



Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Barfs Road, Distington



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

Quality and Environmental Assurance

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Barfs Road, Distington (central grid reference NY006238) in connection with proposals for residential development.
- 1.1.2 The survey comprised a desk study (including CBDC, MAGIC and Envirotech datasets) and an extended UKHabs Version 2 habitat survey, together with an assessment of the site's suitability for protected and notable species. A site visit was undertaken on 25 November 2025 by Andrew Gardner (BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS), a licensed ecologist.

Habitats

- 1.1.3 The site comprises predominantly species-poor modified grassland, with scattered urban trees, small areas of plantation woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland, and boundary hedgerows.
- 1.1.4 The grassland is of very low botanical diversity and does not constitute a Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI). Hedgerows on site are species-poor but are classified as HPI and should be retained where possible. Woodland areas are planted and of local ecological value only. No invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were recorded.
- 1.1.5 No statutory or non-statutory designated sites occur within 1km of the site and there are no ecological linkages indicating likely direct or indirect impacts to designated sites

Protected and Notable Species

- 1.1.6 Records of protected species occur within 2km; however, the site itself supports limited ecological value:
- 1.1.7 **Badger:** No setts or evidence of activity were recorded on site or within 30m of the boundary. The development is unlikely to affect badgers, subject to standard precautionary working practices.
- 1.1.8 **Bats:** The site provides very limited foraging habitat. All trees were assessed as negligible bat roost potential and no further bat surveys are required. Roosting bats are considered highly unlikely to occur on site.
- 1.1.9 **Birds:** Boundary hedgerows provide limited nesting potential. Impacts are considered minor and can be addressed through seasonal timing controls and habitat retention/enhancement.
- 1.1.10 **Red Squirrel:** No dreys or field signs were identified. Connectivity to surrounding woodland is limited and no specific mitigation is required.
- 1.1.11 Overall, habitats present are common and well represented locally. Ecological value is considered to be of local significance only.

Mitigation and Enhancement

- 1.1.12 Subject to the retention and protection of trees and hedgerows where feasible, implementation of precautionary measures during construction, and incorporation of biodiversity enhancements (including native planting, hedgerow reinstatement and bat/bird box provision), the proposed development can proceed without significant ecological constraint .
- 1.1.13 With appropriate mitigation and enhancement, it is considered that the proposal will not adversely affect protected species or the favourable conservation status of any species likely to occur. The site is suitable for residential development from an ecological perspective, subject to the recommendations set out within this report.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land a Barfs Road, Distington, central grid reference NY006238 (Figure 1). A site investigation was undertaken and a report compiled which includes recommendations for any future actions and or mitigation required.

2.1.2 The survey was requested in connection with the proposed construction of new houses.



2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 The main objectives of the study were:

- The completion of a UKHabs Version 2 (UKHab Ltd (2023)) survey including the preparation of a vegetation and habitat map of the site and the immediate surrounding area.
- The survey and assessment of all habitats for statutorily protected species.
- An evaluation of the ecological significance of the site.
- The identification of any potential development constraints and the specification of the scope of mitigation and enhancement required in accordance with wildlife legislation, planning policy and other relevant guidance, and;
- The identification of any further surveys or precautionary assessments that may be required prior to the commencement of any development activities.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3.1 Data Search

- 3.1.1 The Biological Records centre for Cumbria “CBDC”, the Envirotech dataset, and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) were searched to establish the presence of any records of statutorily protected, notable or rare species, and any designated sites of international, national, regional or local importance within a 2km radius of the site boundary.
- 3.1.2 The Envirotech dataset is compiled from extensive field surveys from the period 2004-present, as well as records obtained from third parties during this time.
- 3.1.3 Google Earth and Google Street View were consulted to establish the presence of any features of ecological importance within the local area.

3.2 Vegetation and Habitats

- 3.2.1 A vegetation and habitat map was produced for the site and the immediate surrounding area. The mapping is based on the UKHabs V2 survey and reporting methodology.
- 3.2.2 Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).
- 3.2.3 Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), namely Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) on terrestrial habitat and aquatic species such as floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*).
- 3.2.4 The survey was also informed by questioning the landowner/site agent to ascertain the recent history of the site.
- 3.2.5 Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) were cross referenced with Natural England’s inventory against the site boundary and where found ground truthed.

3.3 Timing and Personnel

- 3.3.1 During the visit, weather conditions were suitable for the survey types undertaken being warm and dry in mid winter.
- 3.3.2 The site and surrounding land was visited on the 25th November 2026 by

- (AG) Mr Andrew Gardner BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS

Natural England Bat Class Licence (Level 2)
Natural England Bat Low Impact Class Licence
Natural England Barn Owl Licence
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence (Level 1)
Natural England Badger Class Licence
Natural England White Clawed Crayfish Licence

4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 *Badger*

- 4.1.1 Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). This legislation arises from animal welfare issues (rather than on the basis of nature conservation grounds) and protects badgers from being killed, injured or disturbed whilst occupying a sett.
- 4.1.2 A disturbance to badgers in their setts may occur as a result of construction operations. Natural England recommends that the use of heavy machinery in proximity of a sett entrance should be avoided, with a 'disturbance free-zone' being established.
- 4.1.3 The degree of disturbance attributed to construction activity is a function of the background level of activity badgers are accustomed to and that which will be attributed to a proposed activity. The "disturbance free zone" is therefore site specific.
- 4.1.4 The survey for badgers comprised an assessment of all suitable habitat within and outside the study area boundary (where this was possible) to a distance of 30m for indications of use by badgers.
- 4.1.5 Signs of badgers which were searched for included:
- Setts - 'D' shaped entrances at least 25cms wide and wider than they are high with large spoil mounds
 - Discarded bedding at sett entrances (this includes grass and leaves)
 - Scratching posts on shrubs and trees close to a sett entrance
 - The presence of badger hairs which are coarse, up to 100mm long with a long black section and a white tip
 - Dung pit latrines and footprints
 - Habitual runs through vegetation and beneath fences
 - Hedgehog carcasses

4.2 *Bats*

- 4.2.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), and are included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, as a Protected Species. Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:
- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
 - Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
 - Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.

- 4.2.2 The Bat Conservation Trust Collins, J. (ed) (2023) issued guidelines on bat survey methodology, a key feature of their recommendation is for the undertaking of a pre-survey assessment - an initial desk-study and a walkover assessment of the survey area and its surrounding area to identify the relative value of the habitats present for bats and likely commuting routes. This is to be followed by a survey program that is appropriate to the likely level of bat activity within the survey area to be determined by and based on the experience of the surveyor.
- 4.2.3 The potential value of the survey area for foraging bats was assessed through consideration of two main factors: professional knowledge of bat ecology and foraging behaviour in combination with the geographical location, topography and habitats present within the survey area and surrounds.
- 4.2.4 Trees on and within the survey area boundary were assessed for their potential to support roosting or hibernating bats. This comprised a close inspection of all trees and buildings on the site to allow an assessment of their potential to be used by bats to be made by a licensed surveyor.
- 4.2.5 Trees were all assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2023) and categorised as No potential, PRF-I or PRF-M. PRF I is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats. PRF M is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

4.3 Birds

- 4.3.1 All breeding birds, other than pest species, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 when building a nest, rearing young or sitting on eggs. Some bird species, such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), are protected when near an active nest site. Several birds are listed as Species of Principal Importance (SPI).
- 4.3.2 Bird species and behaviour was noted during the other field surveys. All areas are covered equally, in order to avoid the subjective survey of better quality 'bird habitat'.

4.4 Red Squirrel

- 4.4.1 The site was walked over and the species of any tree over 15 years old was recorded.
- 4.4.2 At 50m intervals a check for signs of red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) was made and a note made of whether these are few, moderate or many. This was done by looking for feeding activity such as the remains of tree seeds, and whether or not there are dreys. Tree seed availability can vary greatly at different times of the year and from year to year. Seeds of broadleaved trees will usually be available from the autumn and the abundance of seeds will decline through winter and spring. Conifer seeds are available from summer, and often through to the following spring or summer. Thus, looking for signs of squirrel feeding activity can provide useful clues as to whether squirrels are currently resident and feeding within the wood.

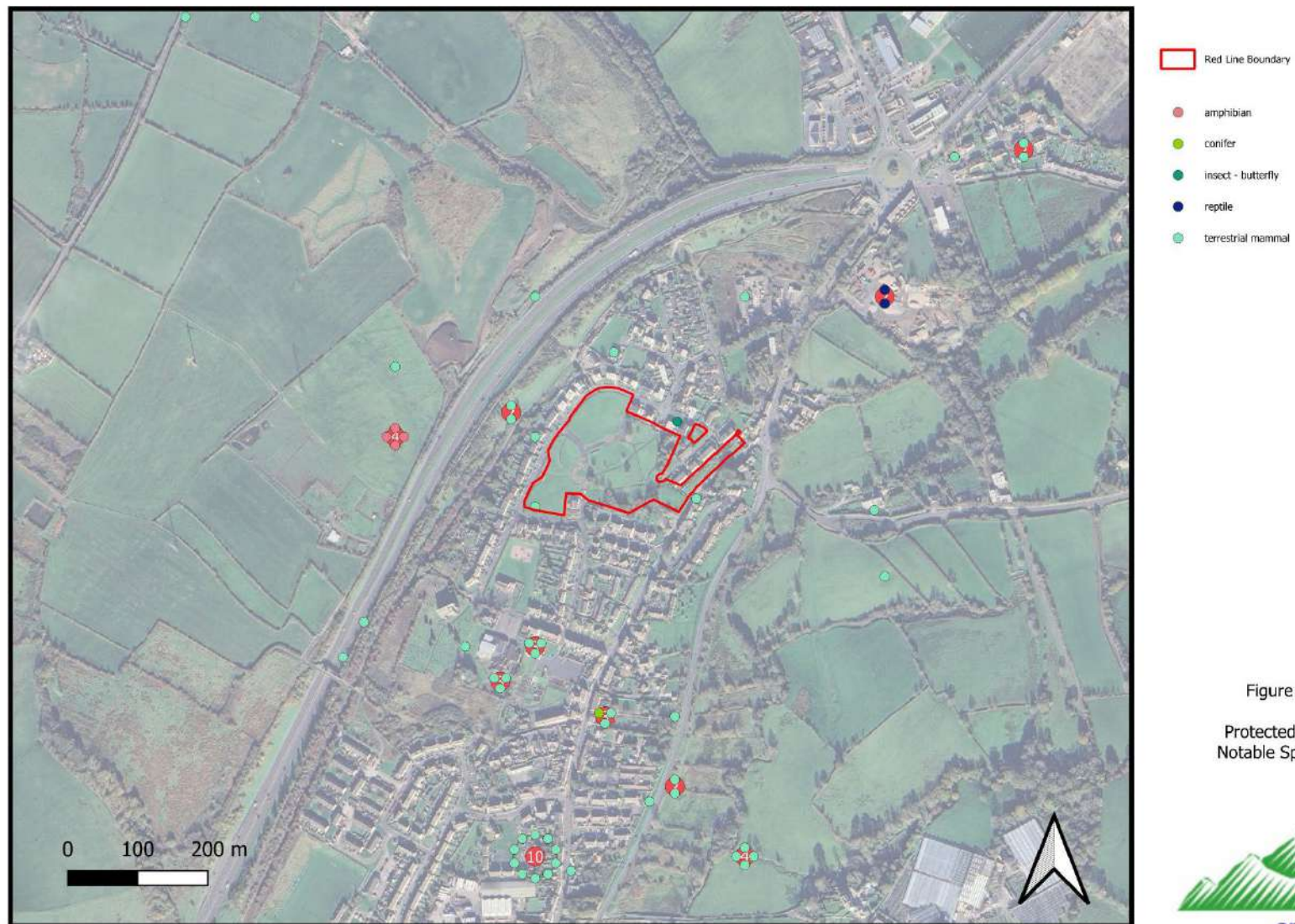
4.5 Survey limitations

- 4.5.1 Due to the habitats present on site there were no significant constraints in respect of identifying the botanical interest of the site.
- 4.5.2 The duration, extent and scope of the surveys were considered sufficient to plan appropriate mitigation and recommend additional precautionary survey work required prior to the commencement of work.
- 4.5.3 No significant survey limitations were encountered.

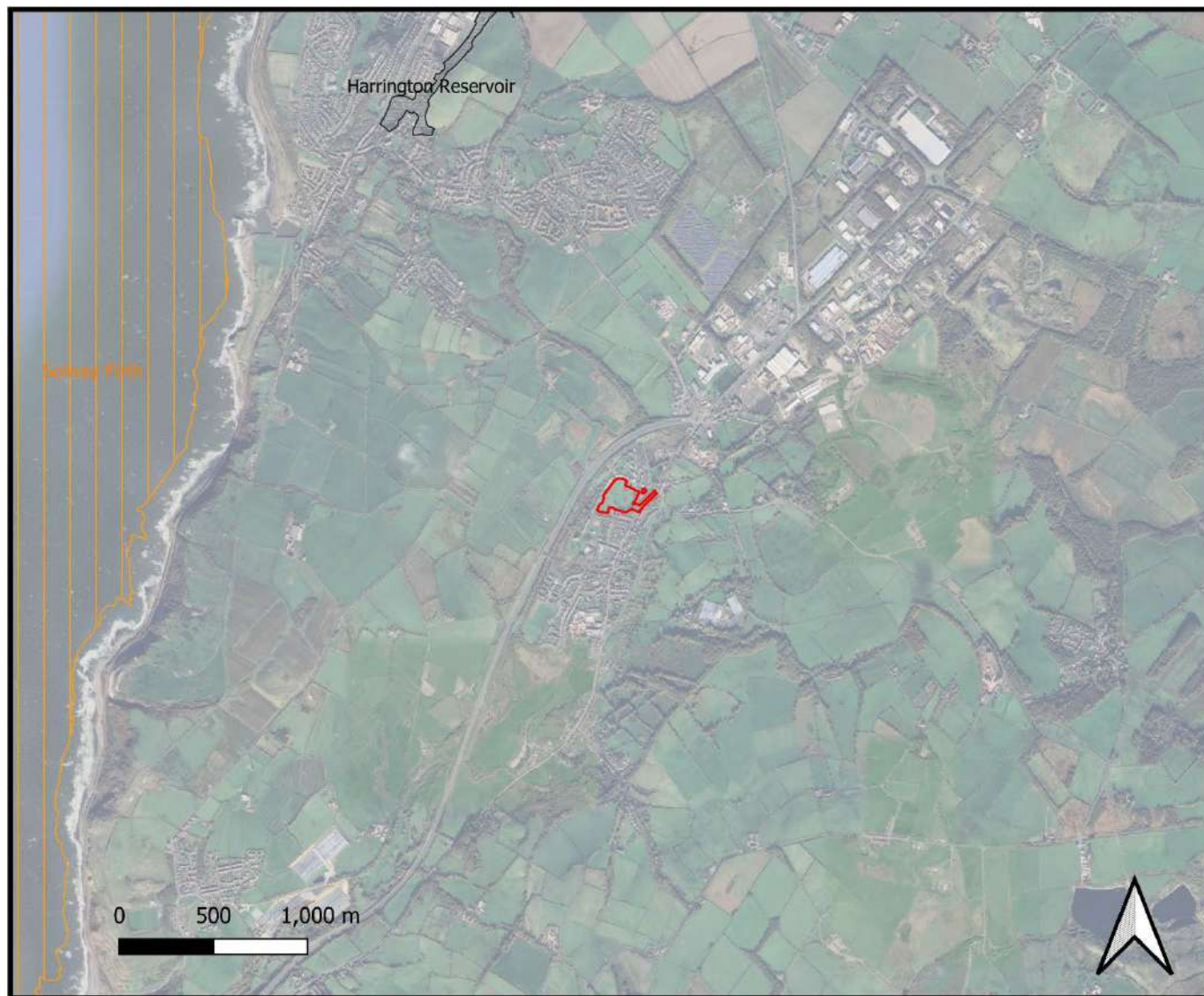
5. RESULTS

5.1 Data Search

- 5.1.1 Envirotech and CBDC hold no records of protected or notable species for the site. There are however records of protected or notable species within 2km (Figure 2). These are discussed in the relevant sections below.
- 5.1.2 There are no non-statutory protected sites adjacent, Figure 3. There are no mapped priority habitats on or adjacent the site, Figure 3a.
- 5.1.3 There are no statutory protected sites within 2km (Figure 4).







-  Red Line Boundary
-  Local Nature Reserves
-  SPA

Figure 4
Protected Sites
and Habitats



6. UKHabs V2 SURVEY RESULTS

6.1 *Habitat Results*

- 6.1.1 A drone was overflown on the 25th November 2025. This produced a number of images which were stitched together to form a orthomosaic map and provided upto date imagery of the site from which UKHabs habitat mapping has been based. Figure 5 shows the hi-resolution imagery without the UKHabs mapping overlay.
- 6.1.2 The site comprises modified grassland with individual trees and small blocks of woodland. The site is enclosed by housing.
- 6.1.3 See Figure 6 for the UK Habs V2 Plan and Table 1 for the descriptive Target Notes.



Figure 5
Orthomosaic map
drone imagery taken
25.11.2025



Target Note	Description	Comment
TN1	Modified grassland	Modified grassland short mown species poor. Perennial Ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>), Annual Meadow Grass (<i>Poa annua</i>), Daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>), Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>)
TN2	Developed land; sealed surface	Developed land; sealed surface- paths and roads
TN3	Other woodland; mixed	Other woodland; mixed- Plantation woodland, mixed species with modified grassland beneath it. Not other deciduous woodland as not Sycamore dominated but also not LMDW as no understory. Does not match any specific UK Habs woodland habitat so defaults to Other woodland; mixed Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>), Japanese larch (<i>Larix kaempferi</i>), Yew (<i>Taxus baccata</i>), Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>), Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>) and Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)
TN4	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland- planted woodland, single age but with bramble woodland understory developing. Mixed species so not other broadleaf woodland. Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>), Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>), Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>), English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), Cherry (<i>Prunus Sp.</i>) and Sycamore.
TN5	Urban tree	Urban trees in parkland. Ash, Sycamore, Poplar, Mountain Ash (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>). Beech, Alder, Sycamore, White willow (<i>Salix Alba</i>) and Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>)
TN6	Native hedgerow with trees	Privet hedge with two standard trees within it (Sycamore and Ash). Trees are valued at baseline, even though in hedge, as assumed to be removed. One medium and one small. <u>Small tree should not be recorded in a hedgerow with trees even if removed under BNG guidelines but is included at this stage to inform impact assessment.</u>
TN7	Native hedgerow	Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>) and Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) unmanaged
Table 1 Details of Target Notes.		



Modified grassland with trees



Other woodland; mixed has no understory other than modified grassland



Lowland mixed deciduous woodland has a bramble understory





Table 2 Photographs

6.2 Vegetation

- 6.2.1 Details of the plant species found on site are included in the target notes. Species recorded are all commonly occurring and undoubtedly occur elsewhere in similar habitats in the local area.
- 6.2.2 The modified grassland has a very low species diversity and ecological value. This habitat does not constitute a Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI).
- 6.2.3 The intact hedges bounding the site are species poor and contain a low diversity of woody plant species but all hedgerows are a HPI. They should be retained in any proposed scheme and where lengths need to be lost, they should be transplanted or new hedges planted as compensation.
- 6.2.4 None of the hedgerows are classified as important under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997) as they are not “countryside hedges”
- 6.2.5 Trees within the site boundary comprise small trees within the parkland/ public open space. Trees are young to middle aged.
- 6.2.6 There is no evidence of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam on the site. No other invasive or notable weed species listed on Schedule 9 (Section 14) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) was identified within the site or adjacent land.

6.3 Badger

- 6.3.1 Four records of badgers occur within 2km of the site.
- 6.3.2 Badger setts do not occur on site and a lack of feeding signs or runs across the site would suggest that they do not occur within 30m of site boundaries.
- 6.3.3 The proposed development will not impact on any existing badger runs or setts. The porosity of the surrounding fields to the passage of badgers will not be affected.

6.4 Bats

- 6.4.1 There are six records of two species of bat within 2km of the site.
- 6.4.2 The foraging habitat at the site is very poor for bat species being open and exposed. The modified grassland offers negligible foraging opportunities for bats. The hedge and tree lines are poor in terms of their structure, diversity and interconnectivity.
- 6.4.3 Despite being poor, the trees, woodland and hedgerows on the site offer the best foraging habitat for bats on the site as the remainder of it comprises open and exposed grassland. Whilst these areas of the site are the most structurally diverse but they are not considered exceptional in the local area. More extensive areas of medium and high

quality habitat occur locally, including the gardens, woodland and existing residential dwellings adjacent.

- 6.4.4 It is not considered there would be significant degradation of foraging habitat as a result of the proposal so long as the hedgerows and trees are retained and or their loss is compensated for in any landscaping scheme.
- 6.4.5 All trees around the site perimeter were also assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2023) and assigned a risk category. All of the trees on site were Negligible Risk.
- 6.4.6 No indications of roosting or highly suitable roost sites were located within the trees. All of the trees could be adequately inspected using a ground based assessment and no additional aerial or emergence surveys were considered necessary to confirm risk.
- 6.4.7 We consider bat species are highly unlikely to rely on the site for feeding but may occur in the local area. Roosting by bats will not occur on the site.

6.5 Birds

- 6.5.1 There are records of birds within 2km of the site.
- 6.5.2 The intact hedgerow offer potential habitat for feeding and nesting birds. The modified grassland and trees have a low potential for use by nesting birds as the grassland is mown and as such is usually short. Trampling risks are also very high within this area of the site.
- 6.5.3 There were no rot holes or cracks in the trees within the site boundary which would support tree hole nesting species such as woodpeckers.
- 6.5.4 The woodland is of insufficient density to be ideal for nesting birds but species such as Magpie (*Pica pica*) may make use of the pine trees.
- 6.5.5 A risk assessment of the site in respect of its future potential for and value to nesting birds could be adequately made.
- 6.5.6 The habitat on site is not considered to be of anything more than of local significance, habitats present are well represented in the local area. The impact on nesting birds is therefore considered likely to be minor.

6.6 Red Squirrel

- 6.6.1 There are 265 records of this species within 2km.
- 6.6.2 No dreys were however located in trees on the site and arboreal connectivity to adjacent woodland is limited.

6.7 Other

- 6.7.1 The boundary hedgerows are species poor and provide little potential for use by hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*). Fragmentation of habitat locally and existing land use

do not provide optimal conditions for the free passage of this species across the site and slugs and snails are likely to occur only at very low numbers.

- 6.7.2 The site may be crossed by species such as fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) which are known to occur locally.

6.8 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites

Direct Impacts:

- 6.8.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would directly affect the dispersal of species between them or directly impact upon their integrity.
- 6.8.2 The habitats on site do not represent or are linked to those found in any of the statutory or non-statutory sites locally.

Indirect Impacts:

- 6.8.3 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would indirectly affect the dispersal of species between them or indirectly impact upon their integrity.

7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 *Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement*

- 7.1.1 The roots of trees on the site should be adequately protected during work in accordance with industry standards. All trees should as far as possible be retained in the scheme.
- 7.1.2 The landscaping scheme should utilise plants which are native and wildlife friendly. In particular night flowering species would be beneficial to bats. Wildflower seed could be used to plant verges to enhance the ecological value of the site and continuity between the site and the wider area.
- 7.1.3 Hedgerows around the site should be retained or improved where possible. Any lengths of intact hedgerow to be removed to facilitate development should be transplanted and or replanted in order that there is no net negative impact on this HPI due to development. The roots of hedgerow plants/trees should be adequately protected during development from compaction/ground disturbance.
- 7.1.4 If the species poor hedges are removed, transplantation of them is not considered to be of significant ecological benefit as there are no notable species assemblages associated with them, replanting of linear lines of trees/ shrubs would be more beneficial.

7.2 *Badger*

- 7.2.1 Badger setts are known to occur within 2km of the site. These setts will be undisturbed by work but in order to minimise impacts on badgers passing over the site the following points should also be followed.
 - All work must take place during daylight hours as badgers are more likely to be commuting over the site at night and this will ensure the risk to any badgers passing through the site will be minimised.
 - Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered. This will ensure badgers are not trapped during work.
 - All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.

7.3 *Bats*

- 7.3.1 Work at night should be restricted, new planting within the site should enhance structural diversity and light spill onto the boundary woodland should be minimised.
- 7.3.2 New roosting provision for crevice dwelling bats could be incorporated into the buildings on site or bat boxes could be erected in retained trees.

- 7.3.3 Any trees to be felled should be re-inspected for bats to confirm they remain absent.
- 7.3.4 Overall it is considered there is more than sufficient scope for mitigation and compensation at the site such that there will be no adverse impact on the favourable conservation status of bats affected by the proposal.

7.4 Birds

- 7.4.1 Nesting by birds within the development area is considered unlikely to occur. Birds may nest within hedges on the periphery of the site.
- 7.4.2 Any vegetation to be trimmed or cleared should be checked for nesting birds before it is removed. Ideally this should occur outside the bird nesting period March- September. If vegetation clearance is to occur in the March-September period a check for nesting birds should be conducted first by a suitably qualified individual.
- 7.4.3 New planting within the site and the retention of trees and shrubs on the site boundary will maintain the ecological functionality of the site for breeding birds.
- 7.4.4 If nesting birds are found at the site all site works shall cease and further ecological advice shall be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

7.5 Red Squirrels

- 7.5.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for this species. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any Red Squirrel activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

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