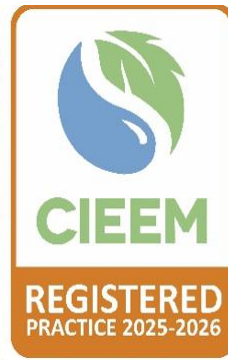


Greenbanks

St Ippolyts, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

August 2026



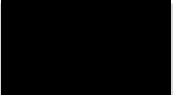
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Contents

1	Executive Summary	4	8	References.....	26
2	Introduction.....	5	9	Appendices.....	28
2.1	Background.....	5			
2.2	Aim of the Study	6			
2.3	Validity	6			
2.4	Legislative and Planning policy context.....	6			
3	Methodology	9			
3.1	Desk study.....	9			
3.2	Field survey	9			
3.3	Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	11			
3.4	Limitations	11			
4	Results.....	13			
4.1	Designated sites	13			
4.2	Habitats	14			
4.3	Species.....	15			
5	Evaluation.....	21			
5.1	Designated sites	21			
5.2	Habitats	21			
5.3	Species.....	21			
6	Recommendations.....	22			
6.1	Further surveys.....	22			
6.2	Mitigation and compensation	22			
6.3	Enhancements.....	23			
7	Conclusions	25			

1 Executive Summary

Maydencroft Limited was commissioned by Gavin Nelson of Bonnel Construction to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Greenbanks, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire. The appraisal was required to assess the potential ecological constraints associated with the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings and development of four residential dwellings with associated infrastructure.

The habitats on Site comprise modified grassland, dense scrub, individual trees, standing water, buildings and hardstanding. The proposed development will result in the loss of areas of modified grassland, scrub, an ornamental pond and swimming pool, buildings and six individual trees. None of the habitats proposed for removal are considered to be of significant ecological importance.

The Site is located approximately 1.47km from Wain Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with five Local Wildlife Sites also present within 1km. Due to the small scale of the development and separation from these designated sites, no adverse impacts are anticipated.

The ecological assessment identified that Buildings 3, 4 and 5 have low suitability for roosting bats, while habitats on Site provide moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. The Site also provides suitable habitat for nesting birds and may be utilised by [REDACTED] and hedgehogs. Great crested newts, reptiles, hazel dormouse, water vole, otter and an important assemblage of invertebrates are considered likely absent from Site.

One dusk emergence survey of Buildings 3, 4 and 5 will be required between May and the end of August to determine the presence/likely absence of roosting bats. Should a bat roost

be identified, further surveys and appropriate mitigation and licensing may be required.

Measures to minimise adverse effects on ecological receptors include:

- Retained trees to be protected in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan.
- Sensitive lighting to protect foraging and commuting bats. Further mitigation/licensing may be required subject to emergence survey results.
- Precautionary measures to prevent animals becoming trapped within excavations during construction.
- Vegetation clearance to avoid the bird nesting season or be preceded by a nesting bird check.

Habitat losses will be compensated through Biodiversity Net Gain, with the proposed habitat creation and tree planting delivering an 11.26% increase in habitat units. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required to secure the management and monitoring of habitats contributing towards BNG for 30 years.

Opportunities for ecological enhancement include the provision of an integrated bat box within each new dwelling, three bird boxes within retained trees and creation of a log pile within the Site frontage.

Subject to completion of the recommended bat emergence survey and implementation of the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures detailed within this report, no significant adverse ecological effects are anticipated as a result of the proposed development.

2 Introduction

2.1 BACKGROUND

Maydencroft Limited was commissioned by Gavin Nelson of Bonnel Construction to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the habitats on Site at Greenbanks, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire. The appraisal was required to assess the potential ecological constraints affecting the development of four residential dwellings on Site. The buildings currently on Site will be demolished to facilitate this development.

The PEA involved a site survey which was undertaken on 21st August 2026 by Alice Salisbury, Principal Ecologist of Maydencroft Limited. The desk study and writing components of the report were completed by Alice Salisbury.

The section of land concerned in the survey (referred to as the 'Site' from hereafter) lies approximately 780m south of St Ippolyts. It is surrounded predominantly by arable fields, hedgerows and grassland, with scattered residential developments and small pockets of woodland.

The proposals comprise the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings to facilitate the development of four three-bedroom dwellings with associated infrastructure. Design plans are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1: Site boundary in landscape context



Figure 2: Site design plans

2.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is a rapid assessment of the ecological features present, or potentially present on Site and within the immediate surroundings. The PEA comprises a desk study and a walkover survey.

The aim of this study is to:

- Identify ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the project
- Inform the client and design team of likely mitigation requirements
- Identify any further surveys required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)
- Identify opportunities for ecological enhancements

2.3 VALIDITY

In accordance with CIEEM guidance (CIEEM 2024), this report is valid until February 2028, this being 18 months from the date of the survey/s. After this date, an Ecologist should be consulted to update the assessment to ensure that the conclusions of this report are still correct.

2.4 LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Appendix C outlines the key legislation protecting habitats and species within England.

The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, published in August 2026, sets out the Government's policies for plan-making and decision-making in England. Chapter 19, Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, seeks to support nature recovery while protecting important habitats, species and landscapes.

Policy N2 requires development proposals, where relevant, to:

- conserve and enhance features of ecological value;
- minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity;
- strengthen ecological networks and support nature recovery;
- incorporate appropriate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions;
- support priority or threatened species; and
- address statutory biodiversity net gain requirements where applicable.

Where significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, development should be refused.

Other key biodiversity principles within the NPPF include:

- protection of internationally, nationally and locally designated nature conservation sites;
- protection of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees;
- conservation, restoration and enhancement of habitats and ecological networks;
- use of Local Nature Recovery Strategies to inform nature recovery;
- provision and long-term management of green infrastructure; and
- conservation and recovery of priority and threatened species.

The NPPF distinguishes between policies for plan-making and national policies for decision-making. Its principles should be reflected in development plans and applied, alongside the adopted development plan, when determining planning applications.

The local planning policies are outlined within **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031**. Those considered potentially relevant to the Site are listed below:

Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity – Development should protect and enhance green infrastructure, biodiversity networks and important habitats and species. Proposals should deliver measurable biodiversity net gain and avoid fragmentation of ecological networks.

Policy NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure – Development should protect, conserve and enhance existing green infrastructure. Where impacts cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation, replacement and long-term management should be provided.

Policy NE2: Landscape – Development should respect the character and sensitivity of the surrounding landscape. Important landscape features should be retained and incorporated into the scheme where possible.

Policy NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites – Development must protect designated sites, habitats and protected or priority species and apply the mitigation hierarchy. Appropriate ecological surveys, buffers, mitigation and measurable biodiversity net gain should be provided.

Policy D1: Sustainable Design – Development should respond positively to its surroundings and retain existing vegetation where possible. New planting, sustainable drainage and other environmental measures should be incorporated into the design.

The **Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** was published in November 2025 and provides a county-wide framework for restoring biodiversity and developing a more resilient and connected ecological network. It identifies priorities and actions for woodland, grassland and heath, rivers, lakes, ponds and wetlands, farmland and urban habitats, alongside targeted measures for species of conservation concern. Key objectives include restoring, creating and connecting habitats, improving habitat management, reducing pollution and invasive species pressures, and increasing resilience to climate change.

The LNRS includes spatial mapping identifying Areas that Could become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIBs), where specific habitat creation or enhancement

actions would make a particular contribution to nature recovery. The strategy is intended to inform planning and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), helping direct habitat creation and enhancement towards locations where they will provide the greatest strategic ecological benefit. For developments submitted following publication of the LNRS, its mapping should also be used when determining the strategic significance of proposed post-development habitats within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric

3 Methodology

This report has been produced based on the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2017). It includes an assessment of the Site's habitats as to their likely importance for protected or notably important species.

3.1 DESK STUDY

To provide contextual background to this project, a desk study has been undertaken to search for the following:

- Internationally designated statutory sites within 2km including Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- National statutory sites within 2km – Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), and National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- Non-statutory sites within 1km – specific to local area including Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
- Protected and important species and habitats within 2km

These 'study areas' were considered appropriate for the scale of the proposed works and follow best practice guidance.

The desk study was conducted using online sources such as Magic Map and NBN Atlas alongside data on protected/notable species and local sites from Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre.

3.2 FIELD SURVEY

The survey was undertaken by Alice Salisbury on 21st August 2026. The weather during the survey was sunny and bright with a light breeze.

3.2.1 Habitats

Habitats within the site were mapped and described using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Version 2.0 methodology. This system provides a standardised and nationally recognised framework for recording and categorising habitats across the UK. It enables habitats to be described consistently and accurately through a structured hierarchical coding system, ensuring clarity and reproducibility in ecological reporting. The use of UKHab supports a robust and transparent approach to habitat assessment, allowing clear identification and description of habitat types to inform the evaluation of ecological value and the development of appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures.

3.2.2 Species

During the field survey, the ecologist undertook a walkover inspection of all accessible areas of the Site and its immediate surroundings. Features of ecological relevance were identified and mapped, and an assessment was made of their potential to support protected and important species.

Due to the habitats present this included:

- A preliminary amphibian habitat assessment to identify the suitability of aquatic and terrestrial habitats on Site and adjacent (where access was feasible) for amphibians including great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). The assessment considered the presence, quality and connectivity of potential breeding ponds

and associated terrestrial habitats (*English Nature, 2001*)

- Evaluation of the suitability of habitats within the Site and surrounding landscape for use by foraging and commuting bats. The assessment considered the habitat composition, linear connectivity features, potential flight corridors and artificial lighting influences (*Bat Conservation Trust, 2023*)
- Trees on Site were assessed for their potential roosting features for bats and considered the surrounding habitat context and connectivity to suitable foraging and commuting habitats in the locality (*Bat Conservation Trust, 2023*)
- 
- An evaluation of the habitats on Site to support nesting birds, including species of conservation concern, considered vegetation structure, habitat diversity and availability of suitable nesting opportunities within trees, scrub, and grassland (*CIEEM, 2021*)
- A preliminary barn owl habitat assessment to evaluate the suitability of habitats within and adjacent to the Site for use by barn owl (*Tyto alba*) for nesting, roosting and foraging. The assessment considered the presence of suitable nesting and roosting features within trees, together with the availability and connectivity of rough grassland and field margin

habitats that may support small mammal prey populations.

- A preliminary hazel dormouse habitat assessment to evaluate the suitability and connectivity of woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats within and adjacent to the Site for hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). The assessment considered habitat composition, structural diversity and connectivity across the wider landscape (*Natural England, 2019*)
- An assessment of the Site for its suitability to support invertebrate populations. The assessment considered habitat diversity, structural heterogeneity, floristic interest, deadwood resource, bare ground and microhabitat availability
- An assessment to evaluate the suitability of the Site and surrounding area for hedgehog. The assessment considered the availability of nesting, foraging and dispersal habitats together with the presence of potential barriers and fragmentation pressures.
- A preliminary reptile habitat assessment to evaluate the potential of habitats within the Site to support common reptile species. The assessment considered habitat suitability for basking, sheltering, hibernation and foraging, together with connectivity to surrounding habitats (*Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, 2010*)
- A preliminary riparian mammal habitat suitability assessment to evaluate the potential of the watercourses on and close to Site and associated riparian corridors to support otter and water vole (*CIEEM, 2021*)

The assessments were undertaken following best practice guidance to determine whether further species-specific survey effort is required to accurately assess the presence or likely absence of protected species on Site.

3.3 PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

A site survey was carried out on 21st August 2026 by Alice Salisbury, Principal Ecologist of Maydencroft Limited. The survey was conducted to assess the potential of the building on site to support roosting bats and followed the Bat Conservation Trust guidance (BCT, 2023). The weather during the survey was warm and sunny, with minimal cloud cover.

The building was inspected externally from ground level using binoculars, to identify potential ingress and egress points for bats to access. The building was then inspected internally using binoculars and a high-powered torch to identify any internal potential roosting features (PRFs). The internal and external survey also looked for evidence of bats including; the presence of roosting bats, droppings, scratch marks, staining and feeding remains. Best practice guidance was utilised to assign suitability (BCT, 2023) based on the number and type of features identified within the building. Table 1 details the suitability categories.

Table 1: Guidance for assessing potential suitability of buildings for bats (BCT, 2023)

Suitability	Description
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year.
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats, however, a small element of uncertainty

Suitability	Description
	remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitats but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitats. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts – maternity or hibernation

3.4 LIMITATIONS

The findings of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are based on the conditions and information available at the time of the desk study and site survey. The survey provides a preliminary assessment of the habitats present and the potential for protected and priority species to occur, but it does not constitute a full species-specific assessment. The survey was undertaken during suitable weather conditions, however, as it represents a single visit, some transient or seasonal species may not have been detected.

Access was limited to areas available at the time of survey, and features outside the site boundary were assessed from publicly accessible viewpoints where possible. The conclusions of this report should therefore be considered indicative, and further detailed surveys may be required to confirm species presence, population status, or ecological function where suitable habitats were identified.

4 Results

The results of the desk and field surveys are summarised below and supported by a habitat map in *Appendix A* and Site photographs in *Appendix B*.

4.1 DESIGNATED SITES

A single statutory site of designated national importance was identified within 2km of the Site. Wain Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest is situated approximately 1.47km southwest of the Site and covers 19.2ha of semi-natural oak/hornbeam woodland. The area is comprised of pedunculate (*Quercus robur*) and sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) with mature hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and hornbeam coppice. A variety of soil types are present at the site, ranging from acidic gravel to base-rich loams, which support an array of grasses and broadleaved species. The open rides and grassland areas support a butterfly population, which includes purple hairstreak (*Thecla quercus*).

A total of five non-statutory sites were identified within 1km of the Site, all classed as Local Wildlife Sites. Sperberry Hill House Meadow, the closest LWS, lies approximately 190m north of the Site and covers approximately 1.72 ha of neutral-calcareous grassland with scattered trees and hedges just east of Ippollitts Brook. The site is designated for grassland indicator species.

The remaining LWSs are all more distant from the Site and include a variety of habitats including swamps, gravel pits, woodland and calcareous grassland. The sites are designated for the presence of wet woodland indicators, ancient woodland and their potential to support protected species.

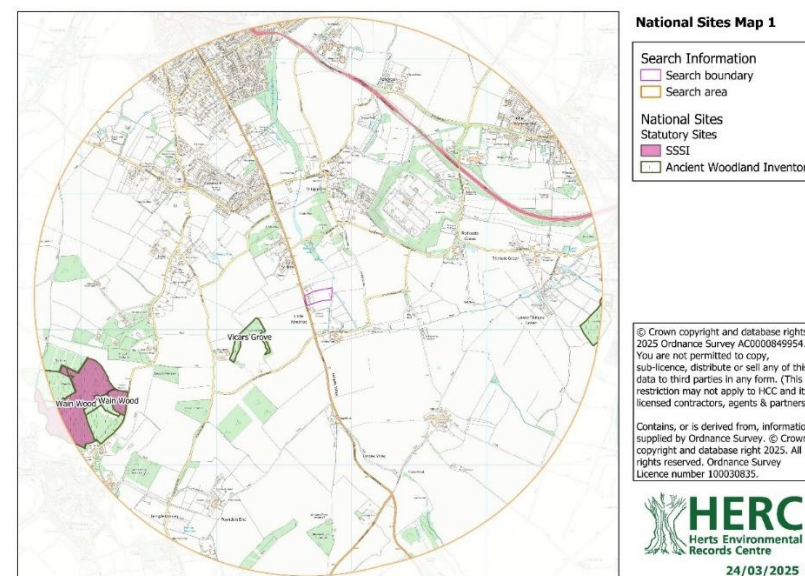


Figure 3: Locations of nationally important statutory sites within the search area

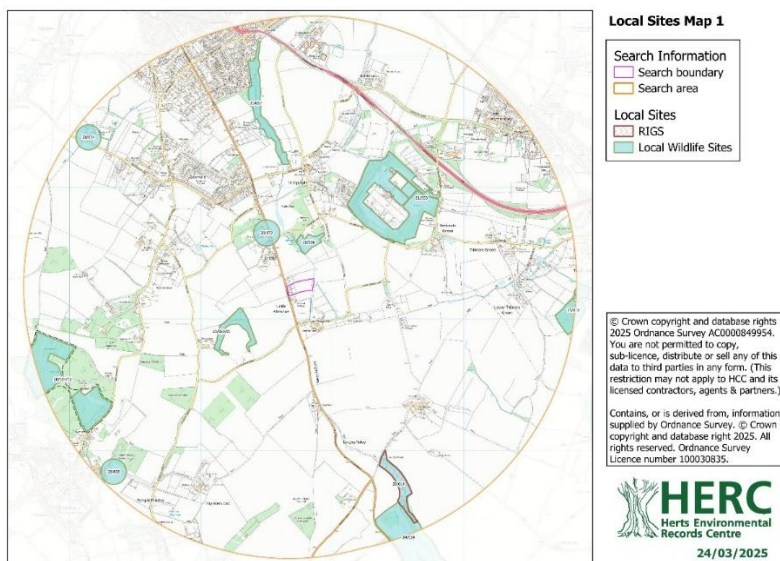


Figure 4: Locally designated sites within the search area

4.2 HABITATS

4.2.1 Modified grassland

Reference G1

Modified grassland dominates much of the Site. A garden is present to the west of the property, close to the road. This garden is dominated by coarse grass with some green alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), and nettle (*Urtica dioica*) present along the boundaries. There is bare ground present which appears to be from digging. Several trees are present within the garden.

Reference G2

The back garden is comprised of modified grassland dominated by coarse grasses with limited floral diversity or

abundance. Some nettle, ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), germanders speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*) and daffodils (*Narcissus spp.*) are present. A number of trees are present within the area, details are provided in Table 2.

Reference G3

An area of modified grassland dominated by ruderal vegetation (secondary code 81) is present adjacent to the Stables. The area is littered with building materials including brick and poles. The species present include; nettle, cow parsley, dog rose (*Rosa canina*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*), field forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). The grassland is varied in structure with areas of bare ground present.

Reference G4

The eastern part of the Site comprises a heavily horse-grazed field with large patches of bare ground which are heavily compacted. The grass is very short and there are no other species present within the field.

Table 2: Trees across Site

Tree ID (in line with Arboricultural report)	Description
T14	Silk Tree, mature.
T15	Cedar, semi-mature, in raised section of garden.
T16	Cherry, mature.
T17	Cherry plum, mature with deadwood and fungi.
T18	Cherry, mature.

Tree ID (in line with Arboricultural report)	Description
T19	Self-set birch.
T20	Malus, semi-mature with sparse crown.
T21	Spanish fir, mature with minor deadwood.
T22	Hornbeam, overhangs development.
T24	Cherry, semi mature.
T25	Magnolia, semi-mature in very poor health.
T26	Norway maple, semi-mature.
T27	Silver maple, early mature.
T28	Western red cedar, early mature.
T29	Leyland cypress, early mature.
T30	Birch, early mature.

4.2.2 Dense scrub (h3h)

Either side of the car parking area are areas dominated by ornamental shrubs alongside privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), yew and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The largest shrub is approximately 2.5m in height.

4.2.3 Other standing water (r1g)

A disused pool is present on the eastern boundary of the back garden. The pool has previously been covered however; the cover is now broken. There are some reeds (*Phragmites australis*) and pond weed growing within the pool. In addition, a brick built elevated pond is present in the back garden, close to the house. The pond is stocked with carp.

4.2.4 Urban habitats

There are several buildings (u1b5) on Site; the main house (B1) connected by a stone wall with archway to a garage and workshop building (B2), a block of stables (B3), a group of sheds (B4), and a small outbuilding (B5). There are many areas of gravel including a car park, hardstanding and paving (u1b6) around the buildings.

4.3 SPECIES

The habitat suitability, direct/indirect evidence and likelihood of occurrence of protected and important species is summarised in the sections below.

4.3.1 Amphibians

A total of 11 records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) were returned in the data search. The closest and most recent record was 590m north of the Site in 2019. Other records were either further away or had spatial accuracy too poor to ascertain accurate locations.

22 records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*) were returned in the data search. The closest and most recent record was of over 20 individuals at St Ibb's park, approximately 540m north of the Site in 2020.

Great crested newts (GCN) breed in still or slow-flowing freshwater bodies such as ponds, ditches or small lakes and reside in terrestrial habitats for the remainder of their life cycle. GCN favour terrestrial habitats which provide foraging, shelter and hibernating opportunities within 250 – 500m from breeding ponds (Cresswell and Whitworth, 2004).

Ippollitts Brook is approximately 137m to the east of the Site boundary. The ditch collects into several small ponds to the

north and south. There are no other ponds present within 250m of the Site.

The habitats on Site are considered sub-optimal for amphibians due to their urban nature. The pond on Site is considered unsuitable for GCN and other amphibians due to the presence of carp.

The disused pool on Site is also considered suboptimal due to the lack of marginal vegetation present. In addition, the habitat between the brook and the pool comprises extremely short, grazed field with no suitability for commuting amphibians. As such, amphibians including great crested newts are considered likely absent from Site.

4.3.2 Bats

A total of 163 bat records were returned in the data search. The records were comprised of eight different species including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) and barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*).

The closest and most recent record was of a common pipistrelle 210m south of the Site in 2021. Brown long eared and common pipistrelle roosts were recorded within 1km of the Site, with roosting Natterer's bats also present over 1km away. Review of licence applications using Magic Map showed five applications within 2km ranging from 2009 to 2019, to mitigate impacts to common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long eared and Natterer's bats.

4.3.2.1 Foraging and commuting

The habitats on Site are suitable, although suboptimal for foraging bats as they are comprised predominately of short grassland. However, the habitats surrounding the Site including the hedgerow and tree boundaries and Ippollitts Brook are suitable habitats for both commuting and foraging bats. As such, the Site is of moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

4.3.2.2 Roosting

There are several buildings (u1b5) on Site; the main house (B1) connected by a stone wall with archway to a garage (B2), a block of stables (B3), a group of sheds (B4), and a small outbuilding (B5). Each of these buildings or group of buildings was subject to a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment.

4.3.2.2.1 Building 1

Building 1 is the main building on Site and is a hipped bungalow with clay field and hip tiles. The building is in current use as a family home. The roof tiles are in good condition with no lifts however, some moss is growing on the tiles. The walls are rendered. The eastern elevation is comprised of rendered walls with French doors to the north, a window and door present in the centre and four more windows along the length. The walls are all uPVC and well-sealed. The guttering present is boxed in with no gaps. The southern elevation also has boxed guttering. The roof is lowered for an extension but is connected to the higher roof with flashing.

The bungalow extends out to the west at the northwestern corner of the building with a bay window present. Two further bay windows are present and a back door along the western elevation. The windows are well sealed with some loose cladding.

The internal building is currently in use as a family home and is separated into several rooms. There is a loft space which was accessible at time of survey. The loft space was insulated and mostly empty. The rafters and purlins are all wooden.

There was no evidence of bats on the exterior of the building. In addition, no evidence of bats was identified within the loft space. The external of the building had no potential roosting features or any features which would provide access into the loft space. As such, the bungalow is of **negligible suitability** for roosting bats.

4.3.2.2.2 Building 2

Building 2 is a garage which is connected to Building 1 by a porch area. The garage is hipped with clay roofing tiles for the field and hip tiles. Moss is growing on tiles in places. The front of the garage is currently used for storage and has exposed timbers, the roof is lined with a plastic-based material. The walls are comprised of breezeblocks. The back of the garage has been converted into a hall into the main house (Building 1).

The northern elevation is a rendered wall with black plinth connecting to a stone wall with gateway into a small porch area which is open to the east. The stone wall extends further north to the small workshop and stable block (B3).

The western elevation is comprised of a double garage door in the centre with rendered wall either side of the door. Guttering is present and boxed off. The garage door is kept closed and is well sealed. The eastern elevation comprises three windows and one door which are well sealed. The eastern elevation is connected to the main building by a flat roof with roofing felt connecting the garage and the house. A wall is present from the eastern elevation out into the garden with a brick archway.

There was no evidence of roosting bats within the interior of the garage although, several mouse droppings were identified. In addition, no external features were identified which would provide access internally for bats. As such, the garage is of **negligible suitability** for roosting bats.

4.3.2.2.3 Building 3

Building 3 is a small workshop connected to a series of stables. The workshop has a flat roof with roofing felt and breezeblock walls. A window and door are present on the eastern elevation. The building is currently used for storage and the door was open at time of survey. The roof was lined with MDF boards with insulation present. The interior is comprised of equipment and tools and is dusty. No evidence of bats was identified within the building.

The stable block is comprised of five stables and a hay store, running north to south. The block is comprised of wooden weatherboarding and the roof is comprised of roofing felt which is well sealed. The stables were in current use with horses present. The stable doors are left open at the top. Internally, the stables are divided by MDF boarding and the roof is boarded with a wooden ridge line running across the block. There are some gaps in the boarding of the walls leading to a large cavity which is considered unsuitable for bats as it is wide and exposed. The stables are fairly cobwebbed and dirty.

The back of the stable block is a small workshop which is weather boarded as the rest of the stables. The eastern elevation is comprised of three windows and a door. The windows all have panes missing providing access into the building which is filled with other window frames.

The external of the stable building provides several areas of access into the stable which has some potential roosting features for bats along the ridge line and exposed beams. It

is considered the features are suitable only for day roosts as the stables are disturbed frequently and left exposed. As such, the stable block is considered to be of **low suitability** for roosting bats.

4.3.2.2.4 Building 4

The series of sheds on Site are comprised of three timber sheds with corrugated metal roofs. The western most shed is open fronted and comprised of weatherboarding. The shed is used for storage and a ridge line is present. The second shed has a door to the west which is comprised of timber and left permanently open. The remainder of the walls within has windows. The shed was used for storage previously but has now largely been overcome by bramble. There are areas of weatherboarding on the frontage. The final eastern most shed was previously a chicken coop. A window is present to the east providing access into the structure. A birds nesting is present within. Further to the west a green house and water butt are present.

The sheds provide suitable features for bats in the form of exposed timbers and lifted weatherboarding. The buildings are easily accessible by bats due to the open windows and doors. However, they sheds are exposed and provide limited thermal mass. As such, they are considered of **low suitability** for roosting bats.

4.3.2.2.5 Building 5

A small building is present to the northeast of the back garden on Site. The roof is sloped and comprised of roofing felt. The building is concrete built with one door and one window on the western elevation. The concrete is cracking in places although, only very small cracks. The door was open at time of survey and appears to be always left open. Internally, the floor is tiled and the roof is MDF lined with exposed timbers present. Due to the presence of exposed timbers the building is of **low suitability** for roosting bats.



infrequently.

4.3.4 Nesting birds

A total of 9492 bird records were returned in the data search, including 105 different species. 645 records were of 20 species listed under Schedule 1 of the WCA.

The closest record was of a red kite (*Milvus milvus*) approximately 300m south of the Site. The most recent record was of a red kite, mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*), kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*), great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*), great tit (*Parus major*), blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) in 2019, approximately 690m northwest of the Site.

The individual trees and areas of scrub on Site provide suitability for nesting birds. In addition, the buildings especially the stables on Site provide suitability for nesting birds. As such, it is considered likely that breeding birds are present on Site during the nesting season (February to August, inclusive).

4.3.5 Hazel dormouse

Hazel dormice (*Muscardnius avellanarius*) have a restricted population within England, and are typically associated with diverse species rich hedgerows, scrub and woodland containing continuous canopy, a variety of food sources and dense understorey cover. Connectivity between suitable habitats is crucial as dormice are arboreal and reluctant to cross open ground.

No records of hazel dormouse were returned in the data search. The habitats on Site are not considered suitable for hazel dormice as there is no presence of woodland or hedgerow. There is limited woodland and hedgerow of suitability in the locality and no known populations within the locality. As such, hazel dormice are considered likely absent from Site.

4.3.6 Invertebrates

Invertebrates depend on a complex and diverse habitat structure to sustain a rich and varied assemblage. However, common and widespread species tend to have less specific habitat requirements and are therefore able to persist in more degraded or simplified environments.

A total of 370 invertebrate records were returned in the data search. 257 records were of 61 invertebrate species listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act. The closest record was of a dingy skipper (*Erynnis tages*), approximately 410m

southwest of the Site in 1986. The most recent record was of a roman snail (*Helix pomatia*) at Wain Wood in 2023, approximately 1980m west of the Site.

The habitats on Site are not considered likely to support an important assemblage of invertebrates due to their urban nature. However, common invertebrates are likely to utilise the Site.

4.3.7 Hedgehog

Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are commonly associated with gardens, parkland, rough grassland, woodland edges, hedgerows and scrub where food, shelter and movement corridors are available. Hedgehogs are declining in number, however, are still widespread and can travel 1-2km per night searching for food and mates with a home range of 10-20ha.

36 records of west European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) were returned in the data search. The closest record was 180m south of the Site in 2014. The most recent occurrence was recorded in 2021, 1380m northwest of the Site.

The habitats on Site including the lines of trees and scrub provide some suitability for sheltering hedgehogs. In addition, the short grassland provides suitability for foraging. However, due to the presence of dogs and horses, the likelihood of sheltering hedgehogs is reduced. As such, it is considered hedgehogs utilise the Site for commuting and foraging only.

4.3.8 Reptiles

Reptiles favour heterogenous habitats that provide open, sunny areas for basking, dense vegetation for cover and suitable prey resources. Areas with refugia such as log, rubble piles or tussocky vegetation are preferred as they also provide sheltering and hibernation opportunities.

All records of reptiles returned in the data search were over 20 years old and therefore, are no longer considered relevant. The modified grassland to the northwest (G3) of the Site which is dominated by ruderal vegetation and littered with rubble is considered suitable for reptiles as it provides areas for basking, sheltering and foraging. In addition, a muck heap is present within the surrounding area which provides suitability for grass snake egg laying. However, the remainder of the Site is not considered suitable due to its uniform structure and abundance of urban habitats.

In addition, the habitats in the locality are considered suboptimal for reptiles due to the abundance of pastoral and arable land. The use of the Site as a stable and the presence of dogs further reduces the likelihood of reptiles being present on Site. As such, reptiles are considered likely absent from Site.

4.3.9 Water voles

Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) typically inhabit slow-flowing rivers, streams, ditches, drains, ponds and canals with well-vegetated banks that provide food, cover, and opportunities for burrowing. Water voles spend most of their life cycle near these aquatic habitats and are highly dependent on them. As such, they are unlikely to be found in wholly terrestrial habitats and rarely move far from suitable waterbodies except when dispersing short distances along connected waterways.

Three records of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) were returned in the data search. The closest and most recent record was 1380m north of the Site at Ippollitts Brook in 2012. The Ippollitts Brook runs along the field boundary to the east of the Site. As water vole have been identified on the brook previously, it is considered that water vole could utilise the brook that runs close to the boundary of the Site. However, water voles live predominately within the watercourse

throughout their life cycle. As such, even though water vole are present on the boundary they are considered likely absent from Site.

4.3.10 Otters

Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are semi-aquatic mammals that are strongly associated with rivers, streams, ditches, lakes, canals and ponds, particularly where suitable riparian cover is present in the form of woodland, scrub and tall vegetation. Otters have a large home range of between 20km for females and 35km for males. Otters generally stay close to suitable waterbodies and are found within the immediate riparian vegetation. However, they can travel up to 1km from waterbodies when required.

No records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) were returned in the data search. Ippollitts brook may provide some suitability for otter however, is unlikely to provide enough food sources for habitual use. As such, otter may utilise the offsite brook sporadically. The habitats on Site are not considered suitable for otters and therefore, they are considered likely absent from Site.

5 Evaluation

5.1 DESIGNATED SITES

Due to the small scale of the development and the relative distance between the Site and the closest designated site, no impacts to designated sites are anticipated.

5.2 HABITATS

The proposed development has the potential to damage/destroy the following habitats:

- The loss of six individual trees to facilitate the development
- Permanent loss of areas of modified grassland in the form ruderal vegetation and gardens
- The loss of an ornamental pond and outdoor swimming pool
- The demolition of buildings and outbuildings

None of the habitats to be lost are considered to be of ecological importance.

5.3 SPECIES

The proposed development has the potential to impact the following species:

- Disturbance to bat roosts and killing/injury of bats as a result of building demolition. This would result in a contravention of the law.
- Loss of areas of moderate suitability foraging habitats within the locality.

- [REDACTED]
- Destruction of, or damage to, active birds' nests, resulting in a contravention of the law.
- Killing/injury to hedgehog during construction.

6 Recommendations

6.1 FURTHER SURVEYS

6.1.1 *Bat emergence surveys*

The Preliminary Bat Roosting Assessment identified that Buildings 3, 4 and 5 have **low suitability** for roosting bats. Therefore, in line with the *Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Survey Guidelines for Professional Ecologists*, one dusk emergence will be required between May to end of August to be confident in a negative result for bat presence. If bats are confirmed to be roosting anywhere within the building, additional surveys may be required for accurate characterisation of the bat roost/s.

If it is confirmed, following further survey and assessment, that the removal of the buildings will result in impact on bat roost/s, the project has the potential to be unlawful without a derogation of the Habitats Regulations and is subject to the meeting of the Habitats Regulations Three Stage Test and a European Protected Species Mitigation licence will likely be required.

6.2 MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION

The mitigation hierarchy has been utilised throughout to ensure the best outcomes.

6.2.1 *Habitats*

Areas of modified grassland, dense scrub and other standing water habitats on Site will be permanently removed to facilitate the development. Six of the trees on Site will be removed to facilitate the development. All removed habitats

will require compensation through BNG to result in a 10% increase in habitat units.

Retained trees will require protection throughout the development to ensure their longevity. The measures outlined within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan must be adhered to at all times to protect the retained trees throughout construction.

6.2.2 *Foraging and commuting bats*

The following mitigation is recommended to minimise disturbance to foraging and commuting bats in adjacent habitats. During the construction phase, the following mitigation should be followed:

- All works should be undertaken during normal working daylight hours. Any artificial lighting (if absolutely required) should not illuminate the boundary habitats;
- Where security lighting is required, it is recommended that these are motion activated with hooded luminaires and directed away from the boundaries, particularly the southern or eastern boundary;
- No lighting should fall or be directed on to the boundary vegetation.

Any new temporary or permanent lighting should be designed to avoid light-spill onto the Site boundaries and boundary vegetation. If permanent lighting is to be installed it must follow the principles of mitigation as outlined within the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note.

Mitigation measures for external street lighting will include:

- Only luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% should be used;
- All external luminaires used on site should lack UV elements and be warm white coloured (ideally < 2700 Kelvin) to reduce blue-light components;
- LED luminaires should be used due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour retention and dimming capability;
- Where security lighting is installed, this should be motion-activated;
- Lights should not be directed at boundary vegetation. Where required, lights can be fitted with hoods, baffles or louvres to reduce back-spill.

6.2.3

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6.2.4 *Birds*

Clearance of woody vegetation should be undertaken outside of bird nesting season, i.e. during the period September to February (inclusive – as a guide). If this is not possible, all areas to be impacted should first be checked for active nests by an ecologist or other suitably qualified individual. If nesting

activity is identified, certain aspects of work in the vicinity of the nest will need to cease until the birds have finished nesting and the young have fledged.

6.3 ENHANCEMENTS

6.3.1 *Biodiversity Net Gain*

The Site baseline comprises predominately buildings, vegetated garden with some ornamental shrubs, ruderal vegetation and modified grassland. The baseline value of the site 0.63 habitat units.

To compensate this loss the frontage of the Site will be utilised as a greenspace with other neutral grassland and tree planting. The other neutral grassland will be maintained in a “moderate” condition and 23 small trees to be maintained in “moderate” condition will be planted within the area, forming a buffer along the road. A management company will be utilised to ensure the habitats are managed sensitively and achieve the conditions required.

The proposed development has been designed sensitively to retain a number of trees within the gardens as part of the development.

The above results in an 11.26% increase in habitat units for the Site. No hedgerows or watercourses are present on Site and as such, no units have been provided for these.

An Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) should be conditioned to ensure the long-term habitat monitoring on Site for thirty years of all habitats contributing to BNG.

6.3.2 *NPPF*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2026) requires development proposals to contribute positively to the natural environment and support nature's recovery. Policy N2 seeks opportunities to conserve and enhance natural features, connect and strengthen ecological networks, incorporate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, and provide features that support priority or threatened species. The following measures are recommended as ecological enhancement opportunities for the Site. Unless otherwise identified as necessary for mitigation or to meet statutory biodiversity net gain requirements, these measures provide additional opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value of the Site and support nature recovery in accordance with the NPPF.

- Provision of one integrated bat box within each new house.
- Provision of three bird boxes within retained trees on Site.
- Creation of one log pile within the frontage of the Site.

7 Conclusions

The proposed development will result in the loss of areas of modified grassland, dense scrub, standing water habitats, buildings and six individual trees. None of the habitats proposed for removal are considered to be of significant ecological importance, and retained trees will be protected throughout construction in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan. Habitat losses will be compensated through Biodiversity Net Gain, with the proposed habitat creation and tree planting resulting in an 11.26% increase in habitat units.

The ecological assessment identified that the Site has the potential to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats, nesting birds, [REDACTED] and hedgehogs. Buildings 3, 4 and 5 were assessed as having low suitability for roosting bats and therefore require one dusk emergence survey between May and the end of August prior to demolition. Great crested newts, reptiles, hazel dormouse, water vole, otter and an important assemblage of invertebrates are considered likely absent from Site.

Mitigation measures will include sensitive lighting to protect foraging and commuting bats, protection of retained trees, precautionary measures to prevent entrapment of [REDACTED] and hedgehogs, and avoidance of vegetation clearance during the bird nesting season. Should bats be identified during the further survey, additional surveys and mitigation and potentially a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence may be required before demolition can proceed.

A HMMP should be conditioned to ensure that habitats contributing towards BNG are appropriately managed and monitored for 30 years. Additional ecological enhancements comprising integrated bat boxes, bird boxes and a log pile are

recommended to further increase the biodiversity value of the completed development.

Subject to completion of the recommended bat survey and implementation of the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures detailed within this report, no significant adverse ecological effects are anticipated as a result of the proposed development.

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9 Appendices

Appendix A: Habitat Map

Appendix B: Site Photographs

Appendix C: Legislation

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27.08.26



Plate 1: Outdoor pool on Site



Plate 2: Ornamental shrubs on Site



Plate 3: Ornamental shrubs on Site



Plate 4: Modified grassland and shrubs in back garden of Site



Plate 5: G1, modified grassland in garden west of the property



Plate 6: Ornamental pond on Site

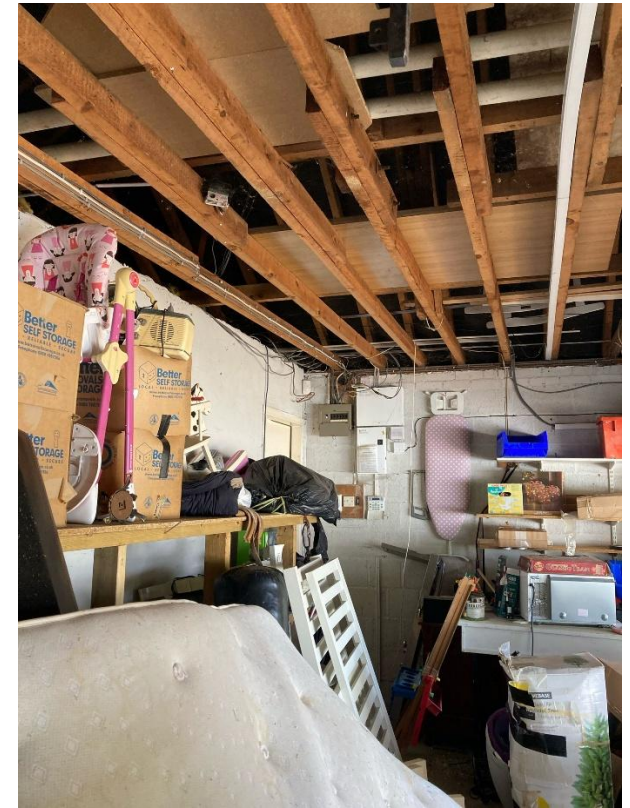


Plate 7: Interior of garage (B2)



Plate 8: South side of sheds (B4)



Plate 9: Western elevation of bungalow (B1) and garden



Plate 10: Exterior of outbuilding (B5)



Plate 11: Frontage of stables (B3)



Plate 12: Loft space in bungalow (B1)



Plate 13: Eastern extent of Stables (B3)

CORE LEGISLATION

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

These Regulations transpose the EU Habitats Directive into domestic law and remain in force post-Brexit. They protect European Protected Species (EPS), requiring a Protected Species Licence (Regulation 55) from Natural England for any works likely to impact these species or their habitats.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

This Act provides national protection for wild animals, plants, and habitats. Amendments (including 2022 updates) expanded offences for reckless disturbance and updated the schedules of protected species. Key offences include the intentional or reckless killing, injuring, taking, or disturbing of protected species.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 – Section 41

Identifies Species of Principal Importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity in England. Public authorities must have regard to conserving these species when carrying out their functions.

Environment Act 2021

Introduces mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements and legally binding targets to halt biodiversity loss. It strengthens existing protections under the Habitats Regulations and the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

International Conventions

The Bern Convention (1979) – Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

The Bonn Convention (1979) – Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

These conventions underpin many of the UK's domestic wildlife protections.

SPECIES-SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Bats (All 18 species)

Protected under:

- *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* – Schedule 2.
- *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* – Schedule 5.

Offences include:

- Intentionally or recklessly killing, injuring, capturing, or disturbing bats.
- Damaging, destroying, or obstructing access to a place of shelter or rest.
- Possession, sale, or advertisement for sale of any live or dead specimen.

Birds (All Wild Species)

Protected under:

- *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* – Schedule 1.

Offences include:

- Taking, damaging, or destroying an active nest or eggs.
- Killing, injuring, or taking any wild bird.
- Disturbing Schedule 1 species while nesting or rearing young.

Nesting period: typically March–August (may vary by species).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SPECIES OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE

Species of Principal Importance must be considered in development planning and environmental management to maintain favourable conservation status. Species likely to occur on site include:

- West European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

POST-BREXIT LEGAL CONTEXT

Following the UK's departure from the EU, retained EU law continues to underpin UK wildlife protection. The UK Government has committed to maintaining or enhancing these standards through the Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) and the Environment Act 2021.