

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Cardens Gardens, Welwyn, Hertfordshire

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March 2026



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W3W: [sizes.index.hugs](https://www.sizes.index.hugs)

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1 Summary

1.1.1 Brindle & Green Ltd were commissioned by Macdonald Begeman Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal incorporating a UK Habitat (UKHab) Classification Survey and Protected Species Assessment at the site known as Cardens Gardens, Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn, Hertfordshire. This report summarises the potential ecological constraints to the full planning application for site clearance to facilitate the development of a caravan park containing 27 spaces. Design plans are provided within Appendix 6 of this report. The survey was carried out on the 18th of June 2025.

1.1.2 The red line boundary is approximately 0.74ha in extent and comprises an area of sparsely vegetated land containing limited amounts of recolonising vegetation, with a small parcel of modified grassland to the south and hardstanding to the north. The site was bordered by timber fencing and Danesbury Park Road to the west, wire fencing with treeline and scrub to the south and a treeline and stretch of woodland offsite to the east which separates the site from the A1 motorway. The site was evaluated to support 'Local' value on a regional scale.

1.1.3 The habitats described within this report have the potential to support protected and/or notable species. As such, this report outlines important measures to protect species during site clearance, and recommendations to improve the biodiversity status of the site post development. A full description of the recommendations can be found within Chapter 7. Table 1 is a summary of the ecological issues recommended for further consideration as a result of our initial investigations.

Table 1: Ecological recommendations

Ecological Consideration	Recommendations (e.g. further survey, mitigation)	Timing
Habitats	Biodiversity Impact Assessment required to inform the units required to achieve a 10% net gain, detailed in Chapter 7. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be implemented in order to safeguard the adjacent offsite broadleaved woodland from development impacts.	During Design Phase
Breeding Birds	Works should be sympathetic to this group of species, with vegetation clearance and building demolition undertaken following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) outlined in Chapter 7.	During Site Clearance (Optimal timing between October – February outside of breeding bird season)
Roosting Bats	Offsite trees adjacent to red line boundary may have potential for roosting bats. Reasonable Avoidance Measures are recommended as detailed in Chapter 7.	During site clearance and construction phases.
Foraging and Commuting Bats	On site habitats were assessed to support 'Low' suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Reasonable Avoidance Measures to avoid impacts to adjacent offsite habitats are recommended, detailed in Chapter 7.	During construction phase.
Badgers	Badger walkover is recommended prior to commencement of clearance works to check for commuting badgers. Elsewise, Reasonable Avoidance Measures are recommended during construction phase, detailed in Chapter 7.	Prior to site clearance. Year Round, during development.
Reptiles	Full reptile survey recommended comprising at least seven visits, detailed in Chapter 7.	March – September (optimal timing April-May or September)
Mammal Species of Principal Importance (Hedgehogs)	Reasonable Avoidance Measures are recommended during site clearance and construction	During development

2 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The purpose of this assessment was to provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site incorporating a UKHab Survey and Protected Species Assessment to establish the likelihood of the site supporting protected species. The survey provides detail on the need for any additional, more detailed protected species surveys, likely mitigation, and any opportunities for enhancement.
- 2.1.2 The site is the subject of a full planning application for site clearance to facilitate the development of a caravan park containing 27 spaces. Design plans are provided within Appendix 6 of this report.
- 2.1.3 The legislation relevant to protected species within the United Kingdom is summarised within Appendix 4.
- 2.1.4 Results and recommendations contained within this report have been prepared by an experienced ecologist and are therefore the view of Brindle & Green Limited. The survey is based on information provided by our client, the development proposals, results of the desk study and our survey of the site. This report pertains to this information only.

3 Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Table 2 lists organisations and/or resources used as part of the desk study process. Data regarding any known statutory or non-statutory sites, in addition to any records for protected species, were requested from the following sources:

Table 2: Ecological Data Resources

Consultant	Requested data	Search radius	Date requested
Local Ecological Record Centre (Herts Environmental Record Centre)	- Protected and Notable Species Records - Local, National and International Site Designations	2km	06/08/2025
Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)	- National and International site Designations - Granted European protected species Development (EPS) Licenses - Priority Habitat Inventory	2km	08/07/2025

3.2 Surveyors

3.2.1 The survey was carried out by Sarah Jennison BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist, Josh Bowler BSc (Hons), Qualifying Member of CIEEM, Graduate Ecologist and Harry Ridgeway BSc (Hons), MSc, Qualifying Member of CIEEM, Seasonal Ecologist.

3.2.2 The survey was overseen by Lucinda Sweet PhD, MCIEEM Natural England Bat Licence (Class Level 2, 2019-9122-CLS-CLS), Great Crested Newt Licence (Class Level 1, 2016-22852-CLS-CLS), Director.

3.3 Survey Conditions

3.3.1 The survey was undertaken at 11:30am on the 18th of June 2025. The outside temperature was recorded as 24°C, with dry conditions, and 1/8 cloud cover.

3.4 UK Habitat Classification Survey

3.4.1 A UK Habitat Classification survey was undertaken where habitats were categorised and mapped (Appendix 1) following the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.01 (UK Hab Ltd., 2023) to establish the

presence and distribution of habitat types within the site and potential ecological constraints to development

3.4.2 The UKHab System is comprised of a five-level Primary Habitat Hierarchy, with each successive level providing increasingly detailed descriptions of habitat parcels present onsite. The system encompasses all habitat types found in the UK, irrespective of scale or geographic range, including UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Habitats Directive Annex I habitats.

- Level 1 includes the description of each major ecosystem present; Terrestrial, Freshwater, and Marine.
- Level 2 includes nine ecosystem types; Grassland, Woodland and Forest, Heathland and Shrub, Wetland, Cropland, Urban, Sparsely Vegetated Land, Rivers and Lakes, and Marine Inlets and Transitional Waters.
- Level 3 describes the 20 broad habitat types of the nine ecosystems outlined in Level 2. Examples include Acid Grassland, Calcareous Grassland, Neutral Grassland, Modified Grassland, Broadleaved and Mixed Woodland, Hedgerows, and Dense Scrub.
- Level 4 expands the 20 broad habitat types of Level 3 into 85 detailed habitat types, including Lowland Meadows, Other Neutral Grassland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, and Other woodland; Mixed. This level also allows the separation of 46 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority habitats from other habitats of lower ecological significance.
- Level 5 provides a further detailed expansion to Level 4 habitat types. 119 habitats are described within this level including 72 habitats as listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive.

3.4.3 Primary habitat types are accompanied by a list of Secondary Codes, which are further categorised into 'Essential' and 'Additional' codes. Each recorded habitat parcel is assigned a single Primary Habitat Code from Levels 2-4 and includes all Essential Secondary Code features relating to the habitat parcel. Additional Secondary Codes are also applied where relevant. No more than six Secondary Codes are recommended per parcel (UKHabs Ltd. 2023) and a list of Secondary Code definitions relevant to the site have been provided within Appendix 1. Where additional details were required, Target Notes have also been provided (Appendix 2). A plant species list (Appendix 2)

summarising all plants identified on site was produced during the survey and all scientific nomenclature was produced according to Stace (2010).

3.4.4 This survey was extended to note the potential for habitats on site to support protected and/or notable species and for evidence of any such species. The habitats on site were assessed for their suitability to support protected species in relation to the habitat type found at the site. Any incidental sightings or field signs were noted at the time of survey. Where evidence of, or the confirmed presence of a protected species was identified, further species-specific surveys may be recommended to ensure that the presence or otherwise of a legally protected species is fully considered prior to the determination of any planning approval or to guide an EPS development licence.

3.4.5 Legislation, guidance and methodology for species relevant to this site are presented in full within Appendices 4 and 5 of this report.

3.5 Site Evaluation

3.5.1 Following the ecological appraisal, the site was classified into one of six groups (Table 3), to indicate whether the site is considered to hold ecological value on a local, national or international scale. This evaluation is intended as a guide and only targeted survey work can establish the significance of protected species populations onsite.

Table 3: Definitions of each of the six evaluation brackets, indicating the importance of each habitat type and an example of their possible habitat status. (Table constructed following The CIEEM EcIA Guidelines, Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal (2024) pages 16 -17)

Evaluation Value	Example of habitat or species
International	An internationally designated site or candidate site, including habitat or species included within Special Protection Areas (SPA) / Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar Sites, listed under Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive.
National	Sites designated at UK level, e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), supporting species considered nationally threatened or rare. A regularly occurring regionally or county significant population/number of any nationally important species A feature identified as of critical importance within Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006).
Regional	Key Habitat type included within BAP. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a regionally important species.
County	Designated sites, such as Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) or viable habitat / species populations of value at a county level (LBAP).
District	District level designated sites, such as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) or habitats / species populations of value at a district (Which have features qualifying for LWS status). Sites/features that are scarce within the district or which appreciably enrich the district habitat resource.
Local / Site	Habitats or species populations of value in a local (i.e. within ~ 5km of the site) context. Habitats of poor to moderate biological diversity e.g. established conifer plantations, species poor hedgerows and un-intensively managed grassland which supports species which are common to the local area and whose loss can be easily mitigated.

3.6 Limitations

3.6.1 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The protected and notable species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of these species occurring on site, based upon the suitability of the habitats, known distribution of the species in the local area and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group.

3.6.2 A temporary construction cabin building (B1) was located on site but was unable to be accessed for an interior survey to assess suitability for roosting bats. However, due to the nature and condition of the building, this is not considered to impact the survey findings. The building was single storey, with a flat roof and no loft void, constructed of steel and lacking any suitable entry points for roosting bats. Hence, the building has been assessed to hold 'Negligible' suitability.

3.7 Report Lifespan

3.7.1 Given the transient nature of the subject, we would consider the survey results contained to be accurate for up to 18 months, at the discretion as assessed by a suitably qualified ecologist.

4 Site Context

4.1 Site Description

4.1.1 The application site can be found at TL 24079 17995, positioned on the north-eastern outskirts of the village of Welwyn, Hertfordshire. The site is located approximately 100m north-west of Oaklands, a hamlet within the civil parish of Welwyn and approximately 1.4km north-east of Welwyn itself. The site was bordered by areas of hardstanding within the wider site ownership, woodland edge to the east, a treeline and wire fence to the south and a wooden fence running along Danesbury Park Road to the west.

4.1.2 The central parcel of the site is comprised of a previously cleared area now classified as sparsely vegetated land that has since been recolonised by small amounts of vegetation. The southern parcel of the site was very overgrown and had formed into a patch of modified grassland containing three piles of dead wood and detritus, and the northern portion of the site was a hardstanding gravel driveway used as vehicle access that runs down along the eastern boundary of the site. A single temporary cabin building (Building B1) was located within this hardstanding parcel. The grassland was separated from the eastern hardstanding by a single treeline composed of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*).

4.1.3 Residential development associated with Welwyn and Oakland occupies much of the surroundings, with parcels of agricultural and pastoral land as well as deciduous woodland. The Woodlands Park Homes caravan park lies to the south of the site, whilst the western surroundings are composed largely of residential properties and farms with associated agricultural fields as well as patches of deciduous woodland. The A1 motorway runs approximately 20m from the eastern boundary of the site, separating the site from a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) named Mardley Heath. In addition to residential development associated with the hamlet of Oakland. The northern surroundings are predominantly composed of deciduous woodland with residential development to the north-west associated with Welwyn. Connectivity for species such as bats and birds to surrounding habitats is provided by treelines and woodland that border the east and south of the site. However, the wooden fencing to the west provides a boundary to terrestrial species, as does the A1 motorway to the east which provides a significant barrier to both terrestrial species and from the nearby Mardley Heath LNR.

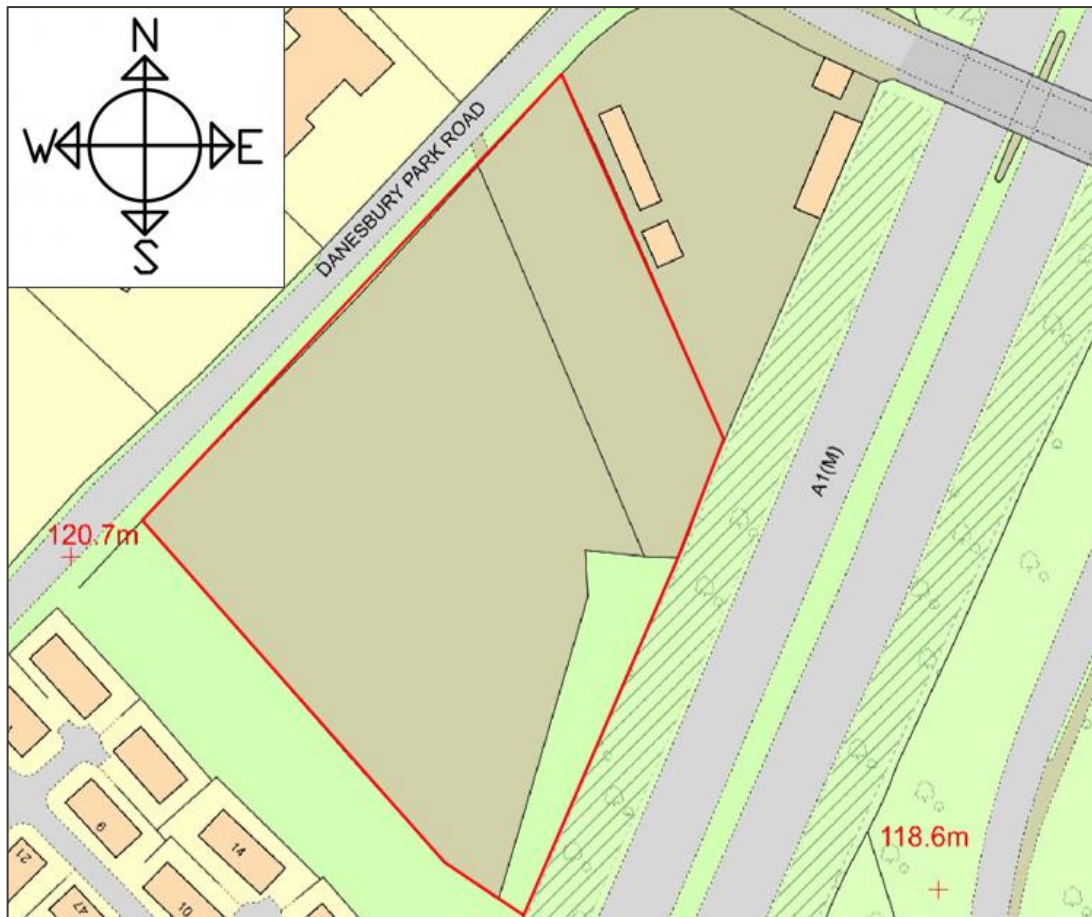


Figure 1: OS map of the project site and surrounding area. Red line boundary depicts application site.

4.2 Zone of Influence

4.2.1 The zone of influence describes the geographic extent of potential impacts of a proposed development. The 'Local' scale of the proposed development reduces the likelihood of impact to the surrounding area, however suitable connective vegetation could influence the presence of protected species within the application boundary. The zone of influence was considered to be 500 metres from the application boundary for reptiles, 250m for amphibians, 30 metres for terrestrial mammals such as badgers, and within the area of impact for breeding birds and bats.

5 Results

5.1 Desk Study

Designated Sites

5.1.1 The site was subjected to a search for designated sites within a 2km radius of the site using data supplied by the Local Records Centre (Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC)) and the online desk-based resource MAGIC. The data supplied by HERC was received on the 06/08/2025 and is summarised within Table 4.

5.1.2 . The search revealed three statutory sites within 2km. The closest non statutory designations are discussed below, with full data sets available upon request.

5.1.3 A search of the online resource Magic Maps found no additional sites with Statutory designations within the 2km radius search.

Table 4: Summary of Designated Sites within the area of the application site

Site Name	Grid Ref.	Status	Reason for Designation	Distance from site
Statutory Sites (within 2km)				
Mardley heath	TL 24621831	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Birch (<i>Betula</i> spp) and hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) trees, heathlands, rare solitary bees and wasps	80m E
Danesbury Park	TL 23521696	LNR	Grassland supporting insects and birds. Mature trees supporting owls, bats, insects and fungi.	800m SW
Singlers Marsh	TL 22751671	LNR	County rare wet meadow habitat supporting plants, insects and birds.	1.7km SW
Non-statutory Sites (within 1km)				
Ninning's Wood	TL 242186	Local Wildlife Site	Ancient semi-natural Sweet Chestnut (<i>Castanea sativa</i>)/English Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) Woodland containing diverse plant species.	400m N
Puttockhill Wood	TL 244170	Local Wildlife Site	Ancient semi-natural English Oak/Hornbeam Woodland.	710m SE
Legs and Stockings Wood	TL 244188	Local Wildlife Site	Ancient semi-natural Sessile Oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>)/Hornbeam Woodland	740m NE
Reynard Spring & Arnold's Spring	TL 232179	Local Wildlife Site	Ancient semi-natural English Oak/Hornbeam Woodland supporting a variety of plant species.	750m W
Grassland E. of Danesbury Hospital	TL 236172	Local Wildlife Site	Tussocky semi-improved grassland supporting a variety of grasses and herbs.	810m SW

Priority Habitat

5.1.4 The data search identified 12 areas of Ancient Woodland within 2km of the site, the closest being an unnamed site located 120m northeast of the site boundary.

Protected Species Assessment

Data supplied by HERC also included records of protected species. Full datasets can be provided upon request. A summary of the closest or most relevant records can be seen in Table 5. The summary has been limited to records within 10 years and for species most relevant to the habitats present. Full data search results are available on request.

Table 5: Summary of relevant protected and priority species records

Species	Grid Ref.	Date	Description
Birds			
Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)	TL 21	07/11/2020	8 total records, nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Red Kite (<i>Milvus milvus</i>)	TL 21	20/3/2020	60 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	TL 21	17/10/2020	22 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Yellowhammer (<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>)	TL 21	07/11/2020	16 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Skylark (<i>Alda arvensis</i>)	TL 21	28/11/2020	17 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Mistle Thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)	TL 2418	21/06/2018	15 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	TL 21	02/12/2020	27 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	TL 2418	15/03/2017	35 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>)	TL 21	02/08/2020	10 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)	TL 2418	21/06/2018	52 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.

Species	Grid Ref.	Date	Description
Linnet (<i>Linaria cannabina</i>)	TL 21	07/11/2020	11 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Willow Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>)	TL 244182	26/04/2015	2 total records, both being 370m from the site with a 100m grid accuracy.
Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	TL 21	17/10/2020	8 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>)	TL 21	11/11/2020	5 total records, all being 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	TL 2417	02/11/2018	57 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Blue Tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)	TL 2418	21/06/2018	60 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	TL 2418	21/06/2018	61 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	TL 24 17	02/11/2018	40 total records, the nearest being 0m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.
Mammals			
Badger (<i>Meles meles</i>)	*CONFIDENTIAL*	08/12/2017	Within 2km. Active sett with prints and latrines present.
Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>)	TL 2283516701	2016	1.8km SW. Field observation, 3 total records.
Brown Hare (<i>Lepus europaeus</i>)	TL 241170	05/4/2015	Nearest 900m S. Field observation, 8 total records. 3 records located 0m from site, but with a 1km grid accuracy.
Hedgehog (<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>)	TL 2434317804	07/08/2019	Nearest 320m E. Field observation. 17 total records.
Stoat (<i>Mustela erminea</i>)	TL 236185	26/5/2017	Nearest 630m NW. Field observation. 2 total records.
Polecat (<i>Mustela putorius</i>)	TL 25181938	30/11/2017	1.75km NE, dead on road.

Species	Grid Ref.	Date	Description
Common Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	TL 25431846	01/5/2017	1.4km E, roost, unspecified.
Daubenton's Bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)	TL 21	25/2/2017	6 records, all located 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Serotine (<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>)	TL 25431846	01/5/2017	1.4km NE, roost, unspecified.
Soprano Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	TL 25431846	01/5/2017	1.4km NE, roost, unspecified.
Natterer's Bat (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>)	TL 21	25/2/2017	6 records, all located 0m from site with a 10km grid accuracy.
Herpetofauna			
Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>)	TL 2617	23/5/2016	1.9km SE. Field observation. 2 records.
Slow Worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>)	TL 24571978	24/07/2022	1.85km N. Field observation.
Common Toad (<i>Bufo bufo</i>)	TL 2317	25/12/2016	11 total records with the nearest being located 90m SW from site with a 1km grid accuracy.

5.1.5 Magic Maps revealed two granted EPS licences within 2km of the site:

Table 6: Summary of relevant protected and priority species records

Species	Grid Ref.	Licence No.	Date	Description
Brown Long Eared Bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)	TL 25011741	2016-26597-EPS-MIT	01/12/2016	License for the destruction of a resting place. Approx 1km SE of site.
Common Pipistrelle	TL 24991719	2018-36237-EPS-MIT	10/08/2018	License for the destruction of a resting place. Approx 1.15km SE of site.

Priority Habitats

5.1.6 Data supplied by MAGIC includes a UKBAP priority habitat inventory. MAGIC returned priority habitat Deciduous Woodland on and adjacent to site by the eastern boundary. Upon site visit, no woodland was present within the red line boundary. However, a strip of deciduous woodland was recorded adjacent to the eastern site boundary forming the verge of the A1 motorway.

5.2 Habitats

5.2.1 The habitat types recorded on site are summarised below, and the frequency and distribution of habitat types is displayed within a UKHab Survey Map (Appendix 1 and 2). Table 7 provides a list of habitat types present on site along with their inclusion (or otherwise) as a National and / or Local Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) (Previously referred to as Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)) (It should be noted that additional information is included within the text where a classification under UKHab survey methodology does not mirror habitat types considered to be conservation priorities).

Table 7: UKHab Habitat Types found on site and inclusion within UK BAP/HPI habitats

Habitat Type	N HPI	L HPI	N/A
Sparsely Vegetated Land (s1)			✓
Modified Grassland (g4)			✓
Scattered Trees and Line of Trees (32, 33)		✓	
Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface (u1c)			✓
Building (u1b5)			✓

Sparsely Vegetated Land (s1) with Tall Forbs (16)

5.2.2 The central parcel of the site was composed of sparsely vegetated land accounting for approximately 0.32ha that had previously been cleared and had been allowed to be recolonised by vegetation. There was evidence of small fires and pieces of man-made scrap littering parts of the area. The sparse densities of vegetation was classified as '16 – Tall Forbs'. These species were varied and the area was dominated by hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), with abundant broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*). Frequently recorded species included spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) and purple-leaved willowherb (*Epilobium coloratum*). Occasionally recorded species included oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Rarely recorded species included teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), cudweed (*Filago germanica*) and prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*).



Figure 2: Area of sparsely vegetated land since recolonised by vegetation, located centrally within the site.

Modified Grassland (g3c) and Scattered Scrub (10)

5.2.3 The southern parcel of the site was composed of modified grassland, which accounts for approximately 0.24ha of the redline boundary (Figure 3). The area featured a highly variable sward height of 5cm to 60cm, with some scrub species growing as high as 2m in places. Species included abundant cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Yorkshire fog. Occasionally recorded species included timothy (*Phleum pratense*), doves foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and spear thistle. Rarely recorded species included birds foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), hedge woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) and soft brome. Three large wood piles were located within this parcel (see Appendix 1 for locations). A full list of recorded plant species can be found in Appendix 2. The secondary code '10 – scattered scrub' was applied to this habitat parcel, particularly around the southern and southeastern margins.



Figure 3: Area of Modified grassland towards the south of the site.

Scattered Trees and Line of Trees (32, 33)

5.2.4 A single mature pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) was recorded towards the eastern boundary of the site (Figure 4). Additionally, a treeline of immature trees (Figure 5) was recorded towards the south-east of the site, dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) with frequent field maple (*Acer campestre*).



Figure 4: Single scattered pedunculate oak tree located at eastern boundary



Figure 5: Treeline of immature trees on right of photo, located towards south-east of site.

Buildings (u1b5)

5.2.5 Building 1 was a single storey temporary construction in good condition with locked and intact doors and windows, with a flat roof and raised approximately 20cm off the ground.



Figure 6: Building B1 located towards north-east of site.

Artificial unvegetated - Unsealed Surface (u1b)

5.2.6 An area of unsealed hardstanding is located at the northern parcel of the site. This parcel consists of a cleared area covered with gravel in preparation for construction. This extends into a dirt track that runs along the eastern boundary of the site in between the treeline and the woodland to the east that makes up the edge of the red line boundary. An additional area on the western boundary is composed of tarmac for the purpose of forming a vehicle entrance to the site. Total on site area of this habitat type was approximately 0.18ha.



Figure 7: Area of artificial unvegetated - unsealed surface located to the north of the site.

Invasive Weeds Assessment

5.2.7 An assessment of the site was made to establish the presence of invasive weeds included on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

5.2.8 No recordings of schedule 9 invasive weed species were found within, or adjacent to the application area.

5.3 Fauna

Breeding Birds

5.3.1 The assessment was undertaken during the breeding bird season. Four species of bird were recorded flying above the site during the survey including red kite (*Milvus milvus*), carrion crow (*Corvus corone*), buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*).

5.3.2 Treeline, scrub and grassland on site as well as woodland adjacent to site provide suitable nesting habitat for birds, including birds of conservation concern identified within 2km of the site during the desk study such as House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

5.3.3 Building B1 onsite had potential to provide suitability for nesting birds. There were no recorded suitable access points for bird species or ledges, however the building was a temporary cabin with a flat roof, which provides a potential suitable platform for nesting bird species such as wood pigeons.

5.3.4 Based on a review of the habitat types on site and the list of bird species recorded within the data search, the site and adjacent habitats are considered to have potential support an assemblage of bird species including some species considered to be of high conservation concern that are either legally protected or UK BAP species.

Bats

5.3.5 The data search returned 15 records of bats in the previous 10 years, all of which pertained to roosts. The closest were recorded as 0m from site, but with a 10km grid accuracy the exact locations are not reliably known. Three records of confirmed roosts were recorded 1.4km northeast from the red line boundary, pertaining to common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and serotine.

Roosting Bats

5.3.6 Building B1 were all assessed to support 'Negligible' suitability to support roosting bats. The building consisted of a single storey, flat-roofed temporary workers' cabin constructed of steel. There were no openings or access points recorded that would constitute Potential Roost Features (PRFs), although the building was locked and so the interior could not be investigated.

5.3.7 The mature English oak tree on site was assessed and categorised based upon Bat Conservation Trust guidance (see Appendix 5) and was assessed to have 'Negligible' suitability to support roosting bats. Despite the tree being mature in nature, it did not support suitable cracks, fissures or holes to support roosting bats. However, offsite woodland habitat contained trees with the potential to support roosting bats.

Foraging and Commuting Bats

5.3.8 The site and surrounding area supported a number of features providing some suitability to support commuting and foraging bats. The rough grassland and vegetation, and the boundary features such as the treeline on the eastern boundary and the treeline that lies adjacent to the southern boundary provided valuable connective habitat to the surrounding environment, which contains a variety of habitats including woodland and agricultural fields that provide valuable

resources for foraging and commuting bats. However, the on-site habitats themselves provided limited potential for bats. As such, the site is considered to hold 'Low' suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Offsite adjacent habitats, such as the strip of woodland to the east, were assessed to possess 'Moderate' suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

Badgers

5.3.9 Records relating to certain protected species including badger sett locations are sensitive in nature, and due to the risk of public interference are kept confidential. Details of results relating to badger have not been included in this report due to their sensitive nature but will be submitted within a confidential appendix to support the planning submission (Appendix 9).

5.3.10 No evidence of badger setts, snuffle holes or latrines were found during the ecological appraisal of the site. A single mammal run (Target Node 3, see Appendix 2) was recorded to the south-west of the site, although there was insufficient evidence to determine species. The site supported habitat features such as long, rough grassland which is suitable foraging and commuting habitat for badgers. Additionally, the site was adjacent to a strip of woodland on a motorway verge which were considered conducive to supporting badger populations and sett building habitat due to its gradient and location. The extent of the site, and the location within a landscape featuring woodland habitats suggest that this transient species could forage or commute within the surrounding environment but are not likely dependant on habitats within the redline boundary.

Great Crested Newts

5.3.11 The data search returned 2 records within 2km of the site, with the nearest record located 1.9km southeast from site.

5.3.12 There were no water bodies recorded on site, and only two within 250m of the red line boundary (Figure 8). Pond 2 was located on the opposite side of the A1 motorway, which is a significant terrestrial barrier to terrestrial species dispersal for great crested newts. Pond 1 was located on private land approximately 150m north of the site and so could not be accessed during the survey. However, barriers such as Pottersheath Road which led over a motorway bridge and had high curbs was a significant barrier for commuting GCN. In addition, wooden fencing surrounds the site ownership which limits accessibility for GCN. The northern extent of the ownership that lies between the site and the pond is composed of gravel hardstanding driveway with dwellings build onto it and appeared to be relatively frequently accessed.

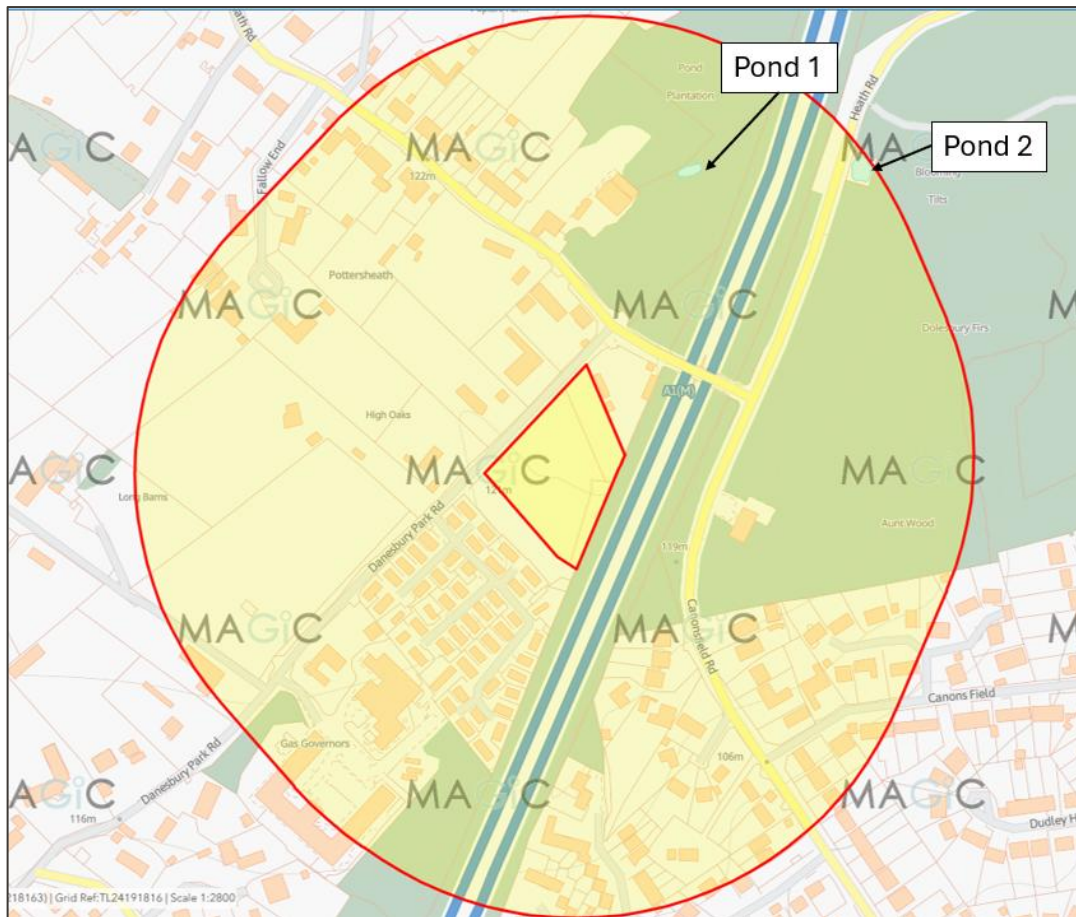


Figure 8: OS Map showing pond locations within a 250-metre radius of the site.

Reptiles

5.3.13 The data search returned 1 record of reptiles within 2km of the site, pertaining to a dead slow worm located 900m from site with a 1km grid accuracy.

5.3.14 The site supported a suitable habitat matrix to support reptiles such as grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Viviparous lizard*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). The extensive modified grassland on site provided a variable sward structure and opportunities for foraging. The wood and debris piles on site offered dappled shade and suitable reptile refugia such as deadwood suitable for hibernation. Basking opportunities were also recorded with pieces of discarded scrap metal present in the sparsely vegetated land pocket.

Mammal Species of Principal Importance

5.3.15 The NERC Act 2006, Section 41 highlights 17 species of principal importance within England. The data search returned records of water vole, brown hare, polecat and stoat within 2km of the site. However, no signs of these species or suitable habitat to support them were recorded during the survey. Therefore, these species are not considered to be a constraint on this application.

Western European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

5.3.16 The habitats on site were considered conducive to supporting Western European hedgehog. Habitats including the rough grassland, adjacent woodland and wood and debris piles provide suitable foraging, refuge and commuting habitats for this species, and may also be suitable for hibernating hedgehogs.

6 Evaluation

6.1 Development Proposals

6.1.1 The site is the subject of a full planning application for site clearance to facilitate the development of a caravan park with 27 spaces. Design plans are provided within Appendix 6 of this report.

6.2 Desk Study Impacts

6.2.1 Direct impacts on nearby designated sites as a result of the proposed development are considered unlikely. The site supports habitats of low value, namely modified grassland, scattered scrub, hardstanding and colonised sparsely vegetated land. Whilst one designated site is located within 250m of the site, namely Mardley Heath located 80m east, this site is separated from the development site by the A1 motorway providing a substantial barrier. As such, the loss of the locally frequent habitats on site will have no conceivable impact to these designations. The initial proposals set out for the site (Appendix 6) show that the extent of the development proposals are contained within the site boundary, as such, impacts on locally designated sites are considered unlikely.

6.3 Habitats

6.3.1 The habitats on site have been evaluated as having 'Local' value in relation to the immediate surroundings and a regional context.

6.3.2 The site was composed of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface to the north, in the form of a cleared area covered in gravel. The central parcel of the site was composed of sparsely vegetated land that had been recolonised by some vegetation since clearance. The southern parcel of the site was modified grassland with piles of discarded wood located within it and some parcels of scattered scrub. A single temporary construction cabin building lay within the unvegetated unsealed land, a single mature oak tree was recorded to the eastern boundary and a treeline of immature trees was also recorded towards the south-east of the site.

6.3.3 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory from February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act. Therefore, the site must undergo a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, further details of which are provided in Chapter 7.

6.3.4 Additionally, the site was located adjacent to a strip of broadleaved deciduous woodland, which is listed as Priority Habitat. Due to the proximity of this habitat to the development, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be implemented in order to safeguard this habitat from any negative impacts associated with development, such as excavation works damaging roots.

6.4 Breeding Birds

6.4.1 All wild birds, their eggs and nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird whilst nesting, or take, damage or destroy the nest of any such bird while in use or being built. In addition, species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or their dependant young are afforded additional protection from disturbance whilst they are at their nests.

6.4.2 The vegetation and roof of B1 on site were considered to provide suitable nesting habitat for common bird species. The habitats on site are of low value and locally frequent, as such the impact of the loss of these habitats is short term and can be offset through post-construction landscaping. However, in the absence of mitigation direct or indirect impacts on individual birds, their young, eggs and habitats could occur during site clearance. Chapter 7 provides recommendations relating to the need for precautionary working methods to safeguard this species group during vegetation clearance.

6.5 Bats

6.5.1 All bats in the United Kingdom and their habitats are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to damage or destroy any bat roost, intentionally or recklessly obstruct a bat roost, deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat or intentionally kill, injure or take any bat.

Roosting Bats

6.5.2 The mature oak tree on site was not recorded as featuring PRF's. The tree is on the margins of the site and is being retained as part of existing plans. However, mature trees within the offsite woodland did have potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, Reasonable Avoidance Measures to prevent impacts of the development on this species are recommended, the details of which are provided in Chapter 7, and damage to woodland habitat should be mitigated by the CEMP.

6.5.3 Building B1 was identified as having 'Negligible' suitability to support roosting bats due to the lack of PRFs within the building's external features. As such, the removal of this building is unlikely to provide a barrier to the application.

6.5.4 The recommendations section of this report sets out important guidance on measures to avoid impacts on this species and measures to support its conservation status through ecological enhancement.

Foraging and Commuting Bats

6.5.5 The linear features provided by the treeline to the east and the rough grassland present on site could act as commuting lines and foraging areas for bat species and are considered to hold 'Low' suitability. Surrounding habitats in the offsite adjacent land, such as the woodland parcel to the east, possess 'Moderate' suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

6.5.6 Chapter 7 sets out Reasonable Avoidance Measures to prevent impacts of the development on this species group.

6.6 Badgers

6.6.1 Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, in England and Wales it is an offence to wilfully kill, injure, disturb or take any badger, or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to any part of a badger sett.

6.6.2 There was no evidence of badger setts, snuffle holes or latrines within zone of influence, however a mammal run was recorded to the south-west of the site. Additionally, the woodland surroundings of the site and data records suggest that badgers may be present in the wider environment and could forage and commute through the red line boundary on an intermittent basis.

6.6.3 Chapter 7 sets out important guidance on measures to avoid impacts on this species and measures to support its conservation status.

6.7 Great Crested Newts

6.7.1 Despite the presence of suitable habitat on site for the terrestrial phase of GCN such as rough grassland and wood piles, the barriers between the site and Pond 1 were significant and as such the site was not assessed to have suitability for GCN and this species is not expected to provide a constraint to this application.

6.7.2 It is considered unlikely that GCN would present a constraint to the planning application, particularly given the barriers lying between the site and Pond 1. GCN are not thought to be present within the redline boundary and as such are not considered further within this report. If any evidence of GCN presence is uncovered during development works, then works should cease and the advice of an ecologist sought.

6.8 Reptiles

6.8.1 Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) making it illegal to intentionally kill or injure reptiles.

6.8.2 No evidence of reptiles was recorded during the survey; however, the site supported a suitable habitat matrix comprising rough grassland with a variable sward structure and piles of dead wood refugia. As such it is therefore possible that harm or injury could be sustained to this group of species during the pre-construction clearing of the site.

6.8.3 Chapter 7 sets out the need for further survey work to determine the presence / likely absence of reptiles at the site and, if present, inform mitigation/compensation to avoid impacts on this group and support their conservation status.

6.9 Mammal Species of Principal Importance

6.9.1 The NERC Act 2006, Section 41 highlights 17 species of principal importance within England. This includes several species of bat, however these have been addressed in section 6.5.

Western European Hedgehog

The habitats on site were considered conducive to supporting Western European hedgehog. Habitats including the rough grassland and dead wood piles provide suitable foraging, refuge and commuting habitats for this species. Chapter 7 provides recommendations aimed at safeguarding this species during construction, and measures to facilitate their use of the site post-development.

7 Recommendations

7.1.1 The site should be the subject of further ecological assessment and reasonable avoidance measures should be detailed and implemented during the construction phase of the proposed development.

7.1.2 This survey can be used to guide the Master Plan layout to ensure that mitigation is employed to retain and enhance local biodiversity where possible. Efforts should be made to support National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans, achieve a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain Post development and seek opportunities to incorporate ecological enhancements within the proposed development as detailed within the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), which seeks biodiversity enhancements through the planning process, and the Environment Act 2021.

7.2 Habitats

Habitats	Timing
Recommendations	
The site should be subjected to a Biodiversity Impact Assessment to ascertain habitat value and number of post development units to achieve a minimum 10% net gain. A Construction Environmental Management Plan should be issued in order to safeguard the Priority Habitat deciduous woodland located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site from impacts associated with the development.	During design stage
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Design proposals may require amendment following the results of BNG assessment. Enhancements such as planting native flowers and scrub can be advised and directed following further survey.	During design stage

7.3 Breeding Birds

Breeding Birds	Timing
Recommendations	
Vegetation and building roof on site and woodland adjacent to site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Given their protection, development must be sympathetic to the value of this habitat and potential impacts on breeding birds, their eggs, nests and young. The breeding bird season is generally accepted as being between March and September. Consideration and implementation must be given to the following options most appropriate to the scheme. a) Undertake vegetation clearance and building demolition between the months of October and February where possible. b) Clearance between the months of March and September should be subjected to a search for active birds' nests 24 hours prior to commencement of works.	Works outside of the breeding season (Oct-Feb) If unachievable, follow steps in recommendation.
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Soft landscaping proposals should seek to include areas of open space to be enhanced with native planting for the benefit of biodiversity, guided by a biodiversity impact assessment.	During design stage

7.4 Roosting Bats

Roosting Bats	Timing
Recommendations	
Adjacent offsite deciduous woodland habitat contained trees with potential to support roosting bats. It is recommended that Reasonable Avoidance measures in conjunction with a CEMP to protect woodland habitat and prevent negative impacts on roosting bats. If lighting is required, a scheme should be devised and positioned to have minimal disturbance following the guidance of an ecologist. Any lighting used during the development should be directed away from the eastern boundary with overspill less than 1lux (ideally 0) onto suitable habitats.	During and post development
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Design proposals may require amendment following the results of further survey work. Habibat built in bat boxes 001 (or similar approved) to be fixed onto onsite or adjacent trees, at a height of at least 4m from the ground, facing south or southwest and sheltered from winds and artificial light. Where possible, bat boxes should be placed close to woodland edges and treelines.	During construction

7.5 Foraging and Commuting Bats

Foraging and Commuting Bats	Timing
Recommendations	
The site possesses features such as rough grasslands and a treeline to the eastern boundary that have the potential to act as limited flight paths and foraging resources for local bat populations. As such, this site has been assessed to hold 'Low' suitability for foraging and commuting bats. However, adjacent offsite habitats had greater potential to support foraging and commuting bats and so impacts on these offsite habitats should be mitigated. It is recommended that Reasonable Avoidance measures in conjunction with a CEMP should be implemented to preserve woodland habitat and prevent negative impacts on foraging and commuting bats. If lighting is required, a scheme should be devised and positioned to have minimal disturbance following the guidance of an ecologist. Any lighting used during the development should be directed away from the eastern boundary with overspill less than 1lux (ideally 0) onto suitable habitats.	During and post development.
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Soft landscaping proposals should seek to incorporate native tree and shrub species wherever possible, which are beneficial to native invertebrate species, the primary component of UK bat species' diets. Planting should consider species that attract night-flying insects such as night-scented stock (<i>Matthiola longipetala</i>) and evening primrose (<i>Oenothera biennis</i>).	During design stage

7.6 Badgers

Badgers	Timing
Recommendations	
Appropriate precautions should be employed before and during construction works to prevent harm to this protected species. a) A Pre-works check of the site should be undertaken within three months prior to the onset of construction related activities. b) Any exposed excavations to be left overnight are to be covered at the end of each working day or include a means of escape for any fallen animals (e.g. a scaffolding plank). Any temporarily exposed open pipes are to be capped to prevent badgers gaining access. c) Should badgers or any evidence of badgers be encountered during the construction phase, all works should cease, and the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist should be sought	Pre and during development
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Planting of native, fruit-bearing plant species such as blackberry bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>) should be implemented to provide valuable resources for foraging badgers.	During design stage

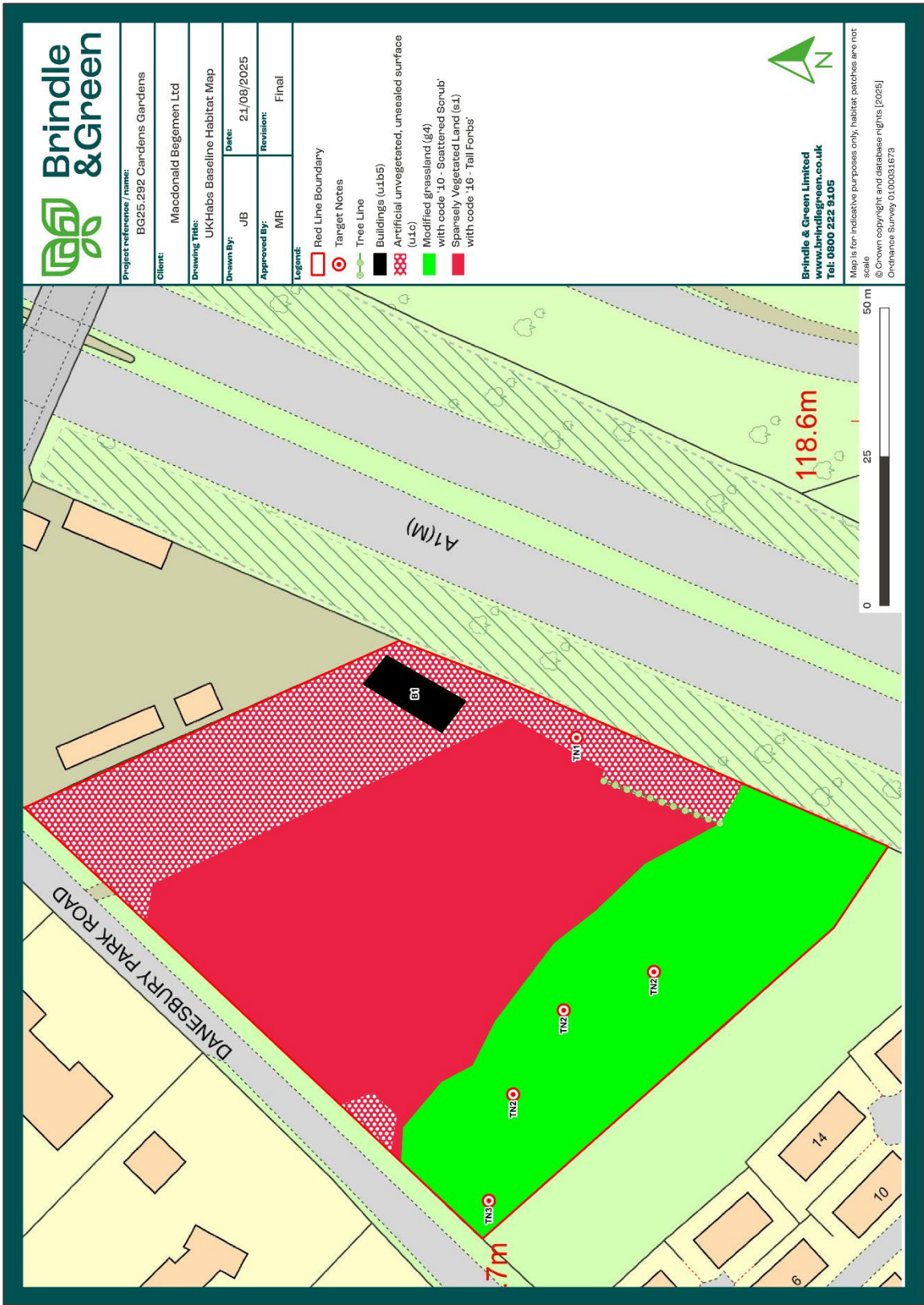
7.7 Reptiles

Reptiles	Timing
Recommendations	
Habitat features such as rough grassland and deadwood were considered highly conducive to finding this species on site. To establish whether reptiles are using the site it is recommended that suitable habitat patches are subjected to a full reptile presence / absence survey at the appropriate time of year.	Seven visits in suitable weather conditions Timing: March – September All survey work required prior to determination of planning application.
Enhancement Prescriptions	
Design proposals may require amendment following the results of further survey work.	During design stage

7.8 Mammal Species of Principal Importance

Mammal Species of Principal Importance	Timing
Recommendations	
Hedgehogs may use the site for foraging or commuting purposes. The recommended reasonable avoidance measures should be followed: - Any temporarily exposed open pipes are to be capped to prevent hedgehogs gaining access. - Undertake works during daylight hours. - The vegetation should be checked prior to removal. - Search areas of deadwood, brash, and discarded items by hand before removing. - If burning any cleared vegetation, carry out immediately after piling to prevent hedgehogs moving in prior to burning. - Any exposed excavations to be left overnight are to be covered at the end of each working day, or include a means of escape for any fallen animals (e.g., a scaffolding plank).	During clearance and development
Enhancement Prescriptions	
The inclusion of 'hedgehog highways' should be implemented into the design of the proposed boundary fencing whereby a 13cm x 13cm hold should be cut into the base of fences creating a corridor for hedgehogs between the site and wider environment.	During design stage

Appendix 1 – UK Habitat Classification Plan



Appendix 2 - UKHab Target Notes and Species List

Table 8: UKHab target notes

Target note number	Description
1	Rubble pile. Grid reference: TL 24115 17965 