

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Our Lady & St Andrews Church, 16 Nightingale Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1QS

Client:

Laura Watson

Survey date:

12th June 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the North Hertfordshire District Council. The proposal is described as:
Demolition of existing scout hut and new building of church hall

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

Survey Details					
The site survey was undertaken by Georgia Knight BSc (Hons), Graduate Ecologist (Accredited Agent on Licence: 2022-10404-CL18-BAT)					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
12/06/2024	17	66	70	3	None
Survey limitations					
It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the searches of historical biological records. Biological records data is required to facilitate a full assessment. To date, Arbtech has not been commissioned to obtain the data. Biological records can be acquired at a later date and will be necessary for any subsequent license application to Natural England. This will be determined following the results of the further surveys recommended in this report. The loft space in B1 was not fully accessible due to health and safety issues and a safe route could not be determined. The loft space was viewed from the edge of the loft area. Therefore, some roost features or evidence of bats (if present) may have been missed. These limitations have been taken into account during the evaluation of the site and requirement for further surveys and mitigation.					
Ecological Survey Factor		Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.			
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations					
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plans in appendix 3 and photos in appendix 4).					
Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).					

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> <i>U1b5 – Buildings</i> <i>U1b6 – Developed land; sealed surface</i> <i>G3c – Other neutral grassland</i> <i>H2b – Non-native and ornamental hedgerow</i>	The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 18756 29829 and has an area of approximately 0.1ha comprising one building currently used as a scout hut and one shipping container, with associated area of hardstanding used as a carpark with a small area of grass. It sits within the wider site ownership of Our Lady & St Andrews Church, which is directly to the east, south and west of the site. It is in an urban area, surrounded by the town of Hitchin with residential dwellings to the north, east and west and a police station and road directly to the north. The wider landscape comprises residential dwellings with their associated gardens, scattered trees and several recreation grounds, with the River Hiz approximately 40m to the east. This river is culverted under the road and a railway line runs approximately 590m to the east. On site habitat descriptions: <u>U1b5 – Buildings</u> There is one building and one shipping container within the site boundary, with the wider ownership boundary containing a church. These buildings are assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats in the appropriate section below. <u>U1b6 804 – Developed land; sealed surface, car park</u> The site largely comprises of a hardstanding tarmac parking area. <u>G3c 108 200 – Other neutral grassland; frequently mown, tree</u> There is an area of grassland at the northeastern end of the site and a strip running along the northern elevation of B1 that is regularly mown and maintained with a sward height of 5cm. This comprises of; Dominant perennial rye Abundant smooth meadow grass and wall barley
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	Frequent common nettle, daisy, ragwort, dandelion and white clover Occasional Yorkshire fog, ivy, ribwort plantain, herb robert, cleaver sp., common dog-violet and green alkanet Rare creeping buttercup, elder sapling, forget me not and common nipplewort There are patches of bare ground around the eastern side of B1 where the entrance to the building is, totalling approximately 30% of the area and there is a planted ornamental border at the eastern end, against the wall of the neighbouring church. There is one conifer tree, a cypress sp. (T1), located to the northeast of the site. <u>H2b – Non-native and ornamental hedgerow</u> There is an ornamental hedgerow located at the southern boundary of the site. It is surrounded by the hardstanding carpark to the north and the church to the south. It comprises of holly, viburnum and other ornamental shrubs. <u>Local habitats</u> There are no priority habitats on site. The closest priority habitat is deciduous woodland located approximately 290m to the southwest of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The habitats on site are widespread and not notable. The proposed development will result in the loss of a small area of grassland and one tree, with most of the development affecting hardstanding areas. No direct impacts on adjacent or nearby habitats are foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	The project may be subject to BNG exemptions as less than 25m ² of habitat will be lost; however, the LPA may still require a BNG assessment under local planning policy.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The site is not subject to any designation, and there are three statutory sites within 2km of the site. Purwell Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located ~ 1km to the east. It is a mixture of meadow land and play areas with the River Purwell flowing through. King fishers are native to the area.

	- Oughtonhead Lane Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located ~1.4km to the east. It is noted for its rich assemblage of fossils, in particular for land snails and small mammals. - Oughtonhead Common LNR is located ~ 1.7km to the west. It is a nature reserve with a wide variety of wildlife habitats to which the River Oughton runs alongside. No national network sites (SAC, SPA, Ramsar) are located within 2.5km.								
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are foreseen due to the small nature of the development that will affect hardstanding areas of the site.								
Recommendations	None required.								
Invasive / Non-native species									
Summary of Survey Findings	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.								
Foreseen Impacts	N/A								
Recommendations	No further surveys but remain vigilant.								
Invertebrates									
Summary of Survey Findings	No habitat for protected or notable invertebrates is found on site.								
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.								
Recommendations	No further surveys.								
Bats									
Summary of Survey Findings	EPSL data A search of the magic.gov.uk database for EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the license or will relocate to other known roost sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There are five EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site, as detailed below; <table><tr><th>EPSL reference</th><th>Bat species affected</th><th>Distance from site</th><th>Impacts allowed by license</th></tr><tr><td>2016-21240-EPS-MIT</td><td>Soprano pipistrelle</td><td>980m to the west</td><td>Damage and destruction of a resting place</td></tr></table>	EPSL reference	Bat species affected	Distance from site	Impacts allowed by license	2016-21240-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	980m to the west	Damage and destruction of a resting place
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2016-21240-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	980m to the west	Damage and destruction of a resting place						

	EPSM2012-5034	Common pipistrelle	1.2km to the south	Destruction of a resting place
	EPSM2009-1327	Brown long-eared bat	1.7km to the southwest	Destruction of a resting place
	EPSM2010-2585	Brown long-eared bat	1.7km to the southwest	Destruction of a resting place
	EPSM2012-5071	Common pipistrelle	1.6km to the northwest	Destruction of a resting place
Foraging and commuting habitat on site There is limited foraging and commuting habitat on site as the site mainly comprises of buildings and areas of hardstanding. The nearby residential vegetated gardens, trees and recreational fields could provide some value to foraging and commuting bats, as well as the nearby river which could provide a linear feature for bats to commute to the site from the wider landscape. Roosting habitat - buildings B1 is a single storey wooden building currently used as a scout hut. It has a pitched roof clad in a corrugated asbestos sheet and there is wooden weatherboarding across all elevations. There are wooden windows and doors that appear to be in good condition and are well sealed around the frames, with no means of ingress. There are no gaps or areas of damage to the roof and the building is well sealed at the eaves with no opportunities for roosting bats. The edge of the corrugated roof is filled with expanding foam, allowing no access or crevices for bats to roost. The cladding appears to be in good condition on the northern and southern elevations and lays flat to the building with no means of ingress. However, on the eastern and western gable ends there are a few areas where the cladding is damaged and lifted, creating small gaps underneath that could be used by crevice dwelling bats to roost, although the flight path is restricted due to the close proximity of a shipping container to the west. On the northwestern corner of the building there is a gap at the edge of the wooden cladding that could allow bats to access the subspace of the roof structure. No staining, droppings or evidence of bats were found around this gap.				

	On the eastern and western gable ends, the wooden bargeboard is lifted providing a gap that could be utilised by crevice dwelling bats to roost. There is a mezzanine level within B1, at the eastern end of the building. This is sealed off by plastic sheeting and was not accessible due to health and safety risks. This was viewed from the edge of the platform by a ladder. It is constructed of modern wooden beams that are painted and appear to be in good condition, with no gaps for bats to utilise and there are wooden boards that line the roof structure. These wooden boards are in poor condition, with areas of damage and are hanging off the roof, revealing the corrugated roofing sheets underneath. It is currently used for storage and there is a doorway to the east end of the space. It is not clear if the loft extends beyond this point, therefore some evidence of bats, if present, may have been missed. The main area within B1 is sealed to the eaves, with no gaps or areas of damage that could allow bats access into the main space within the building. No evidence of bats was found internally or externally within B1. B1 is deemed to have moderate value for roosting bats due the external features identified such as the damaged and lifted cladding and lifted bargeboard on the western and eastern ends of the building, that could support small numbers of crevice dwelling bats, as previous EPSLs within 2km suggest that crevice dwelling species are present in the landscape. B2 is a single-storey, flat roof extension, adjoined to the brickwork of the western elevation of the church. It joins to the brickwork below the eaves and the roof structure does not connect to the roof structure of the church itself. It has exposed brick walls that appear to be in good condition, with no gaps, cracks or mortar missing that could allow bats to roost and there is a plastic cladding on the northern elevation that is tight to the wall, with no gaps behind that crevice dwelling bats could utilise. The uPVC windows and doors look to be in excellent condition with no gaps or damage around the frames for bats to use. The uPVC fascia sits flush to the brickwork, providing no
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	opportunities for bats to roost and the lead roof is well sealed where it meets the fascia and brickwork, with no gaps for bats to roost underneath. There is no internal loft space within B2 and it is currently used as a kitchen for the church, which is well sealed with no opportunities for bats to roost or gain access into any internal spaces. B2 is deemed to have negligible value for roosting bats due to the lack of features internally and externally to support both crevice dwelling and void dwelling bats. No evidence of bats was found internally or externally within B2. B3 is a shipping container at the west of B1. It is constructed of metal and there are no features suitable for bats to roost. B3 is deemed to have negligible value for roosting bats. Roosting habitat - trees There is one tree, a cypress sp. (T1), located to the northeast of B1 at the northeastern end of the site. The tree appears to have no wounds or features suitable to support roosting bats. T1 is afforded the following assessment in compliance with the bat survey guidelines (BCT, 2023): None. There is a lack of decay or damage features with roosting habitat value or low likelihood of there being any.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Roosting habitat – buildings The proposed development will result in the demolition of B1. This could result in the damage, modification and destruction of any bat roosts present within the subspace of the roof and could cause disturbance, death or injury to bats. No impacts to bats are foreseen in the extension of B2 as the building is deemed to have negligible value due to the lack of external features for bats to use to roost.

	Roosting habitat - trees It is understood that T1 will be removed to facilitate the proposed development. Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within this tree, and as such there are not anticipated to be any impacts on roosting bats as a result of the removal of this tree.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Roosting habitat - buildings B1: Two bat emergence surveys are required during the active bat season (optimal May to August, suboptimal September) to confirm presence or likely-absence of a bat roost in the building. Both of the surveys should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive and surveys should be spread three weeks apart. Three surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the building due to the limited view from the shipping container, and infra-red cameras should be used as an aid. If bat roosts are confirmed in the building, additional surveys may be required to characterise the roost and inform an EPSL application to Natural England. Surveys must be a minimum of three weeks apart. The EPSL application requires that surveys have been undertaken within the most recent active bat season and planning permission must have been granted and all relevant wildlife-related conditions have been discharged prior to submission. Lighting mitigation and enhancements may be required based on the outcome of the further emergence survey. B2 and B3: These buildings contain no features suitable for bats to roost, and therefore no further surveys are recommended. Roosting habitat - trees

	The tree to be removed as part of the proposed development contains no features for bats to roost and therefore no further surveys are required.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No evidence of nesting birds was found on site during the surveys; however, birds could use the tree to the northeast of B1 and the gap in the wooden cladding on the northwestern corner of B1 for nesting. No habitat for schedule 1 birds was observed.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests within B1 and the tree on site.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Any vegetation and demolition of buildings should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation and building should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no EPSLs for reptiles within 2km of the site. The habitats on site are assessed to provide limited opportunities for reptiles to bask or shelter, as the site mainly comprises of buildings and hardstanding, with the small area of grassland regularly mowed and kept to a short sward length which is suboptimal for reptiles. The site is surrounded areas of hardstanding and tarmacked roads, which would likely deter any reptiles from the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on reptiles as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Amphibians	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The grassland on site is suboptimal for amphibians as it is maintained at a short sward length, providing no opportunities for shelter from predation. Other habitats on site are the hardstanding areas and buildings, providing limited habitat for great crested newts and other common amphibians. Amphibians also require suitable aquatic habitat in which to breed. There are no known ponds 500m when consulting OS maps. The closest watercourse is the River Hiz, approximately 40m to the east of the site boundary although this is culverted and likely to have a strong current that would prevent dispersal of GCN, and is unlikely to allow them to cross into other habitats. Therefore, the river is unlikely to support GCN populations and protected amphibians are likely to be absent around the survey site year-round. There are no great crested newt EPSLs, class license returns or pond survey data within 2km of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will see a loss of a small area of grassland but will mainly affect hardstanding areas. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local amphibian populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. No impacts are anticipated on great crested newts as a result of the proposed development as this species is considered to be absent from the site.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys are required.
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No badger setts or evidence of badgers were found within the site boundary. The site itself offers very low habitat value for badgers and is unsuitable for sett making with large areas of hardstanding present, however, there is no fencing around the site and so badgers could enter the site from the wider area, although this is largely an urban residential area that provides limited opportunities for sett making.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	A small area of grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local badger populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat

	locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of badgers, if commuting across the site during construction.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Basic precautionary mitigation during works is recommended: - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to habitats which badgers could use. South and west boundaries. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified within 30m, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no watercourses on or connected to the site. The closest river is located 40m to the east and is separated from the site by a main tarmac road. The site offers no opportunities for riparian mammals as it largely comprises of buildings and areas of hardstanding.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development, as the area affected is mainly hardstanding.
<i>Recommendations</i>	N/A
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no dormouse EPSLs within 2km and no suitable habitat on site for dormouse to utilise. The hedgerow at the southern boundary of the site contains non-native species and is isolated in the landscape, surrounded by buildings, areas of hardstanding and tarmacked roads within an urban area.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.

Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The grassland onsite provides foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	A small area of grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitat is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Similar to the badgers, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

Appendix 1a: PRA map



Appendix 1b: Suggested surveyor positions



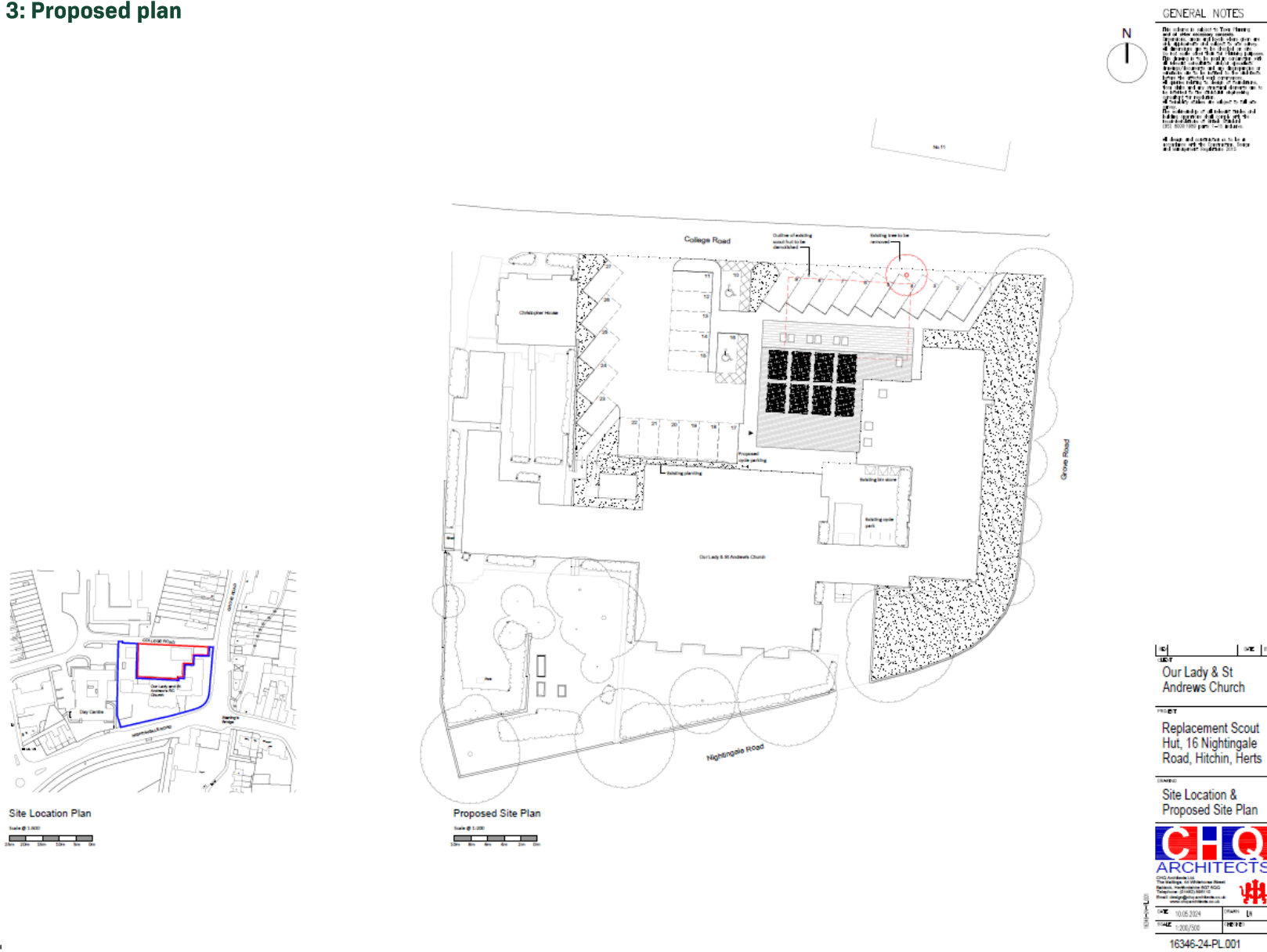
Appendix 1c: Habitat map

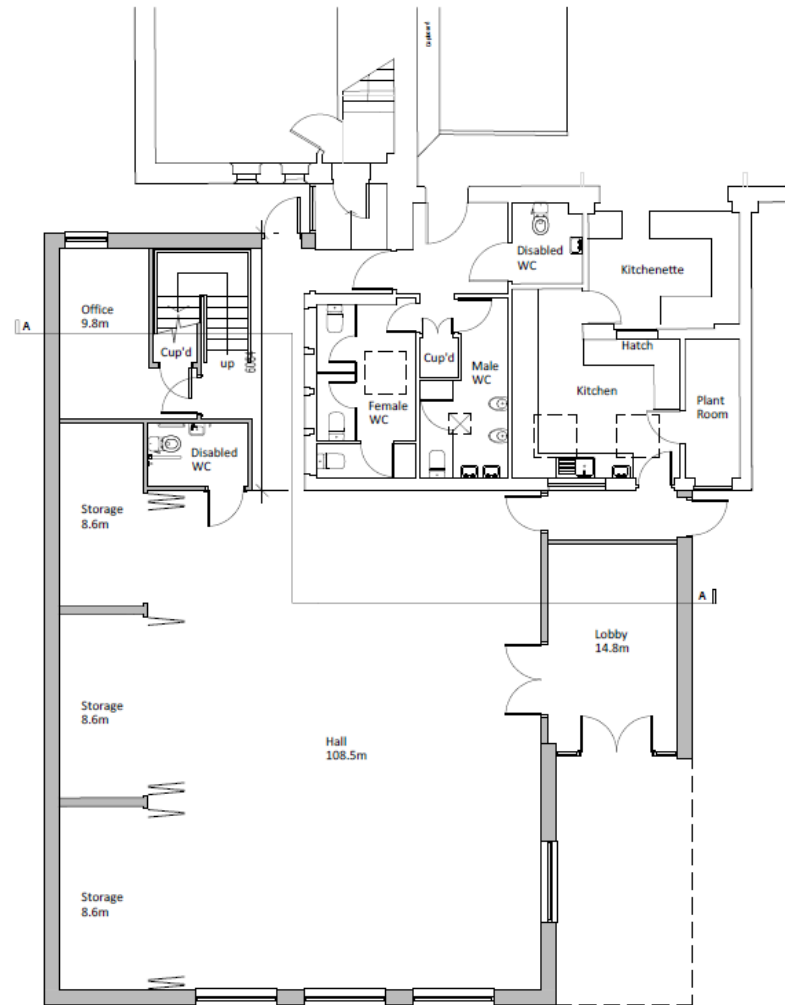


Appendix 2: Location map

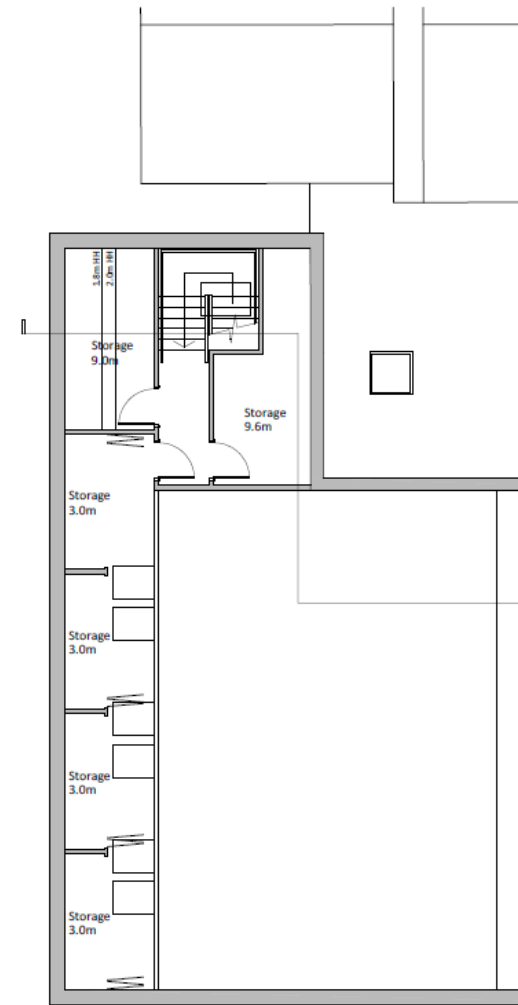


Appendix 3: Proposed plan





Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Mezzanine Floor Plan

Scale @ 1:100
5m 4m 3m 2m 1m 0m

GENERAL NOTES

This scheme is subject to Town Planning and all other necessary consents. Dimensions, areas and levels shown are only approximate and subject to site survey. All dimensions are to be checked at site. No work shall be done without proper approval. The drawings are to be read in conjunction with all relevant contracts and specifications of materials. The drawings are to be checked before the ground and concrete. All parties relating to design of structures, their details and any structural elements are to be referred to the structural engineering consultant for production. All temporary matters are subject to safety survey. The construction of all relevant trades and building operations shall comply with the requirements of British Standard BS5533:1985 parts 1-5 inclusive. All design and construction is to be in accordance with the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2007.

REV
DATE
Our Lady &
St Andrew Church

PROJECT
Replacement Scout
Hall, 16 Nightingale
Road, Hitchin, Herts.

DRAWING
Proposed Floor Plans



CHQ Architects Ltd
The Millgate, 44 Watlington Street
Barnet, Hertfordshire, SG5 5DQ
Telephone: (01432) 885110
Email: design@chq-architects.co.uk
www.chq-architects.co.uk

DATE 21.03.24 DRAWN LW
SCALE 1:100 CHECKED

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Appendix 4: Photos

Figure 1 – southern elevation of B1

Figure 2 – northern and western elevation of B1 and small area of grass



Figure 3 – lifted bargeboard on western end of B1

Figure 4 – gap in cladding at northwestern corner of B1



Figure 5 –
damaged cladding
on western end of
B1



Figure 6 – eastern
end of B1



Figure 7 – gaps
under cladding and
bargeboard on
eastern end of B1



Figure 8 – interior
of B1



Figure 9 – interior of B1 with mezzanine loft space sealed off



Figure 10 – interior of mezzanine loft space in B1



Figure 11 – north and western elevation of B2



Figure 12 – southern and western elevation of B2



Figure 13 – sealed fascia on B2

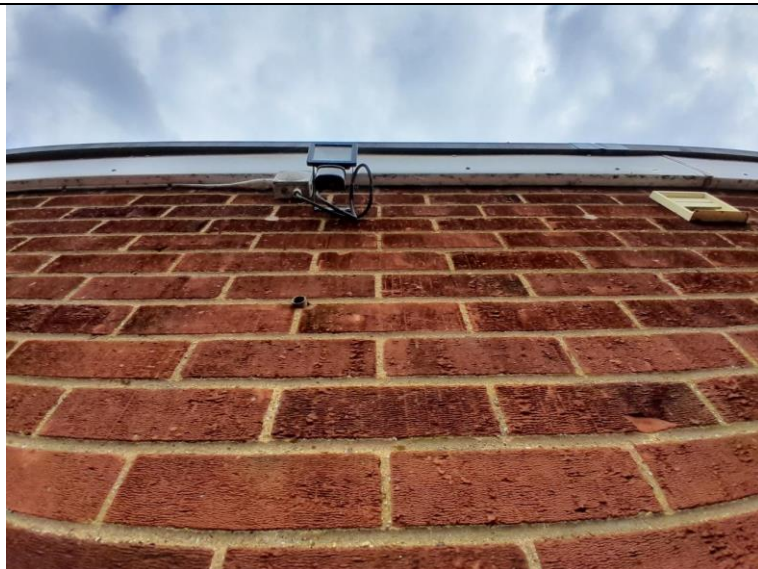


Figure 14 – interior space of B2



Figure 15 – northeastern corner of the site with tree (T1) next to B1 and neighbouring church to the left



Figure 16 – hardstanding area at the centre of the site, to the southeast of B1



Figure 17 –
hedgerow at
southern edge of
the site

Figure 18 – area of
grass at
northeastern
corner of the site



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Version control			
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