Shericles Farm, Desford

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Issue Date: 17 December 2025

Report No. 250822.PEA.v2

Site Details

Report	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Site Address	Shericles Farm, Kirkby Road, Desford, Leicestershire LE9 9JX
Central OS Grid Reference	SK 46719 02761
Client	Ms Hannah Hufford

Document Control

Author	Reviewed By	Comments	Report Version	Issue Date
Melissa Bell	Katy Clark-Goddard	First issue	v1	07/11/2025
Zachary Mason	Anna-Scott-Swift	Second issue – updates to client details and RLB changed to include access track	v2	17/12/2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Croft Ecology was commissioned by Ms Hannah Hufford to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Shericles Farm, Desford, Leicestershire (the 'Site') in relation to proposals to construct a bespoke self-build dwelling (the 'Proposed Development') at the Site.
- The PEA also incorporated a great crested newt Habitat Suitability Index assessment (HSI).
- The survey, undertaken on 29 September 2025 by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel, involved identifying habitats and features of ecological interest within the Site, including their potential to support protected or notable species, in order to determine the key ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the Proposed Development. Any additional survey work and any possible mitigation requirements were also identified.
- The Site comprised a residential dwelling, vegetated garden with a pond, a horse grazed field, manege and associated stables, individual trees and woodland blocks. The zone of impact of the proposed works was limited to a small area of the garden used for parking.
- The proposals will not impact any of the existing buildings at Shericles Farm. The recommendations made are based on this understanding and should be reviewed and amended as required if proposals are changed.
- A pond was located in the north of the vegetated garden section of the Site. A HSI assessment identified the pond as having poor suitability for great crested newts and it was considered unlikely that the species would use the Site for terrestrial foraging, refuge and commuting based on the habitats surrounding the Site. As the pond will not be affected by the proposed works directly or indirectly, no further consideration was given to the pond.
- The Site had potential for foraging and commuting bats and for passing terrestrial mammals as well as common amphibians and reptiles, though no evidence of protected species within the Site boundary was recorded. There remains some potential for protected or notable species such as badger, reptiles, amphibians and hedgehog to pass through the Site on occasion.
- No further surveys of the Site are required.
- It is recommended that the boundary trees, in particular the mature trees of the Site, are retained and protected both during- and post-development.
- Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures have been recommended in Section 4. In addition to the tree protection noted above, these measures include sensitive timing of works to ensure that no protected or notable species will be harmed during works, sensitive vegetation clearance in respect of great crested newts with a check for nesting birds, and

measures around lighting to ensure species can continue to make use of the Site post-development.

- Proportionate enhancement measures are also included in Section 4, which would include provision of integrated bat and bird boxes to provide enhanced opportunities for protected/notable species.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Croft Ecology was commissioned by Ms Hannah Hufford to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Shericles Farm, Kirkby Road, Desford, Leicestershire LE9 9JX (central grid reference: SK 46719 02761) (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). At the time of writing it is understood that a bespoke self-build dwelling, comprised of a two-storey property, will be created alongside associated curtilage, private garden space and additional landscaping and planting (the 'Proposed Development').

The recommendations in this report are made on the understanding that no existing buildings will be impacted and that proposals will take place as initially advised. If any amendments are made, the survey findings and subsequent recommendations are likely to also require review and amendment.

The survey effort also included a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of the pond to the north of the existing vegetated garden.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

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

1.2 Site Location

The Site (as demarcated in red on Figure 1 below) was located within a primarily agricultural landscape, surrounded entirely by agricultural fields and farm buildings. Beyond this were the village of Desford 0.6km northeast and industrial units 1.3km southeast. There were small woodland blocks, hedgerows, scattered individual mature trees, a network of drains/ditches, open waterbodies and small ponds throughout the local landscape. Botcheston bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was located 2.5km to the northeast.

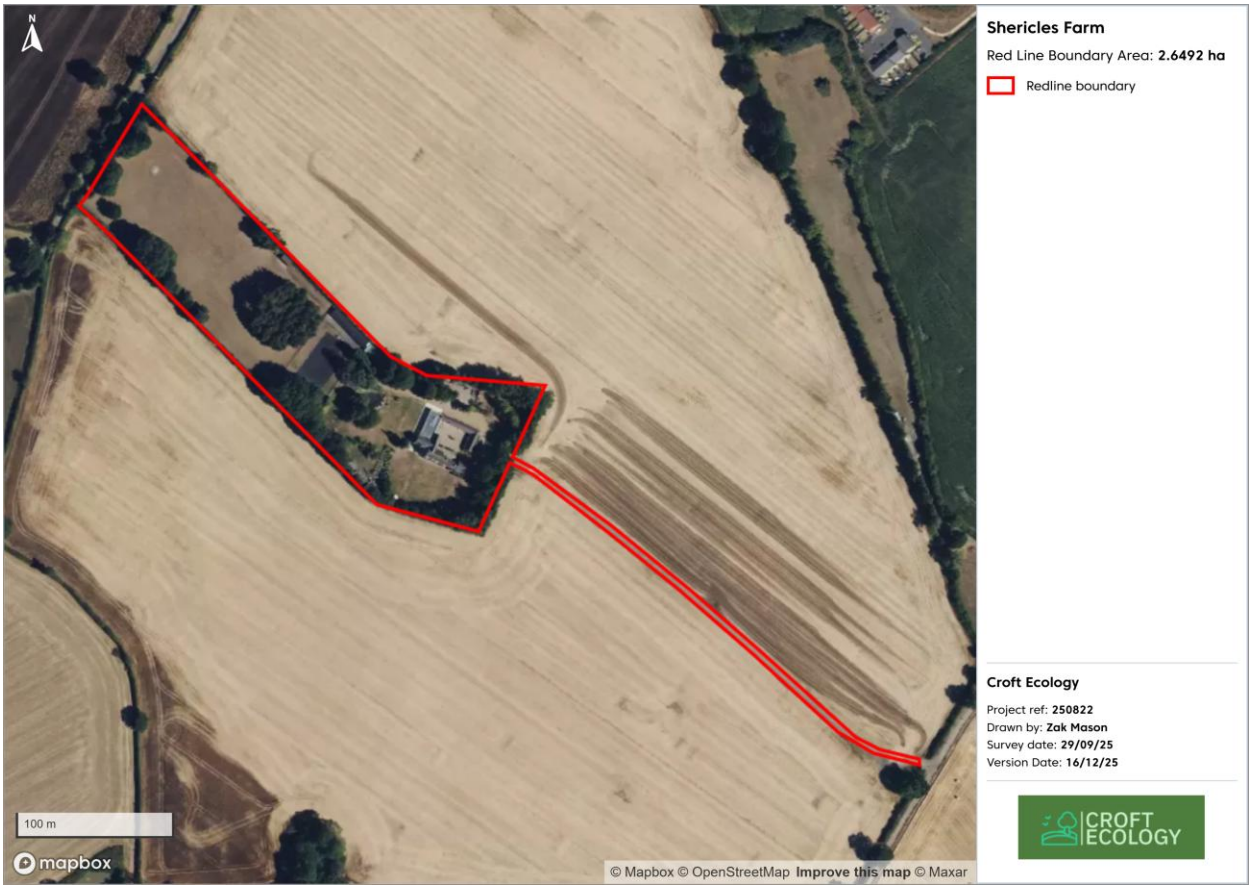

Figure 1. Site Location (basemap source: OpenStreetMap)

1.3 Planning and Legislative Context

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

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

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Personnel

The preliminary ecological survey was undertaken by Zachary Mason, Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Zachary has four years of experience working in the field of ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of walkover surveys/baseline habitat surveys and has been using UK Hab survey methodology for the last three years. Zachary has prepared many reports during this time including protected species survey reports, method statements, PEAs and ECIAs. Zachary holds a level 1 GCN licence (2024-12260-CL08-GCN).

This report was prepared by Melissa Bell (PhD), an Assistant Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Melissa has prepared reports detailing the results of entomological survey work previously and, more recently, bat emergence surveys, Preliminary Roost Assessments, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and Biodiversity Net Gain.

The technical review was undertaken by Katy Clark-Goddard BSc (Hons) MSc, Senior Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Katy has over five years' experience working in ecological consultancy, including undertaking PRA, PEA, EcIA and BNG assessments, on small to medium scale private, MOD and railway sites. Katy holds Natural England protected species licences for bats (level 1 2021-51994-CLS-CLS & level 2 2025-12753-CL18-BAT), dormouse (level 1 2025-12751-CL10A-DOR) and GCN (level 1 2024-12121-CL08-GCN).

2.2 Data Search

The Government's website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was accessed on 28 October 2025 to conduct an initial search for designated nature conservation sites, priority habitats and Natural England European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences issued within 1km of the Site, and to determine whether the Site was located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ).

Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre also provided details on statutory and non-statutory sites, as well as protected and notable species records, within a 1km radius of the Site boundary on 3 September 2025.

Additionally, aerial photography was viewed to assess habitat connectivity around the Site's locale, which may be important to ecological features present on-Site and for the consideration of suitable ecological enhancements.

2.3 Field Survey Date and Conditions

The Site was visited on 29 September 2025 and included all land within the red line boundary (see Figure 1) together with a brief assessment of those habitats bordering the Site.

Weather conditions at the time of survey were dry with 15% cloud cover, no wind and a temperature of 14°C.

2.4 UK Habitat Field Survey

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

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

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

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

[1] UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at https://www.ukhab.org/)

2.5 Protected Species

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

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

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

2.5.1 Great Crested Newt – Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

Prior to the field survey being undertaken, a review of aerial imagery identified one pond within the Site boundary (Figure 2). This pond was accessible at the time of the survey and was therefore subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment to determine its potential to support great crested newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*.

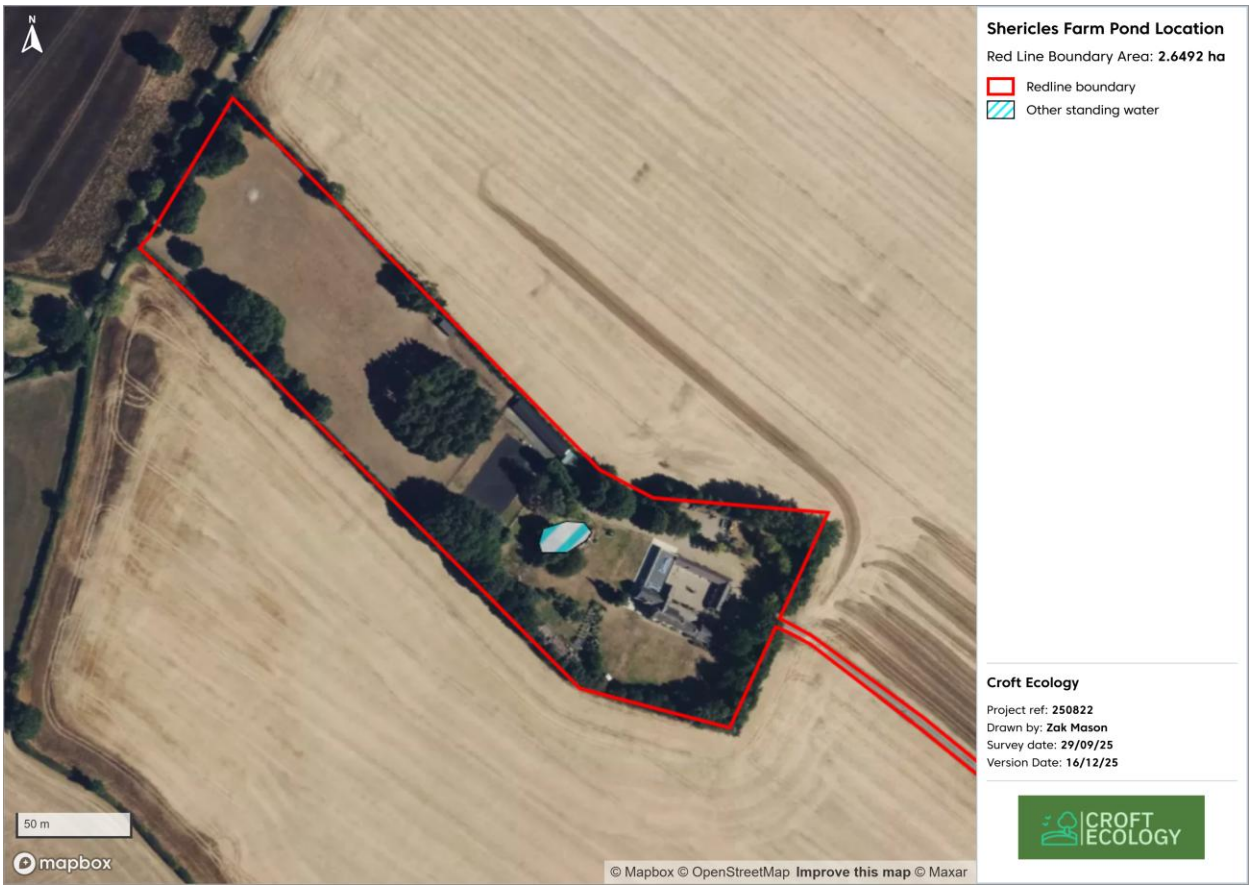

Figure 2: Pond location (blue and white) within the Site boundary (red).

HSI assessments are a widely accepted method to determine if a waterbody is suitable for GCN by assessing ten 'suitability' criteria, namely:

- geographic location,
- pond area,
- frequency of drying,
- water quality,
- perimeter shading,
- waterfowl presence,
- fish presence,
- pond density within 1km,
- terrestrial habitat quality, and
- macrophyte cover.

The methods used to measure each variable are provided within ARG advice note 5 (2010). The mean of these ten variables then calculates a score to determine if additional investigation is necessary (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Scale of Pond Suitability used in HSI Assessments

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

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

2.5.2 Bats: Ground Level Tree Assessment

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

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

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

Table 2. Assessment of bat roosting potential in trees[2]

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

2.6 Limitations

No limitations were encountered during the survey of the red line boundary. Whilst a HSI assessment of all ponds within 500m of the Site may be a preferred route, all such ponds (bar one) were on private land and were subsequently inaccessible. However, for the reasons described in the Results and Discussion sections, this was not considered a limitation to the GCN assessment.

2.7 Evaluation of Constraints and Opportunities

All potential ecological constraints to the Proposed Development were identified. In the context of the Mitigation Hierarchy[3], consideration was given as to how any significant effects could be

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

[3] "*The overarching aims of ecological work used to inform the planning process are to minimize harm and to maximize benefits for biodiversity resulting from development. The generally accepted way of doing this, now embedded within the planning system, is to follow the "mitigation hierarchy". This seeks as a preference to avoid impacts then to mitigate unavoidable*

avoided, minimised or mitigated. Following this, appropriate compensation and enhancement measures are outlined within this report. Where additional surveys are required to better understand the likely presence of a protected species, or the value of a habitat and the impact of the proposals on this ecological feature, these are detailed in Section 4 of this report. Opportunities for ecological enhancements are also provided in Section 4 of this report.

impacts, and, as a last resort, to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures." Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013)

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Sites & Priority Habitats

No statutory designated nature conservation sites were identified within 1km of the Site. The Site was located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Botcheston Bog SSSI where its designation starts 2.5km north of the Site. However, given the small footprint of this Proposed Development, the proposals do not meet the threshold required to warrant further investigation. Consequently, statutory designated sites are not considered further within this report.

Five non-statutory nature conservation sites were present within 1km of the Site. These are candidate and potential Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). A candidate site meets the LWS criteria but the landowner has not been consulted; and a potential site is likely to meet the LWS criteria but has not yet been assessed. Two of the sites: Desford, Neovia logistics bridleway and Desford, the range pond and marshland, were candidate Sites, both located approximately 700m east of the Site. The remaining three, N Peckleton hedgerows, hedgerows between Kirkby Road and Desford Lane and Hedgerow S of Hunts Lane allotments, were potential LWS. These were all species rich hedgerows, the closest of which was located 120m north of the northwest corner of the Site.

Two blocks of deciduous woodland Priority Habitats were identified within 1km of the Site, the closest being 0.7km southwest. In addition, the northernmost section of this closest block was Bullacre Spinney, an area of ancient and semi-natural woodland. Given the small scale of the proposals and distance from the Site, no impacts on Priority Habitats are anticipated and therefore they are also not considered further within this report.

3.2 Habitats

The eastern section of the Site consisted of vegetated garden with ornamental plantings, lines of trees, a pond, buildings and some individual trees. The western section of the Site consisted of a manege area with associated stable blocks, blocks of mixed woodland, coniferous woodland and broadleaved woodland, individual trees, modified grassland and a solar panel array.

The ‘zone of impact’ of the works, deemed to be the area where the new dwelling will be built, the access to this area and/or the surrounding areas which may be impacted by noise, light and vibration from the works, was considered when undertaking the PEA and considering

recommendations for further survey effort. This zone of impact is limited to an area of the garden currently used for parking to the north of the existing dwelling. This would include the existing access track to the property, and the lines of trees that are adjacent to the development area.

A UKHab Baseline Habitats Map of the Site is provided in Appendix B.

3.2.1 Vegetated garden

The eastern section of the Site consisted of a vegetated garden with a lawn dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne* with occasional daisy *Bellis perennis*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and broadleaf plantain *Plantago major*. Ornamental plantings such as cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, rhododendron *Rhododendron sp.* and blueblossom *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* were present along the southern boundary of the garden and within a flower bed within the southern lawn. Animal pens and coops were present in the southwestern area with some small, scattered apple trees *Malus sp.* and some coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana*. The garden also included a gravelled access track to the property, with a parking area and pathway connecting to the western field.

Photograph 1. Southern lawn of vegetated garden with ornamental plantings, looking west.

Photograph 2. Animal pen located within the vegetated garden, looking west.

3.2.2 Individual Trees

Individual trees were present across the Site and included species such as pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, weeping willow *Salix babylonica*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, Douglas spruce *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris* and small-leaved lime *Tilla cordata*. Notably, three weeping willow trees were present in the northeastern section of the vegetated garden, approximately 15m east of the Proposed Development.

Photograph 3. Individual oak tree in the western field of the Site.

Photograph 4. Weeping willows located in the vegetated garden, 15m east of the Proposed Development.

3.2.3 Line of Trees

Lines of trees were present within and along some of the boundaries of the vegetated garden. The eastern boundary of the vegetated garden had lines of leylandii trees *Cupressus × leylandii* either side of the existing Site access. The northern boundary of the vegetated garden had a line of poplar trees *Populus sp.* as well as a line of leylandii with some cherry laurel below. To the northwest of the existing residential dwelling, a line of trees containing beech *Fagus sp.*, large-leaved lime *Tilla platyphyllos*, Douglas spruce, Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris* and leylandii was present along the path connecting the garden to the menage area. The southern boundary of the southeastern corner of the Site had a line of apple, ash and sycamore trees.

Photograph 5. Line of poplar trees in the northeast of the vegetated garden.

3.2.4 Ornamental Pond

An ornamental pond was present within the lawn of the vegetated garden on Site. The pond was stocked with goldfish, carp and koi carp. The pond was surrounded by ornamental plantings and trees such as weeping willow, punk tree *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and wild cherry.

Photograph 6. Ornamental pond present on Site.

3.2.5 Buildings and Developed Land

The existing residential dwelling was located in the eastern section of the Site. It was brick built, with a tiled roof and contained both single-storey and two-storey sections.

A stable block was present on Site. to the west of the vegetated garden. Adjacent to the large stable block was a group of three storage containers.

A solar panel array with grassland beneath it was present in the western field, as well as a small animal field shelter.

A concreted track provided access to the eastern side of the Site.

Photograph 7. Southwestern elevation of existing residential dwelling on Site.

Photograph 8. Stable block to the west of the vegetated garden.

Photograph 9. Storage containers adjacent to stable block.

Photograph 10. Solar panels on Site.

Photograph 11. Concreted access track

3.2.6 Artificial Unvegetated – Unsealed Surface

A manege area for horses was present in the centre of the Site, to the west of the vegetated garden and east of the grassland field.

Photograph 12. Manege located on Site, with broadleaved woodland block visible in the far right.

3.2.7 Other Broadleaved Woodland

Three blocks of broadleaved woodland were present on Site. The first was located adjacent to the southwestern end of the menage area and contained pedunculate oak, ash, small-leaved lime, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, sycamore and a single leylandii tree. The understorey lacked vegetation due to the density of the trees and consisted of bare ground.

The other two blocks of broadleaved woodland were present within the western field. The area adjacent to the southwestern boundary of this field contained beech, silver birch, ash and small-leaved lime, and had a pile of stone present at the base of one of the trees. The area adjacent to the northwestern boundary contained sweet chestnut, large-leaved lime and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*.

Photograph 13. Broadleaved woodland on southern boundary of the western field.

3.2.8 Other Woodland – Mixed – Mainly Broadleaved

One area of mixed woodland was present on the northwestern boundary of the Site, slightly further north than the broadleaved woodland on this same boundary, though both were distinct blocks. This block contained leylandii, small-leaved lime and sweet chestnut trees.

Photograph 14. Mixed woodland, predominantly broadleaved along the northwestern boundary.

3.2.9 Other Scot's Pine Woodland

An area of woodland dominated by Scot's pine was present within the western field, at the southernmost end. Occasional larch *Larix sp.* and field maple trees *Acer campestre* were also present. The understorey consisted of perennial rye grass with occasional common nettle *Urtica dioica* and curled dock *Rumex crispus*, and rarely occurring common chickweed *Stellaria media*. Piles of logs were also present within the understorey.

Photograph 15. Other Scot's pine woodland on Site.

3.2.10 Modified grassland

The western field consisted of a modified grassland field grazed by horses. The field had a consistently short sward and was dominated by perennial ryegrass, with occasional meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and rarely occurring common nettle, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*.

A small strip of modified grassland also surrounded the manege. This area had a similar species composition but was dominated by bare earth due to constant use by horses.

Photograph 16. Horse grazed modified grassland field.

3.3 Species

3.3.1 Amphibians

There were three records of GCN identified within the data search. The closest of these were two records, a positive eDNA from 2020 and a single male from 2021, which were both 310m from the Site. The final record was a positive eDNA from 2020, 811m from the Site. The MAGIC website returned no positive results for GCN in pond surveys within 1km.

The pond on Site was subject to a HSI assessment to determine the likelihood of GCN presence/absence. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. HSI results from the pond on Site.

HSI Category	**HSI Result P1**	**HSI Numerical Score P1**
Location	A	1.0
Pond Area	100m^2	0.2
Pond Permanence	Never Dries	0.9
Water Quality	Poor	0.33
Shade	0-60%	1
Waterfowl Effect	Minor	0.67
Fish Presence	Major	0.01
Pond Density within 1km	16 total, 5 per km^2	1
Terrestrial Habitat	Moderate	0.67
Macrophyte Cover	0-10%	0.35
HSI Score	**Poor**	**0.40**

As per the results of the HSI assessment detailed in Table 2 above, the pond was considered to have poor suitability for GCN, with the pond size, fish presence and lack of macrophyte cover contributing to the low suitability.

There were two additional ponds located within 250m of the Site, one 60m to the west and the other 210m to the south. Notably, neither of these two ponds are located within 250m of the zone of impact for the Proposed Development. There was no access to these ponds for an HSI assessment as they were located on private land.

The Site itself provided limited suitability for GCN due to the heavily grazed/managed grassland. The woodland understory and log piles offered potential refugia but were limited to the western area of the Site. The Site was surrounded predominantly by arable farmland, limiting its connectivity to the surrounding landscape.

The Site lies within an amber zone for Natural England GCN Risk Zones. Amber zones contain main population centres for GCN and comprise important connecting habitat. There are a small number of records of GCN in the surrounding area, however the Site is surrounded by arable

fields with connectivity to the surrounding landscape limited to a couple of hedgerows connecting to the western boundary of the Site. The woodland blocks and log piles offered limited sheltering opportunities for GCN and were located in the western field of the Site where no impacts from the Proposed Development will occur. Given the lack of suitable habitat in proximity to the development area, which is limited to a gravelled area of driveway, the risk of impacts to GCN as a result of the proposals are considered **very low**.

As such, although the Site lies within an amber zone, the Site is considered to have **low** potential for GCN to pass through the Site at most. A District Level Licence (DLL) was considered for this development, however due to the minimal opportunities on Site for GCN, a DLL was deemed disproportionate, with precautionary methods of works a more appropriate approach.

The data search also returned eight other records for amphibians including the common toad *Bufo bufo*, common frog *Rana temporaria* and smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*. The modified grassland, woodland understoreys and log pile refugia on-Site were considered to offer **low** potential for foraging and commuting common amphibians.

3.3.2 Badger

Twenty-seven records of badgers were identified within the desk study, the closest of which was for a sett 500m from the Site, from 2018. Twenty-three of the records were for setts: with the earliest record from 2010 and the latest record from 2022. As badgers are highly mobile within their territories this shows they are likely to forage within the area. Habitats within the Site were suitable for badger foraging but no evidence of badger setts or badger activity were noted during the survey. Therefore, the Site is considered to offer **moderate** potential for badgers.

3.3.3 Bats

The desk study returned 41 records of at least six species of bat within a 1km search radius of the Site, including Myotis bat species *Myotis sp*., noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Nathusius's pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii,* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*.

The records were dated between 2007 and 2020. Twenty of the records were from a site 671m to the north, in 2019 from transect and static data. Eleven of the records relate to extension works at the industrial estate to the southeast dated between 2016 and 2020 and are also from transects and static detectors. No roosts were identified in the data search and no bat EPS licences were returned within 1km of the Site.

The GLTA identified a single tree: a weeping willow located within the northeast of the vegetated garden, which provided a feature suitable for roosting bats (Figure 3). The feature was a knothole at a height of 2m, facing north, and was located approximately 17m east of the zone of impact. The feature was given a grading of PRF-I as the cavity was only considered large enough to support a small number of bats.

Photograph 17. Knothole on weeping willow tree.

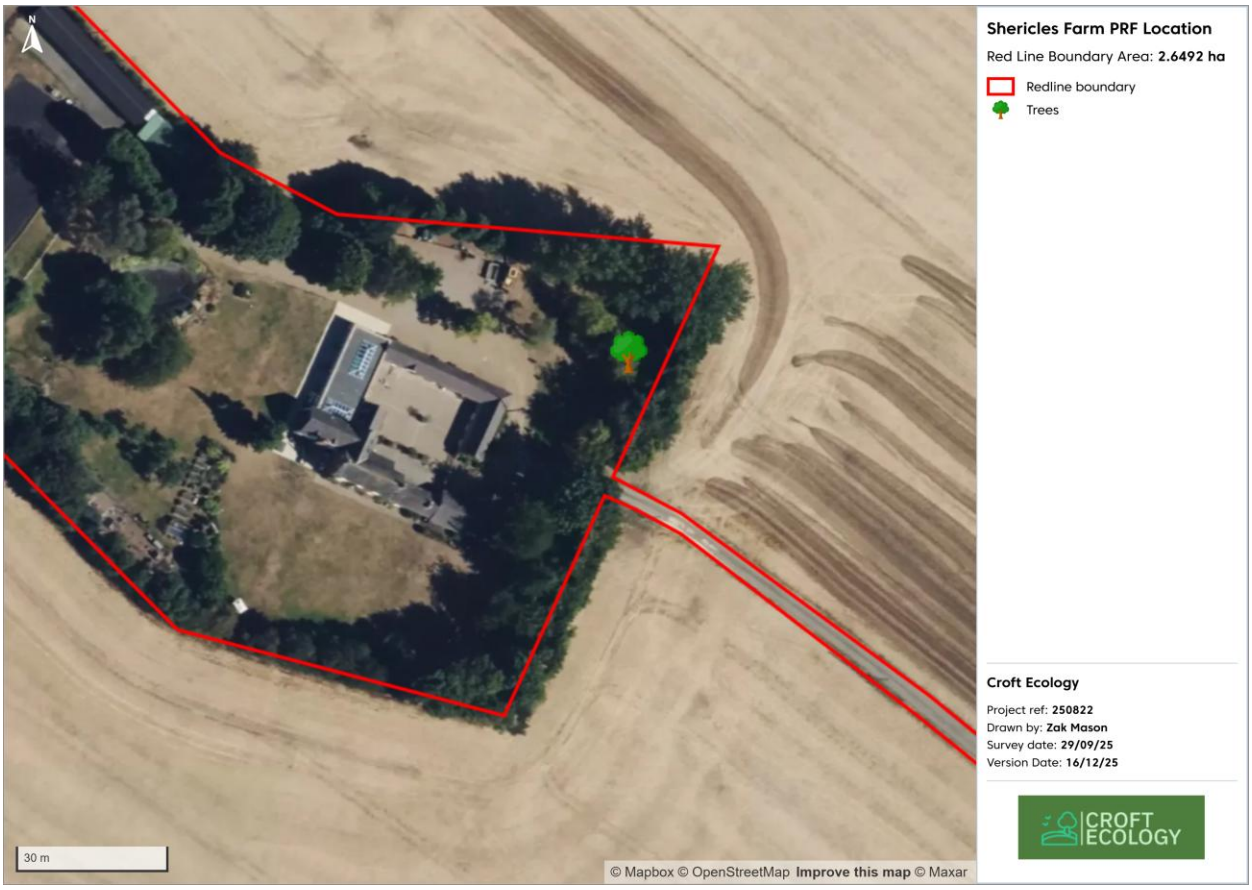

Figure 3: Location of Weeping Willow with PRF.

The existing buildings on Site are not due to be impacted by the proposals and were therefore not closely inspected.

The habitats on Site such as the lines of trees, pond and individual trees, offered suitable foraging and commuting opportunities for bats. There is good habitat connectivity within the wider landscape (agricultural hedgerows, woodland blocks and waterbodies). These features provide foraging habitats suitable for a variety of bat species, and connectivity to known records in the locality of the Site. Therefore, the Site was considered to be of **moderate** value to foraging and commuting bats (Collins, 2023). Whilst further surveys are not required, mitigation measures should be adopted during- and post-development to ensure in-flight bats, foraging and commuting over the Site or entering/exiting potential roosts on the tree or existing buildings, are not detrimentally affected by the Proposed Development. These are outlined in Section 4.

3.3.4 Birds

The desk study returned three records of birds that are listed on the UK's biodiversity action plan, two from 2024 for red kite *Milvus milvus* and redwing *Turdus iliacus,* and one from 2019 for hobby *Falco subbuteo*. The closest record was 400m from the Site.

There were two owl boxes present on Site, both in the blocks of woodland within the western field. There was no evidence of activity during the survey, however they were not closely inspected.

The Site offered **moderate** value for nesting the birds with lines of trees, individual trees, woodland blocks and the vegetated garden on Site offering foraging and nesting opportunities.

Photograph 18. Owl box present on Site.

3.3.5 Reptiles

Thirteen records of reptiles were returned as part of the desk study, all for grass snake *Natrix helvetica*. The closest were ten of these records which were 412m from the Site, where refugia checks found multiple juveniles in 2019 and 2022, and a single adult male in 2022. Habitats found within the Site offered minimal opportunities for reptile commuting, foraging, sheltering and basking, limited to refugia, including log piles and stone piles offered basking opportunities. While these refugia were present, the well-managed habitats that dominated the rest of the Site, along with the ploughed fields surrounding the Site, limited habitat corridors to the refugia

and connectivity to the wider landscape. As such, reptiles are unlikely to be resident within the Site but may pass through on occasion. Therefore, the Site was considered to have **low** suitability for common reptiles.

Photograph 19. Log piles providing potential refugia.

3.3.6 Invertebrates

No records of invertebrates were returned as part of the desk study. The habitats on Site were considered to provide limited suitability for invertebrates, as they are common and widespread, with limited botanical diversity. It is considered unlikely that the Site would support a significant assemblage of invertebrates and therefore, they are not considered further in this report.

3.3.7 Other mammals

The ornamental shrubs and trees offered low habitat value for small mammals such as hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus,* to shelter, commute and forage through the Site. The horse grazed modified grassland field was maintained to short sward and in regular use, creating lack of cover and disturbance unsuitable for hedgehog. There were numerous log piles and other refugia throughout the Site that offer sheltering and hibernation value to small mammals. Overall, the Site is considered to offer **moderate** potential for hedgehog.

3.3.8 Invasive species

The desk study revealed no records of non-native invasive species within 1km of the Site, nor were any identified on Site during the survey. It is noted that a rhododendron sp was identified on Site at the time of Survey but this was not considered likely to be one of those invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and, importantly, will not be impacted by the Proposed Development. As a result, this potential ecological constraint is not considered further within this report.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Proposed Development

At the time of writing it is understood that the Proposed Development is for a self-build dwelling. The zone of impact of the development is limited to a small area of the vegetated garden to the north of the existing dwelling. Due to the small area of the development and its limited scope within the wider Site, the impacts are likely to be low overall.

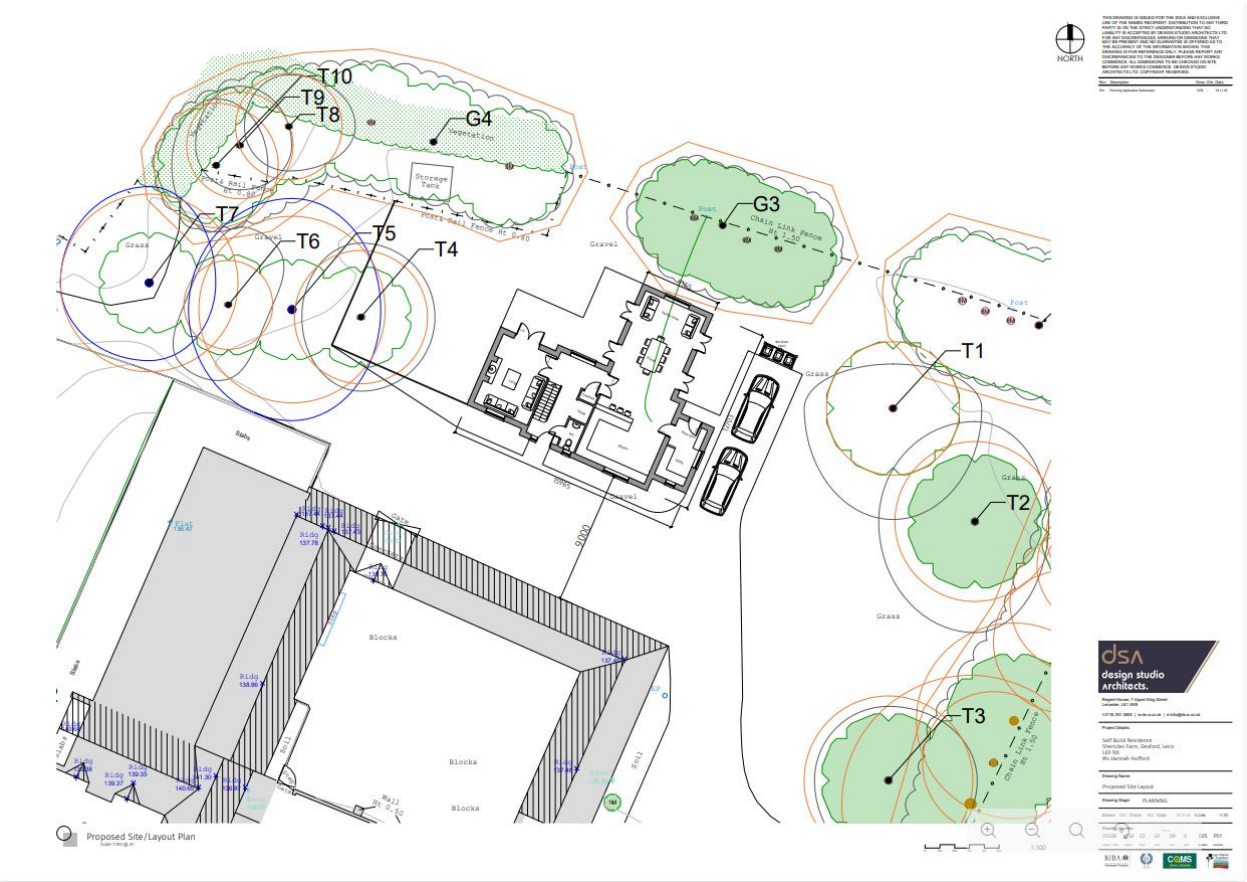

Figure 4: Proposed development – DSA-25008-005-P01.

4.2 Assessment of Ecological Impacts

4.2.1 Designated Sites & Priority Habitats

The Site is not functionally linked to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites, or to any Priority Habitat within 1km. As such, no impacts to these are anticipated from the proposals and no recommendations with respect to them are made.

4.2.2 Habitats

The Proposed Development area is small compared to the overall Site and is limited to an area of gravelled ground used for parking and storage within the wider vegetated garden. Therefore, the impacts to the habitats on Site will be minimal, with only vegetated garden to be lost and the lines of trees in the surrounding area susceptible to impacts. While vegetated garden provides low inherent ecological value, its loss will lower the biodiversity value of the Site and will need to be compensated for. At the time of writing, it is understood that all the trees, including those within proximity to the Proposed Development, will be retained. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that they are not impacted by the development with sensitive working practices employed.

Photograph 20. Proposed Development area.

Should significant changes to the proposed retention/removal of habitats or individual trees be made, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to discuss any changes required to these recommendations.

4.2.3 Species

The Site offered suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats, as well as one tree on Site offering a potential roosting opportunity. Therefore, a sensitive lighting scheme is

recommended during- and post-construction to avoid illuminating retained habitats i.e. individual trees and lines of trees. Roosting bats have not been ruled out on Site as no assessment of the building was undertaken, however only a PRF-I feature was identified in proximity to the Proposed Development and no impacts as a result of the development are anticipated.

The Site offers limited suitability for GCN, reptiles and common amphibians as it is predominantly heavily grazed/managed grassland, with limited connectivity to the surrounding landscape. The Site lies within an amber zone for Natural England GCN risk zones, however within the zone of impact of the proposed works the value for GCN is low.

Although no evidence of the Site being used by mammals was observed during the walkover survey, the Site is well connected to the surrounding natural environments for these species. It is considered likely that the species will pass through the Site on occasion. Safe methods of working should ensure that potential impacts to badger or other mammals, such as hedgehog, passing through the Site, can be avoided during construction activities. Continued opportunities for these species to pass through the Site should be included within the proposals.

The individual trees and lines of trees offer opportunities for nesting birds. Sensitive timing and methods of works, or pre-works checks by a suitably qualified ecologist would ensure that potential impacts to nesting birds could be avoided during site clearance.

4.3 Summary of Further Surveys Required

No further surveys are required provided works take place within 18 months of the date of this report. In this instance, or should the proposals change, an ecologist should be contacted for further advice as to whether any of the survey work may need updating.

4.4 Mitigation Requirements

- All contractors must be made aware of the potential presence of protected species within and adjacent to the works area, and that a suitably qualified ecologist must be contacted should any protected species be found unexpectedly.
- Should any common amphibians or reptiles be encountered during the works these should be carefully moved to an area of retained vegetation.
- Retained trees should be protected from accidental damage and compaction within their root protection areas in accordance with BS 5837: 2012.

- To ensure no harm occurs to hedgehog, badger, common amphibians, reptiles or any other animals moving through the Site, any trenches left open overnight will have a scaffold plank or similar placed in them to provide a means of escape for any trapped animal. Likewise, any open pipes should be temporarily sealed overnight to prevent any trapped animals.
- Materials brought onto Site should be stored on raised pallets to prevent any animals from taking refuge beneath/within them.
- No night-time work is anticipated. Any lighting to be installed as part of the scheme should be minimal and use luminaires lacking UV elements. Warm white LEDs (2700Kelvin or lower) should be used to reduce the blue light component (with peak wavelengths higher than 550nm) and should use a motion-sensor where possible to limit artificial light exposure. Light-spill onto adjacent habitats, including the tree with a PRF feature, the existing buildings and the tree lines and woodland blocks, should be avoided to maintain dark corridors for bats utilising the lines of trees for commuting and potentially the wider site for roosting. Further advice concerning light-spill, column height and glare should be discussed and agreed with an ecologist.
- Works should ideally be undertaken outside the typical bird nesting season of March-September. If this is not possible, such works during March-September must be preceded by a nesting bird check (within 24 hours) by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure no nesting is taking place in nearby buildings or vegetation. If there is evidence of nesting birds, work cannot proceed until nest-building and chick-rearing is complete or until an ecologist is able to advise on a suitable buffer distance to allow work in other areas of the Site.
- Gaps (approx. 13cm square) should be created in any new closed-boarded fencing to allow continued access for hedgehog across the Site.

4.5 Compensation and Enhancement

- Bird and bat boxes should be incorporated within or attached to the buildings, to provide additional opportunities for nesting birds and roosting bats. These could include ridge roost tiles for bats or sparrow terraces which are indicated below in Figures 5 and 6.
- Landscape proposals for the Site should include the provision of native species or those of known value to wildlife. This should include species to attract pollinators and other invertebrates, which in turn would provide increased foraging opportunities for most other species.

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

Figure 6. Schwegler house sparrow terrace available from various sources

5 CONCLUSION

The proposed works will result in the loss of a small area of bare ground within the vegetated garden and will have limited impacts on protected and notable species. While no further surveys are required, mitigation measures are required to ensure no impacts occur and compensatory planting is recommended.

The Site has some suitability for foraging and commuting bats, terrestrial mammals, amphibians, common reptiles and nesting birds. Sensitive working methods should be implemented to avoid impacts upon these species, e.g. lighting controls, seasonally timed work and measures to ensure animals are not trapped within excavations or open pipes overnight. This will ensure works are in line with relevant environmental legislation and planning policy with regards to protected or notable species with potential to be present on the Site.

The inclusion of landscape planting using native species, and integrated bird and bat boxes will provide biodiversity enhancements in line with National (National Planning Policy Framework[4] (NPPF, 2024).

[4] Paragraph 174 (d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: "*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: … (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity…".*

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7 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Legislation and Planning Policy

Summary

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

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Environment Act 2021
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revised in 2024
- Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2020-2041 SP25

UK Legislation

In Britain, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[5] serves as the main tool for safeguarding wildlife. Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) deals with the protection of wildlife, including birds, animals, and plants. The Schedules that hold the most significance in terms of planning are Schedule 1, which protects bird species, Schedule 5, which protects other animal species, and Schedule 8, which protects plant species. Schedule 9 lists species of plants and

[5] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

animals that are not native to Great Britain but have established themselves in the wild, posing a threat to the natural fauna and flora.

Additionally, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017[6] incorporates the EEC Council Directive 92/43/EEC, also known as the Habitats Directive, into UK legislation. This directive safeguards habitats and species of conservation concern throughout Europe, including those found in the UK.

Planning Policy

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

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

Designated Sites

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

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

[6] The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Priority Habitats and Species

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

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

Protected Species

Bats and Great Crested Newt

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

Common Amphibians

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

Common Reptiles

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

Birds

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

Badger

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

Invasive Species

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

APPENDIX B – UKHab Baseline Habitats Map