

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Land at Pirton, Hertfordshire SG5 3QP

Client:

Vision Residences (TWO) LLP

Survey date:

25/06/2026

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with North Hertfordshire District Council. The proposal can be described as a residential development

On the assumption that site conditions and habitats remain unchanged, the results of this assessment will remain valid for 18 months from the date of this survey i.e. until December 2027, in accordance with CIEEM guidance in the lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys. This survey and report should be updated if a planning application has not been submitted within this timeframe.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is work you will need to commission to obtain planning permission and to comply with legislation. Further information, along with opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, are outlined in the proceeding sections of this report.

Table 1: Summary of key findings arising from this survey.

Key Findings
• The habitats on site are of no specific conservation value but have value at the local level. These are to be partially destroyed. Loss or damage will contribute to net losses of biodiversity locally. • As the site does not meet one of the exemptions, a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment will be required to ensure the site delivers the net gain required by the local council. • A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) may be requested by the LPA via condition. • Breeding bird surveys will be required to determine the sites value for breeding birds. • Bat activity surveys, comprising walked transects and static monitoring, will be required to determine the usage of the site by foraging and commuting bats. • Various precautionary working methods have been recommended which have been fully detailed within the fauna section of this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the PEA was to obtain data on existing ecological conditions, and to conduct a preliminary assessment of the likely significance of ecological impacts on the proposed development.

No previous ecology reports have been produced for this site by Arbtech Consulting Ltd or, to the author’s knowledge, by any other consultancy.

Methodology

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2025.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2025.](#)

Survey Details

The site survey was undertaken on 25/06/2026 by Rhiannon Jensen O'Brien BSc (Hons), MSc Natural England GCN licence number: 2025-83001-SCI-CL08, Bat Licence Number: 2025-86384-CL17-BAT and qualifying member of CIEEM., Senior Ecologist

Table 2: The weather conditions during the survey.

Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
26.6	65.0	7	8.1	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.

No Biological Records Data was available at the time of writing this report and this should be obtained and the report updated to enable a robust ecological impact assessment to be completed.

No detailed proposed development plans were available at the time of writing this report and therefore a detailed impact assessment could not be made. This report should be updated once the plans are available.

2. SITE LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

2.1 Summary of Survey Findings

Site Location & Context

The site is centred at National Grid reference TL1514532221 and has an area of approximately 3.45ha. The site comprises cereal crops, modified grassland and a native hedgerow. The site is surrounded by arable fields to the north east and west, with West Lane to the south and Holwell Lane to the east. Pirton village is located to the south of the site with scattered dwellings to the west also. The wider landscape is rural in character, with arable fields, lined with hedgerows and small scattered settlements.

The soils onsite comprise shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone, which are freely draining. The site contains bedrock geology of West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

Priority Habitats

There are five priority habitats within 2km of the site. These comprise traditional orchard, deciduous woodland, ancient & semi-natural woodland, lowland calcareous grassland and open mosaic habitats on previously developed land. The closest priority habitat comprises traditional orchard, located 60m SE from the site. The site is well connected to nearby habitats through areas such as hedgerows and grass verges.

Designated Sites

Statutory Designations within 2km

There is one statutory designation within 2km of the site, as detailed below:

Table 3: The statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary.

Designation	Reason	Distance from Site
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Chilterns National Landscape	The Chilterns National Landscape covers 883 km2 of countryside containing a landscape of heavily wooded hills including the country's most extensive area of beech woodland. Other important habitats include chalk grassland, lowland heathland and meadows.	800m SW
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Statutory Designations within 10km

No national network sites (SAC, SPA, Ramsar) are located within 10km.

SSSI Risk Zone

The site does fall within the impact risk zone for Knocking Hoe SSSI however, the proposed development type is not listed as possible high risk with regard to this designation.

Non-Designated Sites

The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from the local records centre. Whilst some habitats in the wider landscape may host designations, the immediate environs of the site do not host habitats likely to be of designable quality.

2.2 Foreseen Impacts

No direct impacts to any designated sites will occur as a result of the proposed development, due to the distance of the site from such areas in combination with connectivity disrupting barriers.

2.3 Recommendations

No recommendations.

3. ONSITE HABITATS

This section 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.

3.1 Summary of Survey Findings

Cereal crops (c1c)

The site comprises a portion of an existing arable field. Which during the survey the contained wheat. From review of aerial imagery, the habitat has been used for crops since at least 1985, which is as far back as Google Earth imagery provides.

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, this habitat is not subject to a condition assessment.

Modified grassland (g4)

An area of grassland is present to the south providing a current access route to the field. The grassland has a generally low sward of 10-30cm. No damage is observed however areas of bare ground are identified likely from vehicle tracks. Species composition is considered low, at less than 6 species per m2.

Table 4b: Species abundance for modified grassland.

Abundance	Species
Dominant	Barren Brome (<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>)
Abundant	Perennial Rye-grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>)
Frequent	False Oat-grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>)
Occasional	Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>), Field Horsetail (<i>Equisetum arvense</i>), Hogweed (<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>)
Rare	Common Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), Selfheal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>), Common Field-speedwell (<i>Veronica persica</i>)

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Sheets, the modified grassland was assessed to have a poor condition value. The full condition assessment is provided in Appendix 5.

Native hedgerow (h2a)

A hedgerow (H1) is located along a portion of the eastern boundary. The hedge appears uniform with no damage apparent. Some of the hedge appears to be offsite and encroaching across the fence boundary. Species present within this habitat include blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). Whilst the hedgerow has a lack of gaps the wider hedgerow is split into two portions along the boundary.

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Sheets, the native hedgerow was assessed to have a moderate condition value. The full condition assessment is provided in Appendix 5.

3.2 Foreseen Impacts

Whilst detailed proposed plans are yet to be finalised, the proposed development will include the creation of a residential development with some amenity areas and an access road, this will result in the loss of cropland. The existing field access will be used in the development, thus no areas of hedgerow are proposed for removal. This is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. However, without mitigation this could lead to a net loss in biodiversity at the site.

3.3 Recommendations

Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution must be implemented during construction. This should include measures such as:

- Remove only the minimum of habitat required to facilitate the development
- Use of Heras or other appropriate fencing to prevent encroachment by contractors onto retained habitats.

A Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) may be requested by the LPA, outlining best practice measures delineate the construction zone and to minimise the possibility of pollution and habitat damage during construction.

The proposed development will require a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, to calculate the value of habitats on site and ensure the delivery of a minimum of 10% measurable biodiversity net gain.

4. INVASIVE SPECIES

This section 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.

4.1 Summary of Survey Findings

No non-native invasive or otherwise problematic plants were recorded on site or are considered likely to be on site.

4.2 Foreseen Impacts

None.

4.3 Recommendations

No further surveys but remain vigilant.

5. FAUNA: BATS

This section 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.

5.1 Summary of Survey Findings

EPSL data and local records

A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted 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 licence or will relocate to other known roosts sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There are 4 EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site, as detailed below:

Table 6: EPSL survey returns for bats within a 2km radius.

EPSL Reference	Bat Species Affected	Distance from Site <i>(EPSL records are accurate to 100m)</i>	Impacts Allowed by Licence
EPSM2010-2486	common pipistrelle	500m south	Destruction of a resting place
EPSM2010-1822	common pipistrelle, brown long eared	700m west	Destruction of a breeding place
EPSM2013-5820	common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long eared, natterers	1km south-west	Destruction of a breeding place
2018-37658-EPS-MIT	common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long eared, natterers	1km south-west	Damage of a breeding place

There are no Special Areas of Conservation designated for bats within 10km of the site.

Foraging and commuting habitat

Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the form of modified grassland, native hedgerow and cropland. Habitats of value offsite within 2km including traditional orchard, deciduous woodland, ancient & semi-natural woodland and lowland calcareous grassland. These habitats are likely to provide micro-climatic conditions that support invertebrates that will in turn provide foraging opportunities for local bat populations. Due to the size of the site, the habitats could provide a connective pathway for bats.

Roosting habitat

No trees or buildings are present onsite.

5.2 Foreseen Impacts

Roosting habitat

No roosting habitat is present onsite, thus no impacts are anticipated.

Foraging and commuting habitat

The proposed development will result in the loss of cropland. This could disrupt dispersal corridors for bats leaving or returning to roosts in the wider area.

Artificial lighting

The proposed development will lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.

5.3 Recommendations

Roosting habitat

None required.

Foraging and commuting habitat

Bat activity surveys, comprising walked transects and static monitoring, will be required to determine the usage of the site by foraging and commuting bats as well as to identify the likely presence or absence of any bat roosts in the vicinity, particularly those of high conservation value including maternity roosts. Due to the value of the habitats present on the site a total of three visits, one per season between spring and autumn or seven visits, will be required to gather sufficient information to enable a full assessment to be made.

Artificial lighting

A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released>

Suggested biodiversity enhancements

Enhancements are dependent on the outcome of further surveys.

6. FAUNA: BIRDS

This section 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.

6.1 Summary of Survey Findings

Trees and vegetation

No bird nests were identified within the vegetation on-site, however cereal crops and the native hedgerow offer both nesting and foraging opportunities.

Barn Owls

The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls.

6.2 Foreseen Impacts

Trees and vegetation

Cropland and grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats could result in a reduction in nesting, breeding and foraging habitat. Furthermore, the proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.

Barn Owls

None foreseen.

6.3 Recommendations

Trees and vegetation

Breeding bird surveys will be required to establish the value of the site for breeding birds. This will comprise six visits between late-March and early-July to record breeding activity.

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 or an ecologist has confirmed the nesting attempt has concluded.

Barn Owls

No further barn owl surveys required.

Suggested biodiversity enhancements

Enhancements are dependent on the outcome of further surveys.

7. FAUNA: REPTILES

This section 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.

7.1 Summary of Survey Findings

EPSL data and local records

A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site.

Habitat suitability

The site contains a hedgerow that is suitable for reptiles providing refuge, basking, foraging and commuting opportunities. It is noted that the grassland on site (used for access) retained a short sward length at the time of survey, and is currently suboptimal for reptiles due to an absence of refuge opportunities. Furthermore, the arable land dominating the site centrally is not suitable to support reptiles due to frequent disturbance and coverage of bare ground. The site is also enclosed by intensely managed agricultural land. This landscape is likely to significantly limit dispersal opportunities onto the site for reptiles from the wider landscape. However, although the majority of enclosing agricultural fields are subject to intense management including grazing and regular ploughing, the fields are likely to retain narrow unmanaged field margins interconnected by hedgerows and residential areas to the south that may provide foraging and commuting opportunities for a limited number of reptiles.

Although potential connectivity to the site for reptiles is limited in extent, the presence of a small population of common reptiles cannot be fully discounted, albeit limited to peripheral hedgerow vegetation.

7.2 Foreseen Impacts

Cropland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local reptile populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.

7.3 Recommendations

A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures:

- Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles.
- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- If any reptiles 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.
- In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Suggested biodiversity enhancements

The site could be enhanced for reptiles post-development with the inclusion of log piles/hibernacula and planting of areas of native shrubs, to provide sheltering opportunities.

8. FAUNA: AMPHIBIANS

This section 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.

8.1 Summary of Survey Findings

EPSL and survey data

A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for amphibians within 2km of the site. Further, no positive class survey licence return or DLL historic survey data (2017 – 2019) for great crested newts (GCN) were present within 2km of the site.

Aquatic habitat suitability (including ponds within 500m)

Great crested newts (GCN) exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton et al. 2001).

There are no ponds on the site, but a review of aerial imagery (MAGIC and OS Maps) indicates the presence two ponds within 500m. These are located 400m south. Pond 1 is located within Pirton village and considered to have limited connectivity to the site due to the presence of surrounding roads and buildings which can cause a barrier to dispersal. Pond 2 is located on the village edge thus some areas of grassland and hedgerow are present between the pond and the site, providing some connectivity to the site.

A pond map showing approximate pond locations is provided in Appendix 6.

Terrestrial habitat suitability

The hedgerow onsite can provide foraging and refuge opportunities for GCN and amphibians. The arable field and grassland is considered to be of sub-optimal value for GCN and amphibians due to its low sward height and intensive management which have a lack of refuge opportunities.

8.2 Foreseen Impacts

The development is considered to impact approximately 3ha of sub-optimal habitat. When all factors are entered in the Rapid Risk Assessment calculator provided by Natural England, a result of "Green: offence highly unlikely" is produced and the proposed development is therefore not considered to be licensable. This result, however, does not eliminate potential use of the site by occasional transient GCN in addition to other common amphibians and if present during the proposed works, could be at risk of harm or death without mitigation.

8.3 Recommendations

As the development does not impact any habitat of refuge value and produces a green risk score, further survey is considered disproportionate, as such a precautionary working method is recommended to keep impacts acceptably low.

- Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage amphibians.

- Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby aquatic habitats that amphibians 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 common amphibians 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.
- In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Suggested biodiversity enhancements

The site could be enhanced for amphibians post-development through creation of amphibian hibernacula. Information on how to construct a hibernaculum can be found here: <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/hibernaculum>

9. FAUNA: RIPARIAN ANIMALS

This section 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.

9.1 Summary of Survey Findings

A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed for riparian animals (otters and water voles). No EPSLs relating to riparian animals are present within a 2km radius of the site.

Habitat suitability

There are no water courses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.

9.2 Foreseen Impacts

No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.

9.3 Recommendations

No further surveys for riparian animals required.

10. FAUNA: HAZEL DORMOUSE

This section 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.

10.1 Summary of Survey Findings

EPSL data and local records

A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed for hazel dormouse. No EPSLs relating to hazel dormouse are present within a 2km radius of the site.

Habitat suitability

The hedgerow onsite could provide opportunities for dormice, however it is noted this hedgerow is sparse in length and portioned into two sections of hedgerow, both of which have limited connectivity for dormice to offsite hedgerows/habitat.

In addition, there is also a lack of woodland habitat in the immediate surrounding landscape, for isolated habitats in the UK, research indicates that dormice require 20ha of woodland habitat to support a viable population (Bright et al. 1994). Such habitat is not present in the surrounding landscape or connected to the sites habitat. Whilst the nearest known population of dormice is located at Maulden Wood in Bedfordshire, there is limited woodland and connective habitat in the landscape. As such, the presence of dormice onsite is considered unlikely.

10.2 Foreseen Impacts

No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development. The hedgerow onsite will be retained.

10.3 Recommendations

No further hazel dormouse surveys required.

11. FAUNA: BADGERS

This section 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.

11.1 Summary of Survey Findings

No badger setts were noted on site or suspected within a 30m radius of the site. Further, no evidence of foraging badgers was noted within the development area. However, the site was considered suitable for badger sett excavation and foraging habitat.

11.2 Foreseen Impacts

No works will be undertaken within 30m of a badger sett. Grassland and cropland 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 present.

11.3 Recommendations

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to badgers, further badger surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:

- Heras fencing will be erected around the working area to prevent encroachment into retained habitats where badger setts could be present.
- 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 badgers could use.
- 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, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

12. FAUNA: INVERTEBRATES

This section 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.

12.1 Summary of Survey Findings

The habitats present on-site, including grassland and hedgerows are likely to provide common invertebrates with opportunities to forage and shelter. The site contains no further notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.

12.2 Foreseen Impacts

Arable fields and grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local invertebrate populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. In addition, the development proposes to include enhancement areas that can comprise habitats of value to invertebrates.

12.3 Recommendations

Landscaping should incorporate native, locally appropriate plant species which are fruiting or nectar rich to compensate for the loss of habitat.

Suggested biodiversity enhancements

- Enhancement/creation of grassland
- Bee bricks on south facing walls of buildings
- Creation of refugia and hibernacula using debris and brash from site clearance within areas of enhancement.

13. FAUNA: OTHER NOTABLE SPECIES

This section 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.

13.1 Summary of Survey Findings

The habitats onsite provide foraging and commuting opportunities for terrestrial mammals including hedgehogs, foxes, rabbit and deer, with the latter two observed during the survey. Suitable opportunities are also present in the surrounding landscape.

13.2 Foreseen Impacts

Grassland and cropland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local terrestrial mammal 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 mammals, if present.

13.3 Recommendations

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.

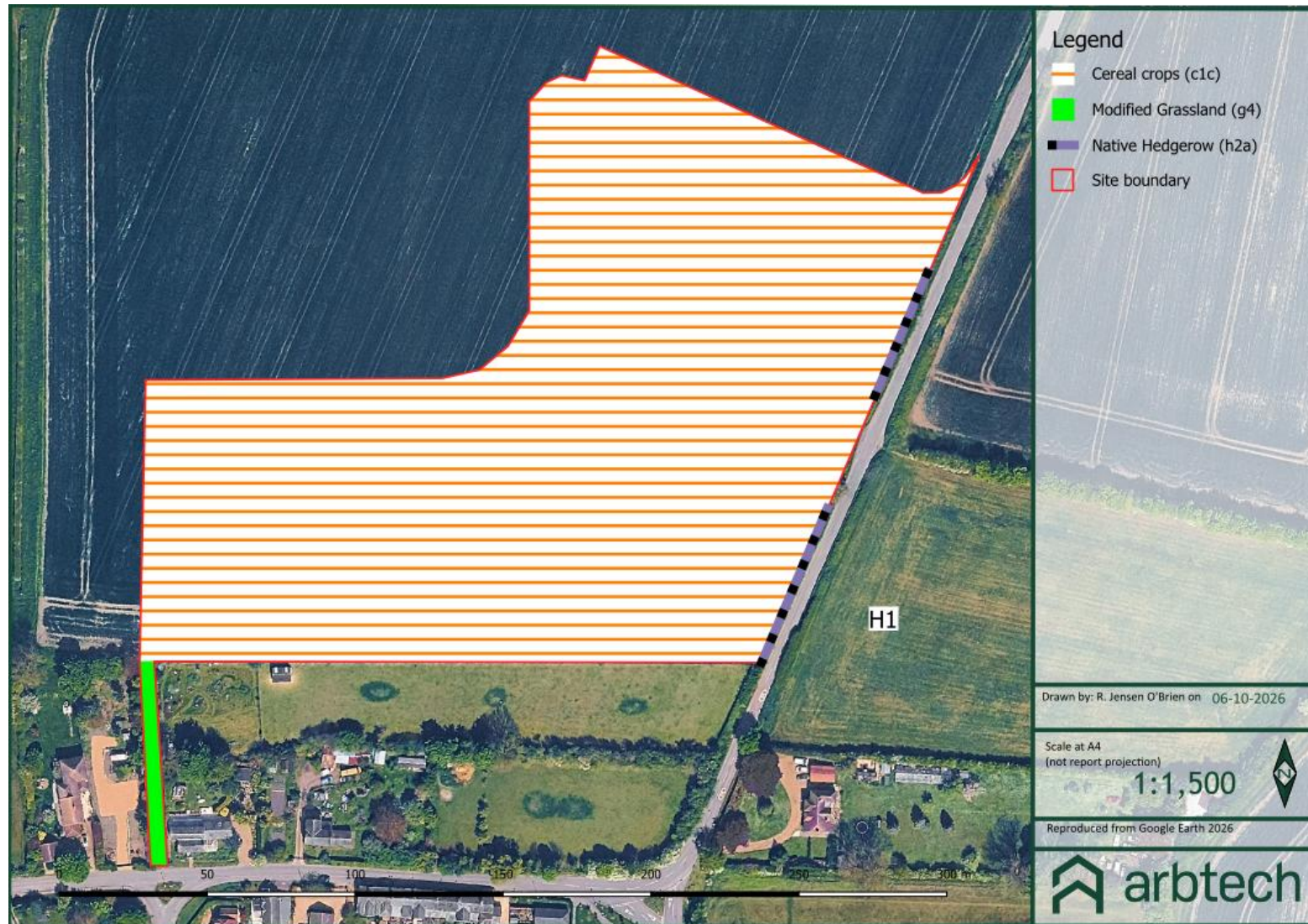
13.4 Suggested Biodiversity Enhancements

Hedgehogs

The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs:

- Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities.
- Creation of brash piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas.
- Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site.

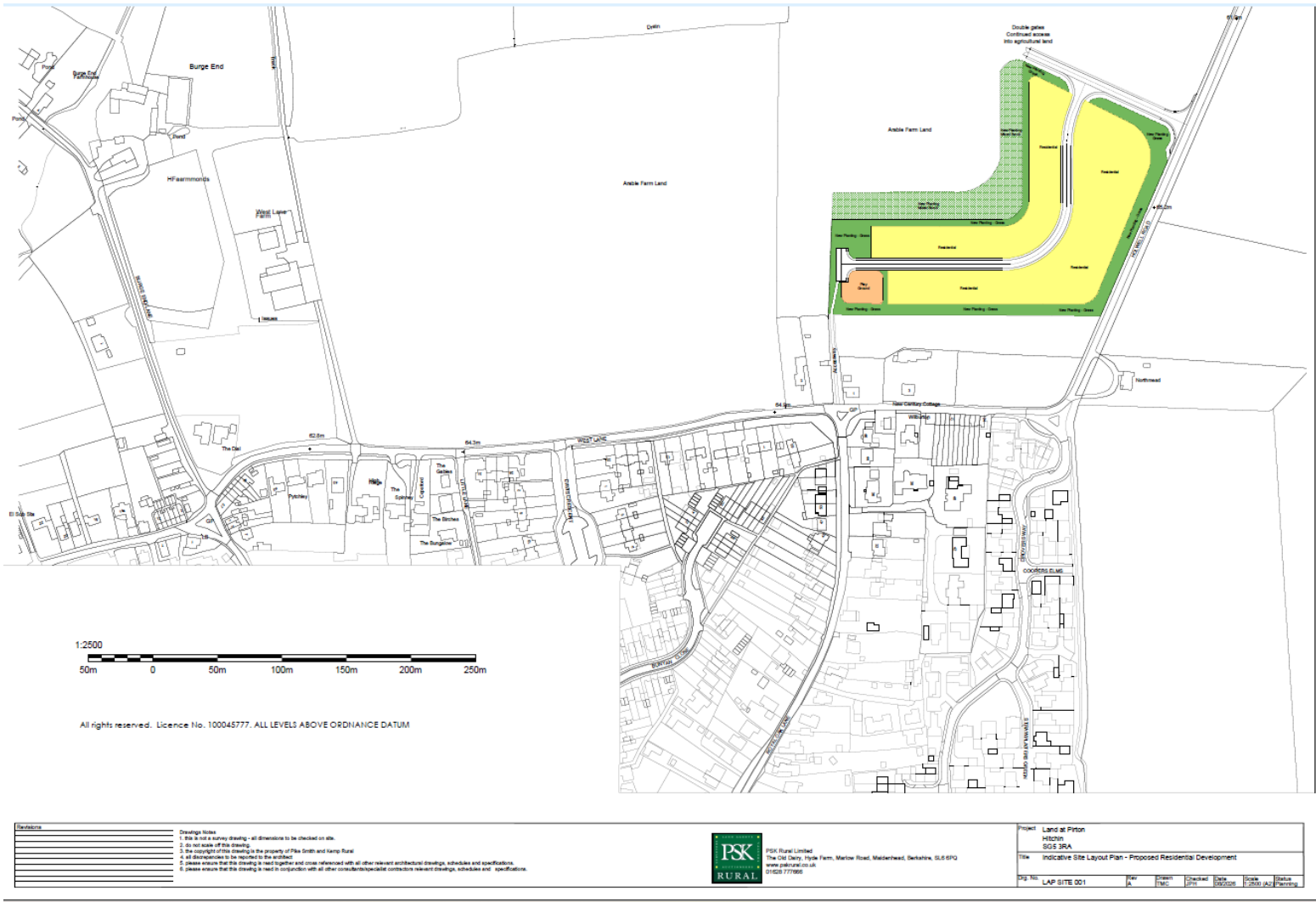
APPENDIX 1: SURVEY/HABITAT MAP



APPENDIX 2: LOCATION MAP



APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED PLAN



APPENDIX 4: HABITAT IMAGES



Cereal crops



Cereal crops



Modified grassland



Native hedgerow

APPENDIX 5: BASELINE CONDITION SCORE TABLES

Modified grassland (g4) condition assessment

	Criteria Description	Criteria Passed?
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m2 present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> , spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i> , broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>). Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m2 (excluding those listed in the previous sentence), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland.	N
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	N
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Y
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Y
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens). For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover.	N
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Y
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA).	Y
		Total 4/7
	Condition poor due to passing 4 of 7 criteria. Essential criteria (A) not met; condition capped at poor.	

Native hedgerow (h2a) condition assessment (H1)

	Criteria Description	Criteria Passed?
A	Height >1.5 m average along length. (The average height of woody growth estimated from base of stem to the top of the shoots, excluding any bank beneath the hedgerow, any gaps or isolated trees. Newly laid or coppiced hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice). A newly planted hedgerow does not pass this criterion (unless it is >1.5 m height).)	Y
A	Width >1.5 m average along length. (The average width of woody growth estimated at the widest point of the canopy, excluding gaps and isolated trees. Outgrowths (such as blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> suckers) are only included in the width estimate when they are >0.5 m in height. Laid, coppiced, cut and newly planted hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice).)	Y
B	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length. (This is the vertical 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow, and its distance from the ground to the lowest leafy growth. Certain exceptions to this criterion are acceptable (see page 65 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook).)	Y
B	Gaps make up <10% of total length; and No canopy gaps >5 m. (This is the horizontal 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow. Gaps are complete breaks in the woody canopy (no matter how small). Access points and gates contribute to the overall 'gappiness' but are not subject to the >5 m criterion (as this is the typical size of a gate).)	Y
C	>1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length: Measured from outer edge of hedgerow; and Is present on one side of the hedgerow (at least). (This is the level of disturbance (excluding wildlife disturbance) at the base of the hedgerow. Undisturbed ground is present for at least 90% of the hedgerow length, greater than 1 m in width and must be present along at least one side of the hedgerow. This criterion recognises the value of the hedgerow base as a boundary habitat with the capacity to support a wide range of species. Cultivation, heavily trodden footpaths, poached ground etc. can limit available habitat niches.)	N
C	Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground. (The indicator species used are nettles <i>Urtica</i> spp., cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> and docks <i>Rumex</i> spp. Their presence, either singly or together, does not exceed the 20% cover threshold.)	N
D	>90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native plant species (including those listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) and recently introduced species. (Recently introduced species refer to plants that have naturalised in the UK since AD 1500 (neophytes). Archaeophytes count as natives. For information on archaeophytes and neophytes see the JNCC website, as well as the BSBI website where the 'Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora' contains an up-to-date list of the status of species. For information	Y

	on invasive non-native species see the GB Non-Native Secretariat website.)	
D	>90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities. (This criterion addresses damaging activities that may have led to or lead to deterioration in other attributes. This could include evidence of pollution, piles of manure or rubble, or inappropriate management practices (for example, excessive hedgerow cutting).)	Y
		Total 6/8
	Condition moderate due to passing 6 of 8 criteria.	

APPENDIX 6: PONDS



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