced surveyor Casey Griffin BSc (Hons) MCIEEM on 7th July 2025.

An annotated UK Habs map is provided in appendix 2 of this report. This illustrates the location of all habitat types recorded at the site together with target notes depicting features of ecological interest.

3.2.1 Weather Conditions

The weather conditions recorded during the site visit are as follows:

Table 1: Weather conditions at the time of the survey – 7th July 2025

Parameter	Recorded Figure
Temperature	17°C
Cloud cover	60%
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	2 / 3

3.2.2 Habitats

g4 modified grassland

The site comprises two contiguous parcels of modified grassland (UKHab code: g4). The sward has been assessed in accordance with UKHab Classification v2.0 and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex 1 (Condition Assessment).

At the time of survey, the grassland has been horse grazed and it noted that this was the case during previous survey (). Indicating that this would be the typical management regime for this site.

A botanical assessment within representative quadrats confirms a low species diversity, with more than 8 species per m² recorded. Furthermore the sward is dominated by a few fast growing grasses typically associated with fertile, neutral soils. Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) was recorded across all 10 quadrat samples, however, other typical grasses including cock's foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*) and yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) were also occasionally recorded within sample quadrats.

Broadleaved herbaceous species have been limited in abundance, likely due to the dominance of rye grass and other course, fast growing grasses, which tends to suppress forb diversity. The following species have been occasionally present:

- Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*)
- Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)
- Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*)

- Common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*)
- Cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)
- Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
- Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)
- Common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*)

The overall composition is indicative of modified grassland, representing a low distinctiveness habitat under the Biodiversity Metric. The dominance of competitive grasses and low herbaceous cover suggests suboptimal condition, as further indicated within Table 2 below.

Table 2: Habitat Condition Assessment – g4 grassland

Number	Criteria	Result
1 **essential criteria**	There must be 6-8 species per m^2. NB - this criterion is essential for achieving moderate condition.	Fail – rye grass dominant
2	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7cm and at least 20% more than 7cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	Fail – sward grazed
3	Some scattered scrub (including bramble) may be present, but scrub accounts for less than 20% of total grassland area. Note - patches of shrubs with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Fail – blackthorn and bramble encroachment from boundary hedgerows
4	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Fail – damaged to sward around drinking trough and evidence of poaching
5	Cover of bare ground is between 1 – 10%, including localised areas, e.g. rabbit warrens	Fail – damage
6	Cover of bracken is less than 20%	Pass
5	There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed in Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981).	Pass
Number of criteria passed		Condition score = 1 – failing essential criteria A results in poor condition

g4 grassland

g4 grassland

damage

quadrat

The modified grassland (UKHab code: g4) present on site is of low ecological distinctiveness, characterised by a species-poor sward dominated by coarse, fast-growing grasses. This competitive growth regime suppresses the establishment and diversity of forbs, resulting in a homogenous and structurally limited habitat. In accordance with the Biodiversity Metric v4.0 condition assessment, the grassland is considered to be of low ecological value and is assessed as being in 'Poor' condition.

h2a: native hedgerow

Outgrown native hedgerows are present along the northern and eastern site boundaries, as well as centrally within the site, separating the two grassland compartments. These linear features have been classified as h2a – Native hedgerow in accordance with the UKHab Classification v2.0.

The hedgerows appear to be unmanaged, with no evidence of recent flailing. This has resulted in a mature, outgrown canopy and the rhizomatous spread of blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) into adjacent areas of modified grassland, particularly along the central hedgerow. The hedgerow structure includes occasional standard ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*), which add vertical complexity to these linear habitats.

Species Composition

The woody species present reflect a typical native hedgerow assemblage, including:

- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.)
- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) – occasional standards

These hedgerows provide important linear connectivity across the site and link with wider boundary features in the surrounding landscape. They offer nesting habitat for birds, nectar and fruit sources for invertebrates, and potential commuting corridors for bats and small mammals.

The Hedgerow Condition Assessment (Biodiversity Metric v4.0), included within Table 3 below, determines the baseline condition of these features:

Table 3: Hedgerow Condition Assessment

Number	Criteria	H1	H2	H3
A1	Height >1.5m average along length	Pass	Pass	Pass
A2	Width >1.5m average along length	Pass	Pass	Pass
B1	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5m for >90% of length	Pass	Pass	Pass
B2	Gaps make up <10% of the total length, no gaps >5m	Pass	Pass	Pass
C1	>1m width of undisturbed ground with perennial vegetation for 90% of length	Fail – grazed	Fail – grazed	Fail – grazed
C2	Plant species indicative of enrichment of soils dominate <20% of the area of undisturbed ground	Fail – nettles and creeping thistle	Fail – nettles and creeping thistle	Fail – nettles and creeping thistle
D1	>90% of hedgerow and undisturbed ground free from invasive, non-native species	Pass	Pass	Pass

D2	>90% of hedgerow and undisturbed ground free from damage caused by human activities	Fail – mature piled	Fail – mature piled	Fail – mature piled
E1	There is more than one age class of tree present	Fail – ash in failing health	Fail – ash in failing health	Fail – ash in failing health
E2	At least 95% of trees in healthy condition	Fail – ash in failing health	Fail – ash in failing health	Fail – ash in failing health
Number of criteria passed		Condition score = 1 – failing 5 or more results in poor condition	Condition score = 1 – failing 5 or more results in poor condition	Condition score = 1 – failing 5 or more results in poor condition

50: dry ditch associated with native hedgerow

A narrow, partially culverted ditch runs along the eastern boundary of the site. This feature has been classified under secondary code of 50 as it is thought unlikely to meet the requirements for inclusion as r1 (being unlikely to hold water for 4 consecutive months. This appears to represent a historic drainage feature, likely collecting runoff from surrounding land and garden boundaries.

Physical Characteristics

- The ditch is narrow (typically <1 m in width) and appears heavily shaded by the adjacent boundary hedgerow.
- Culverted sections limit the continuity and flow of water, and little to no surface water was present at the time of survey (July 2025).
- The banks are steep in places, with limited emergent or marginal vegetation recorded.
- No aquatic plant species or macroinvertebrates were observed during the site visit, indicating very low aquatic ecological function.

The ditch currently offers limited value for aquatic biodiversity, lacking both flow and structural complexity. It may, however, function as a linear corridor for terrestrial invertebrates or small mammals, and potentially provide ecological connectivity between the eastern hedgerow and surrounding habitats.

The Ditch Condition Assessment (Biodiversity Metric v4.0), included within Table 4 below, determines the baseline condition of these features:

Table 4: Ditch Condition Assessment

Number	Criteria	Result
A	The ditch is of good water quality – no signs of pollution	Fail – piled manure
B	A range of emergent, submerged and floating plants are present	Fail
C	There is less than 10% cover of filamentous algae	Assumed pass
D	A fringe of aquatic marginal vegetation is present for more than 75% of the length	Fail
E	Physical damage is evident along less than 5% of the ditch	Fail - Culverted in sections
F	Sufficient water levels maintained – min summer depth of 50cm	Fail
G	Less than 10% of the ditch is heavily shaded	Fail
H	There is an absence of non-native plants and animals	Pass
Number of criteria passed		Condition score = 1 –results in poor condition

u1b5 buildings, u1b developed land sealed surfaces and 828 vegetated gardens

Buildings in relation to their roosting bats and nesting birds' potential are further discussed in more detail in section 3.2.3 Buildings. The western portion of the site comprises the residential property Springbank, its associated driveway, parking area, and gardens. These areas have been classified using the UKHab Classification v2.0 as follows:

- u1b5 – Buildings
- u1b – Developed land, sealed surface
- 828 – Vegetated garden

u1b5 – buildings

The single-storey dormer bungalow at Springbank has been included within this category. Its ecological value is discussed in greater detail in Section 3.2.3 – Buildings, with specific reference to its potential to support roosting bats and nesting birds. Aside from these features, the built fabric is considered to offer negligible ecological value in its current condition.

Buildings and hardstanding

Buildings and hardstanding

u1b – developed land sealed surface

The access drive and front garden of Springbank are predominantly surfaced with hardstanding, including tarmac and paving. These areas provide no meaningful habitat for wildlife and are of low ecological distinctiveness, as defined under the Biodiversity Metric v4.0.

828 – vegetated garden

To the rear and a very small area to the frontage of Springbank is vegetated garden comprised of:

- Lawn,
- Ornamental flower beds,
- Isolated planted shrubs, and
- A single small tree (estimated DBH >30 cm), which is not recorded separately but is accounted for within the overall area of vegetated garden habitat.

This area is maintained as a typical domestic garden, with limited structural or botanical diversity, and is assessed as being of low distinctiveness and ecological value. Nonetheless, vegetated gardens may support opportunistic use by urban-adapted species, such as hedgehogs, common birds, and invertebrates.

3.2.3 Preliminary Roost Assessment

Springbank is a dormer-style residential bungalow with an attached single-storey flat-roofed garage. An external Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on 7th July 2025 by a suitably experienced ecologist (Casey Griffin MCIEEM), in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2023).

Overview and building condition

The building is of modern construction, with recent alterations evident, including the addition of a dormer extension to the rear. The roof appears in good condition and is not of any significant age, likely replaced at the time of dormer construction. Other features include:

- Hanging tiles on the dormer elevation (rear)
- UPVC windows and doors, all tightly sealed and well-fitted
- Brickwork in sound condition, with no visible cracks, gaps, or missing mortar
- Flat-roofed garage, roof appears intact
- Fascia and bargeboards in good condition, with no visible entry points

Internal inspection

No internal inspection was possible as a result of access limitations with the building being tenanted.

Suitability for roosting bats

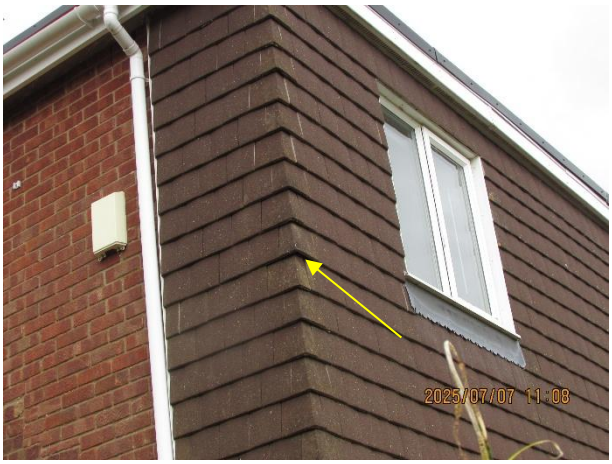
No obvious bat roosting evidence (e.g. droppings, staining, feeding remains) was recorded during the external inspection. However, the following minor Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) were noted:

- A slight lift to some of the corner hanging tiles on the rear dormer, potentially allowing access for crevice-dwelling species such as common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- A small gap in the roofline finish at the top corner of the flat-roofed dormer, which may provide an occasional ingress point (see photo references)

Due to the generally modern and well-sealed nature of the building, these features are limited in extent and unlikely to support large or diverse roosts, but may offer occasional or transient opportunities for crevice-roosting bats.

Based on the external inspection and in accordance with BCT guidelines (2023), the building is considered to have Low suitability for roosting bats. This classification reflects the presence of limited PRFs, combined with generally intact and modern construction, and the absence of confirmed bat field signs.

Gap at corner of flat roof



Lift to corner hanging tiles

As such, while the structure is not a confirmed roost, the presence of a possible crevice access point warrants a precautionary approach, and further survey effort (e.g. emergence/re-entry surveys) is recommended.

Bats in Trees

A ground-based assessment of all trees within the site boundary was undertaken in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines (Collins, 2023). No Potential Roost Features (PRFs) suitable for roosting bats (e.g. rot holes, splits, fissures, lifted bark, woodpecker holes) were identified during this assessment. The mature trees present on site are largely associated with existing hedgerow boundaries. While these trees currently exhibit cluttered canopies and do not display features typically associated with bat roosting, several are ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) specimens that have reached a level of maturity where natural decay processes may begin to create suitable roosting opportunities in the future.

In addition, consideration must be given to the potential impacts of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), which may accelerate the formation of PRFs through limb failure or decay.

To safeguard bats, any future tree removal, significant tree surgery, or hedgerow management works should be preceded by an updated inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine whether PRFs have developed since this assessment.

Where possible, the site design and landscaping proposals will seek to retain the existing hedgerows and trees, thereby maintaining potential future opportunities for roosting bats and preserving habitat connectivity.

3.2.4 Other Protected Species

Foraging and Dispersing Bats

The data search by LRERC reveals the surrounding habitat to offer valuable foraging opportunities for a range of bat species present locally. The site as well as the surrounding landscape is likely to sustain densities of invertebrates and therefore bats would be provided with good foraging opportunities within a local context. Furthermore, nearby established roosts are likely to be heavily dependent on foraging opportunities within their Core Sustenance Zones (CSZs) (BCT; Core Sustenance Zones: Determining zone size; 2016).

Nesting birds

The desk study identified several records of notable bird species within the local landscape, indicating the presence of suitable nesting and foraging habitat in the wider area.

The site offers limited to moderate potential for supporting nesting birds, primarily associated with the native boundary hedgerows.

Hedgerows and Trees

The outgrown native hedgerows along the site's northern, eastern, and central boundaries contain a mix of woody species, including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), with occasional standard ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees. These provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of common passerines such as dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), and wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*).

The hedgerows are currently unmanaged, displaying evidence of structural outgrowth, which may offer dense nesting cover.

Springbank – vegetated garden

The small rear garden of Springbank comprises ornamental planting, a small lawn, and isolated shrubs, which may provide occasional nesting opportunities for urban-adapted or generalist bird species. A single small tree (DBH >30 cm) offers limited additional structural diversity but is not considered significant in isolation.

Buildings
No evidence of nesting birds was recorded on the Springbank bungalow or its garage, and all soffits, bargeboards, and rooflines were found to be intact and well-sealed. Consequently, the buildings are assessed to be of negligible value for nesting birds, including swifts, swallows, or house martins.

Amphibians

The desk study returned three amphibian records within a 2 km radius of the site. These include:

- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) – recorded approximately 1.6 km from the site
- Common toad (*Bufo bufo*) – recorded approximately 1.8 km away
- Common frog (*Rana temporaria*) – recorded approximately 1.8 km away

All records originate from locations beyond 1 km of the site and are not associated with habitats directly connected to the development boundary.

The site does not support any permanent waterbodies or aquatic features suitable for breeding amphibians. The partially culverted ditch on the eastern boundary is narrow, shaded, and appears to hold limited water. It is therefore unsuitable for amphibian breeding and unlikely to function as a significant movement corridor.

The grazed modified grassland lacks refugia features such as logs, stone piles, or dense leaf litter, which are typically required for amphibian foraging or hibernation. The gardens and flowerbeds associated with Springbank provide minimal terrestrial habitat, with ornamental planting and heavily managed lawn offering little ecological value.

Given the distance to known records, absence of aquatic habitat, and suboptimal terrestrial features, the site is considered to be of negligible to low value for amphibians, including great crested newt. The likelihood of the species being present within the site boundary is considered very low, and no further survey or mitigation is deemed necessary at this stage.

However, precautionary working methods (e.g. staged vegetation clearance) is advised during site clearance as a best-practice measure to safeguard any unexpected individuals of widespread amphibian species.

Reptiles

The desk study returned two reptile records within a 2 km radius of the site:

- Grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*)
- Adder (*Vipera berus*)

Both records are located more than 1 km from the site and are not associated with habitats that are functionally connected to the proposed development area.

The site is predominantly composed of improved, horse-grazed modified grassland, which supports a heavily disturbed sward with limited structural variation and low floral diversity. These conditions offer suboptimal basking, sheltering, and foraging opportunities for reptile species.

Additional site features include:

- Boundary hedgerows: Although outgrown, they are generally shaded with limited understorey or marginal edge habitat typical of suitable reptile corridors.
- Eastern boundary ditch: Partially culverted and shaded, offering limited value as a thermally suitable reptile feature.
- Garden areas and ornamental planting around Springbank: These are heavily managed and offer negligible value for reptiles.

No refugia (e.g. log piles, compost heaps, rubble) or extensive scrub/rough grassland mosaics are present, which further reduces the site's value to reptiles.

Based on the lack of suitable habitat, absence of local connectivity, and distance from known reptile records, the site is considered to be of negligible to low ecological value for reptiles. It is highly unlikely to support resident reptile populations, and no further survey work is recommended in relation to reptiles at this time.

Badger

The desk study returned a good number of badger records, with the nearest badger sett located approximately 213m from the application site. However, this record lies beyond the High Street and is separated from the site by a dense band of existing residential development, which presents a significant barrier to movement for terrestrial mammals such as badger.

The site itself comprises improved, horse-grazed grassland which is subject to regular disturbance and nutrient enrichment. The unmanaged hedgerows do offer some linear habitat suitable for sett establishment. However the walkover survey revealed no direct evidence of badger activity such as spoil heaps, digging evidence, latrines, hair, or snuffle holes.

Given the open and disturbed nature of the site and absence of field signs, there is no indication of current or recent badger use within the red line boundary.

Badger clans have territory ranges that vary in size dependent on existing environmental factors such as availability of forage and sett building habitat.

A search of the site and neighbouring habitats during the informing survey, has not identified evidence of badger activity and no evidence of setts or digging have been recorded by the ecologist. However, this species would likely enter the site as they naturally disperse within this landscape.

Invertebrates

The desk study returned a **single notable invertebrate record** within the 2 km search area:

- **White-letter hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*)**, a UK Priority Species, recorded approximately **1.8 km** from the site.

This species is typically associated with **mature elm trees**, particularly those supporting flowers or basal regrowth suitable for larval feeding. No elm (*Ulmus* spp.) was identified on site, and the surrounding habitat is not considered functionally connected to this record.

The site supports a limited range of invertebrate habitats, including:

- Improved, horse-grazed grassland: This habitat is of low floral diversity, heavily disturbed, and dominated by fast-growing competitive grasses, offering poor nectar and larval habitat potential.

- Outgrown hedgerows: These support common native species (hawthorn, elder, blackthorn), providing a moderate seasonal nectar and fruit resource for generalist pollinators.
- Ornamental garden planting at Springbank: Provides low-value nectar sources, but is isolated and intensively managed.

No deadwood piles, wetland features, or species-rich flower-rich habitats are present to suggest the potential for notable or specialist invertebrate assemblages.

Based on the ***homogenous nature*** *of the grassland,* ***limited floral resources****, and* ***absence of habitat complexity****, the site is assessed as being of* ***low value to invertebrates****. While some* ***generalist species*** *such as hoverflies, bees, and butterflies are likely to occur, the site does* ***not support suitable conditions for specialist or conservation-priority invertebrates****.*

Otter and water vole

The desk study returned recent records of both otter and water vole within the 2 km search radius. These records are associated with the Ashby Canal and Higham Lane Fisheries, with nearest records between 200 and 300m from the site. These watercourses are not functionally connected to the site via continuous aquatic corridors and separated from the site by established residential areas.

A partially culverted ditch is present along the eastern site boundary, and was assessed during the July 2025 walkover survey. This feature:

- Is narrow and heavily shaded, with minimal aquatic vegetation;
- Appears to hold little or no standing water at the time of survey;
- Shows no signs of active use by semi-aquatic mammals (e.g. no latrines, feeding remains, footprints, burrows, or slides).

The ditch is disconnected from known otter and water vole populations and is unlikely to function as a dispersal or commuting route for either species, particularly in its current culverted and degraded state.

Given the limited water availability, lack of vegetative structure, absence of field signs, and disconnect from nearby aquatic networks, the site is considered to be of negligible ecological value for both otter and water vole. No further survey work is recommended in relation to these species.

Notable mammals

The desk study did not return specific records for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) or brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) within 2 km of the site. However, both species are widespread across the county and are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 due to national population declines.

Hedgehog

The site offers limited but potential suitability for hedgehog, particularly in association with:

- The boundary hedgerows, which provide shelter, cover, and potential movement corridors;
- The rear garden of Springbank, which contains small areas of vegetated cover;
- Limited foraging potential in the improved grassland, although regular horse-grazing reduces invertebrate prey availability.

No signs of hedgehog activity (e.g. droppings, tracks, nests) were recorded during the walkover survey. However, due to their nocturnal and mobile nature, presence cannot be ruled out.

Brown Hare

The grazed, enclosed grassland does not offer the open, arable or lightly grazed pasture typically favoured by brown hare. The site is also bounded by housing and fencing, with limited landscape connectivity to wider suitable habitat. As such, it is considered to be of negligible value for this species.

While no further survey work is required, precautionary working practices during vegetation clearance and groundworks are recommended to safeguard any unexpected individuals of widespread notable species.

Invasive Species

A small stand of ornamental cotoneaster was recorded within the rear garden of Springbank, associated with the domestic planting typical of a residential curtilage. The precise species was not identified during the walkover survey, but several species of Cotoneaster, including *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, *C. integrifolius*, and *C. simonsii*, are listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) due to their potential to spread and displace native flora.

Although currently restricted to a small, contained area of the site, Schedule 9-listed Cotoneaster species are classified as invasive non-native species (INNS). It is an offence under the Act to plant or otherwise cause these species to grow in the wild.

4. Biodiversity Statement

Schedule 7A of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1990* (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) requires all development proposals in England—unless explicitly exempt—to deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This requirement applies to all habitats within the redline boundary of a proposed development site, regardless of whether those habitats are directly impacted.

Site Context and Habitat Value

In line with the BNG Good Practice Principles and the mitigation hierarchy, the avoidance of high-value habitats should be prioritised during site selection and design. In this case, the application site does not support any irreplaceable or high distinctiveness habitats (e.g. ancient woodland, priority grassland, or veteran trees), and it is unlikely that habitats of high ecological value would be impacted as a result of the proposed development.

The site consists of low distinctiveness grassland (UKHab g4), native hedgerows (h2a), and urban habitats, none of which is classified as irreplaceable or designated. These habitats, while ecologically functional, are not of notable conservation concern in isolation and are suitable for enhancement or replacement within the development scheme.

Applicability of the BNG Condition

Planning permission is being sought for the construction of 19 residential units with associated infrastructure access and car parking.

Given the scale, nature, and land take of the proposed development, this application is subject to the Biodiversity Net Gain Condition under the Environment Act 2021.

Under the statutory framework, this condition:

- Requires the submission and formal approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) following the grant of planning permission;
- Ensures that the development delivers a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity units, as calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric;
- Prohibits commencement of development until the Biodiversity Gain Plan is approved by the Local Planning Authority;

- Requires that biodiversity gains are secured for a minimum of 30 years, either on-site or through registered off-site units or statutory biodiversity credits.

A statutory metric displaying only baseline value of habitats assessed during the walkover surveys of the site is provided within the Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Study (GE0866bfs). This metric demonstrates a baseline habitat unit value of 1.50 habitat units, 1.26 hedgerow units and 0.21 watercourse units**.**

5. Assessment of Potential Ecological Impacts

Further Survey Effort

Bat Surveys:

Springbank has been assessed as offering low suitability for roosting bats, due primarily to the presence of a small number of low value PRFs. No direct evidence of bat use was identified during the external inspection.

In accordance with the *Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023)* for buildings of low roost suitability, the following is recommended:

- One dusk emergence survey should be undertaken during the bat activity season (May to August), ideally between late May and July when detection likelihood is highest.
- The survey should be conducted in suitable weather conditions (i.e. dry, temperatures above 10°C, low wind).
- The building should be observed by experienced and licensed bat ecologists using appropriate equipment such as full-spectrum bat detectors and infrared and/or thermal recording tools.
- If no bat activity is recorded, and no further features of concern are identified, works may proceed with precautionary method statements.
- If bat presence is confirmed, further survey effort and licensing will be required before any works affecting the building can commence.

This approach ensures that the survey effort is proportionate to the assessed risk, while remaining compliant with best practice and relevant legislation.

Summary of the Proposed Development

The proposed development, as shown on Proposed Site Layout Plan dwg. no. 25-31-SK01-C (Hayward Architects Ltd, April 2025), involves the demolition of an existing residential property (Springbank) and the construction of 19 new residential dwellings on land to the rear of properties fronting High Street, Stoke Golding, Leicestershire

Key components of the proposal include:

- 19 residential dwellings, comprising a mixture of 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom houses, including affordable housing units (marked as "3B Aff" and "Mais").
- A new vehicular access route created from High Street via the demolition of Springbank.
- A central public open space (POS) provision of approximately 1,230 m², situated in the northern portion of the site.
- Soft landscaping, including retained and newly planted trees, hedgerow trimming (to 5 m width), and a proposed balancing pond in the northeast corner (to be confirmed).
- Some hedgerow removal to accommodate access and layout changes, with retained hedgerows shown to be integrated within the scheme.
- Root Protection Areas (RPAs) and existing trees are noted on plan, with details marked for retention and consideration during construction.

- The site area extends to approximately 0.79 ha, bounded by residential development to the south and open countryside to the north and east.

This development represents a transition from predominantly pastoral land use to a residential scheme, and ecological considerations have been incorporated into the site layout, including tree and hedge retention, public greenspace, and attenuation features.

Designations:

One statutory site lies within 2 km of the development boundary:

- **Kendall's Meadow SSSI** – Located approximately 710 m to the north of the site, this Site of Special Scientific Interest is designated for its species-rich mesotrophic grassland habitat. The site supports plant communities of notable botanical value and is of regional ecological importance.

There is no direct habitat connectivity between the application site and Kendall's Meadow. The intervening landscape includes residential development, roads, and agricultural land, and there is no hydrological connection. Given the separation distance, the small scale of the development, and the absence of airborne or waterborne pollution pathways, there is no anticipated direct or indirect impact on the features for which the SSSI is designated.

Non-Statutory Designations

A total of 58 non-statutory sites (Local Wildlife Sites – LWS) were identified within 2 km of the development boundary, comprising a range of:

- Notified LWS (e.g. Meadow and Pond, Brook Farm)
- Candidate and Potential LWS (e.g. Stoke Golding Old Cemetery, Ashby Canal sections, Sutton Wharf Grassland)
- Historic LWS with outdated or incomplete survey data (e.g. Greenhill Covert, Foxcovert Lane Hedgerow)

Of these, 23 sites are located within 1 km, and five lie within 500 m, the closest being a species-rich hedgerow at 187m. These sites support a variety of semi-natural habitats, including:

- Mesotrophic and marshy grasslands
- Mature standard trees and veteran features
- Species-rich hedgerows
- Canal-side aquatic and marginal habitats

The development site is physically and functionally separate from all LWS and potential LWS features. The closest features are buffered by residential curtilages and boundary features, and no linear hydrological or green corridor linkages are expected to be severed. There will be no direct land-take or encroachment onto any designated site.

Although indirect effects, such as disturbance from increased recreational pressure, light spill, or changes in local hydrology, can be of concern, the scale and layout of the development, including buffering of retained habitats and provision of on-site greenspace, is considered sufficient to avoid measurable impact on surrounding LWS sites.

Furthermore, the provision of habitat enhancement and net gain measures within the site (e.g. hedgerow management, pond creation, ditch enhancement and species planting) will contribute positively to the local ecological network, offering improved resilience to adjacent sites.

Conclusion

There are no anticipated significant adverse effects on either statutory or non-statutory designated sites as a result of the proposed development. The proposed scheme is spatially and functionally isolated from nearby ecological

designations, and ecological impacts are expected to be negligible provided appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures are implemented.

Habitats:

Modified Grassland (UKHab: g4)

The majority of the site comprises improved, horse-grazed grassland, classified as g4 – Modified Grassland. This habitat is:

- Low in botanical diversity, dominated by competitive grasses with limited herbaceous content;
- Subject to long-term equine grazing, with poaching and nutrient enrichment evident;
- Assessed to be in poor condition and of low distinctiveness under the Biodiversity Metric v4.0.

Impact:

The grassland will be largely lost to facilitate development. However, given its low ecological value, this is considered a minor ecological impact, and no specific mitigation is required beyond standard BNG offsetting and habitat replacement.

Native Hedgerows (UKHab: h2a)

Three native hedgerows are present along the northern, eastern, and central boundaries, classified as h2a – Native Hedgerow. These features:

- Are largely unmanaged and outgrown, with occasional ash standards;
- Support common woody species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, and bramble;
- Provide nesting habitat, foraging resources, and landscape connectivity for birds, mammals, and invertebrates.

Impact:

A small section of the central hedgerow will require partial removal to accommodate internal access roads. The remaining features are proposed to be retained and buffered, with trimming (e.g. to 5 m width) shown on the proposed layout plan.

- Retained hedgerows may be temporarily affected by edge effects (e.g. lighting, disturbance).
- Root protection zones must be respected during construction.

Mitigation/Enhancement:

- Retained hedgerows should be managed under a favourable condition regime, including gapping-up and rotational cutting.
- A minimum buffer of 2–3 m is recommended around retained sections to protect ecological function. These areas should be excluded from any proposed garden space.
- Hedgerows will form part of the BNG baseline and enhancement strategy.

Eastern boundary ditch

The proposed development will retain the partially culverted ditch along the eastern site boundary, but several indirect impacts are anticipated:

- Encroachment by garden boundaries: The current layout shows private gardens backing directly onto the ditch, potentially leading to shading, overspill, and tipping, which may further degrade the habitat.
- Risk of further culverting or infilling: Without appropriate design safeguards, sections of the ditch could be further modified, reducing its hydrological and ecological function.
- Loss of opportunity for functional connectivity: If the ditch remains unmanaged or fragmented, its potential as a linear habitat corridor will be further diminished.

Although the ditch currently holds no flowing water, is heavily shaded, and lacks aquatic vegetation, it remains an important boundary and ecological feature that could support greater biodiversity with intervention.
While currently degraded, the ditch offers a valuable opportunity to deliver measurable ecological uplift if subject to enhancement. Through buffering, restoration, and integration with SuDS, the ditch could function as an ecological corridor, supporting amphibians, invertebrates, and plant diversity, as well as contributing to habitat connectivity within the local landscape.

Built Habitats (UKHab: u1b5, u1b) and Vegetated Garden (UKHab: 828)
The residential property Springbank, along with its driveway and gardens, will be lost during demolition and redevelopment.

- These urban habitats are of low ecological value, supporting limited floral or faunal interest.
- A small tree within the garden and ornamental beds offer minimal biodiversity function.

Impact:
Loss of these features is not ecologically significant. Opportunities exist to deliver biodiversity gain through the integration of wildlife-friendly landscaping, street trees, and garden enhancements within the new development.

Conclusion
The proposed scheme is considered to result in minor negative impacts on habitats of low to moderate ecological value, all of which can be appropriately mitigated or compensated through the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy, site layout, and ecological enhancement measures.

Protected species:

Badger

Badgers are capricious animals that move between setts in response to changes in environmental factors and the activity level on site may fluctuate during the year. Therefore it is important to regularly monitor badger activity on site, both prior to and during the construction phase. As such, a pre-commencement badger check, by a suitably qualified ecologist, should be undertaken prior to development and any recommendations following this check should be followed.

During the works any holes, trenches, and/or ditches should be supplied with an inclined mammal ladder to provide a means of escape. These risk avoidance measures should be detailed within a supporting CEMP.

Enhancement Opportunities
While no badger population is currently using the site, the following measures could support wider ecological connectivity:

- Planting of fruit- or berry-bearing native shrubs (e.g. hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose) along retained hedgerows to support occasional foraging.
- Retained green corridors (e.g. hedgerows, ditch line) could be buffered and managed to allow continued movement of badgers or other terrestrial mammals.
- Mammal gates or drop kerbs could be incorporated at key fence lines or boundaries to prevent severance of potential future movement routes.

Foraging and Dispersing Bats

To safeguard bats, any future tree removal, significant tree surgery, or hedgerow management works should be preceded by an updated inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine whether PRFs have developed since this assessment.

Where possible, the site design and landscaping proposals will seek to retain the existing hedgerows and trees, thereby maintaining potential future opportunities for roosting bats and preserving habitat connectivity.

Given the presence of suitable habitat within the immediate landscape, a bat friendly lighting scheme should be considered. Such measures should include:

- careful placement of luminaires so that they illuminate only the required areas,
- minimise light spill on suitable foraging habitat nearby;
- installation of directional lighting, specialist bollard or low-level downward directional luminaires;
- use of appropriate luminaires, with no UV component, warmer colours (i.e. more yellow/orange, ideally <2700Kelvin and a peak wavelength higher than 550nm;
- LED luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% and with good optical control;
- Use of security lighting with motion sensors and short (1minute) timers; and/or use of dimming or part night lighting.

Nesting birds

Construction and preparation activities on-site have the potential to disturb nesting birds. This could have a significant adverse effect on local breeding bird populations and would constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Compliance with this legislation will be a key consideration during the operational phase of the works.

As a precaution, works should be scheduled outside of the typical bird nesting season (March–August). If this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist must conduct a nest survey no more than 24 hours before clearance works begin.

If an active nest is found within the proposed clearance zone, appropriate avoidance measures must be implemented. These may include establishing a buffer zone marked with barrier tape to prevent disturbance. The nest must then be monitored until all chicks have fledged, and a qualified ecologist has confirmed the nest is no longer active before works can proceed.

Enhancement Opportunities

Although the site supports limited nesting habitat overall, retained hedgerows, occasional trees, and scrubby edges provide potential foraging and nesting opportunities. The loss of small areas of this habitat can be offset through the following targeted enhancements:

Installation of Integrated Nest Boxes

Install a variety of bird boxes across the development, targeting both common and declining species:

- House sparrow terrace boxes on gable ends of new dwellings.
- Swift bricks integrated into new builds (ideally at ≥5 m height on north or east elevations).

Native and Fruit-Bearing Planting

Landscaping proposals should seek to use native shrubs and trees that provide nesting structure and winter food, including: Dog rose (*Rosa canina*), guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*). Proposals should also seek to incorporate grasses and wildflowers that support insect prey species, benefitting invertebrate-feeding birds.

Otter and water vole

No species-specific mitigation is required; however, standard best practice should be implemented to avoid secondary effects during construction:

- Pollution prevention measures should be applied as per Environment Agency guidance, especially near the ditch:
    - Secure fuel/chemical storage away from any drainage features.
    - Implement sediment traps and silt fencing if excavation occurs near the ditch.
- Maintain buffer zones and ditch margins to avoid unnecessary trampling or damage.

Enhancement Opportunities
Although no impact is predicted, there is scope to enhance the ditch to benefit a broader range of aquatic and riparian fauna:

- Daylighting culverted sections where feasible.
- Introducing native emergent/marginal vegetation to increase structure and ecological function.
- Ensuring continuous vegetated buffers along the ditch to improve habitat value and potential corridor function.

These measures would help support invertebrate diversity, and potentially improve the site's role as functional green infrastructure, even if not directly supporting otter or water vole.

Hedgehog and Brown Hare

Hedgehog and Brown Hare are likely to be present within the wider landscape and as such, it is possible that these species may cross the site whilst naturally dispersing in search of forage or commuting. Should these species be using habitats on site, effects may include death / injury, habitat loss and fragmentation. It is considered unlikely that proposals will have any significant effect on the favourable conservation status of these species. During the works any holes, trenches, and/or ditches be supplied with an inclined mammal ladder to provide a means of escape. Future fencing on the site must ensure use of mammal gates/gravel boards to allow for movement.

Enhancement Opportunities
The European hedgehog is a UK Priority Species and a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006, experiencing significant national declines due to habitat fragmentation, road mortality, and loss of nesting and foraging opportunities in suburban areas.

To support this species within the development, the following enhancement measures are recommended:

- **Hedgehog Highways**
    - Incorporate 13 cm × 13 cm holes (minimum) at the base of fencing panels between gardens to allow movement through the development.
    - Ensure at least one hedgehog gap per plot, ideally aligned with other linear features such as hedgerows, the ditch corridor, or open space.
- **Permeable Boundaries**
    - Encourage use of hedgerows, post-and-rail fencing, or planting buffers instead of close-boarded fencing to improve landscape permeability.
- **Wildlife-Friendly Landscaping**
    - Include hedgehog-friendly planting within gardens and communal greenspaces:
        - Native hedgerow shrubs (e.g. hawthorn, dog rose)
        - Low-intensity managed lawns and undisturbed refugia (leaf litter, log piles)

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Appendix 1 – Legislation

Legislation & Planning Policies

A number of UK and European policies and legislation deal with the conservation of biodiversity.

Protected habitats & species

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) Section 9 protects great crested newt and all UK species of bat and their resting places from disturbance, damage and destruction. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 additionally lists great crested newt and all UK species of bat as European Protected Species, and additionally prohibits killing or injury of individuals, as well as protecting their resting places from disturbance and destruction.

Common reptiles (grass snake, adder, common lizard and slow worm) are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) and are protected from killing and injury.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 181 (as amended) provides protection to all species of wild bird and their nests. Under Section 1 it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly take, damage, destroy, or otherwise interfere with nests or eggs, or to obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest.

Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is an offence to disturb, kill, injure or take a badger or to disturb, damage, obstruct access to, allow a dog to access or destroy a sett.

Priority habitats & species

The NERC Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity. Additionally, this Act states that a list of priority species and actions must be drawn up and published, to contain species and habitats of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. These lists of Priority Species and Priority Habitats, which encompass the previous UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species, are those identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. Priority habitats and species were chosen based on international importance, rapid decline and high risk. The list contains over 1000 habitats and species in total.

Invasive species

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains introduced species which have been identified as having a severe economic and ecological impact through their introduction. It is an offence to release or allow to escape into the wild any species which is listed under Part I or Part II of Schedule 9, or any species which is not native.

Appendix 2 – UK Habitat Map