

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

November 2025

**Land at Mill Lane and
London Road, Hitchin**

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

On behalf of
Martin Grant Homes

Report No: CSA/3922/07

This report may contain sensitive ecological information. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to determine if this should be made publicly available.

Report Reference	Revision	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Comments
CSA/3922/07	-	28/08/2025	RB/RT	JW	
	A	24/10/2025	RT	AC	Updated to reflect client comments



	B	06/11/2025	RT	JW	Updated to reflect changes to redline
--	---	------------	----	----	---------------------------------------



CONTENTS

Page

Executive Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Legislation, Planning Policy & Standing Advice	3
Legislation	3
National Planning Policy	3
Local Planning Policy	3
Standing Advice	3
3.0 Methods	4
Desk Study	4
Field Survey	5
Limitations	6
Evaluation and Assessment	6
4.0 Baseline Ecological Conditions	7
Nature Conservation Designations	7
Habitats and Flora	8
Fauna	11
6.0 Discussion and Recommendations	16
Nature Conservation Designations	16
Habitats and Flora	16
Fauna	17
Opportunities for Ecological Enhancement	20
7.0 References	21

Appendices

Appendix A: Habitats Plan & Habitat Summary Table

Appendix B: Legislation, Planning Policy and Standing Advice

Appendix C: Desk Study Information

Appendix D: Photographs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Residential development is proposed at Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin, for which planning permission will be sought from North Hertfordshire District Council.

CSA Environmental was instructed by Martin Grant Homes to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site to identify any ecological constraints to development, inform scheme design, highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement and determine the need for any additional investigation/survey. As part of this PEA, a desk study and field survey of the Site were undertaken in February 2025, with a full UK Habitat Classification survey completed in July/August 2025.

No nature conservation designations are present on-site or on adjacent land, with no impacts anticipated to any Sites identified locally.

The Site is dominated by neutral grassland across two fields interspersed with areas of scrub and ruderal species. The grassland is of some ecological interest, with tussocks and varied structure, particularly in the eastern parcel. Small areas of woodland, individual trees, and boundary hedgerows on the Site are of interest and priority must be given to their retention where possible, and enhancement alongside development.

Various surveys are underway to inform a full Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the Site and address matters relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf of Martin Grant Homes. It sets out the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). Residential development is proposed at the Site, for which planning permission will be sought.
- 1.2 The scope of this appraisal has been determined with due consideration for best-practice guidance provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017), and to the *Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development* (BS 42020:2013) published by the British Standards Institution (2013).
- 1.3 The Site occupies an area of c. 3.37ha and is located around central grid reference TL 19070 27389, to the south-east of Hitchin. It comprises two fields of neutral grassland with areas of woodland, scrub, collapsed building, individual trees, and boundary hedgerows (see Habitats Plan in Appendix A).
- 1.4 This PEA aims to:
 - Characterise baseline ecological conditions of the Site and its wider context
 - Identify any ecological constraints to development of the Site
 - Inform scheme design
 - Identify further ecological surveys and investigation necessary to inform a full Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the Site
 - Highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement
- 1.5 To achieve these aims, an ecological desk study and field survey were undertaken of the Site, the findings of which are presented herein.
- 1.6 As set out in best practice guidelines (CIEEM, 2017) a PEA is typically only suitable for planning submission where there are no ecological constraints relating to the project. Where ecological constraints are identified, such as the presence of important ecological features, the effects of development on these features should be assessed within a separate EclA report, which would supersede the PEA.

2.0 LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY & STANDING ADVICE

Legislation

- 2.1 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this PEA includes:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
 - The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
 - The Environment Act 2021
- 2.2 This above legislation has been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report. Further information on the above legislation is provided in Appendix B.

National Planning Policy

- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity. Further details are provided in Appendix B.
- 2.4 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their effects within the planning system.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.5 A number of local planning policies relate to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation. These are summarised in Table 1 of Appendix B. These policies have been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report.

Standing Advice

- 2.6 Natural England and Defra's Standing Advice (Natural England & Defra, 2014) regarding habitats and protected species aims to support local authorities and forms a material consideration in determining applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation. Standing advice has therefore been given due consideration, alongside other detailed guidance documents, in the production of this report.

3.0 METHODS

Desk Study

- 3.1 An ecological desk study was undertaken in March 2019 and updated in February 2025 comprising a review of online resources and biological records centre data as detailed below.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database was reviewed to identify nature conservation designations within the following search radii:
 - Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites within 10km of the Site (including possible/proposed sites)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 3km of the Site
 - Other relevant data e.g. Ancient Woodland Inventory within 1km of the Site
- 3.3 A review was undertaken of the location of any such designations, their distance from and connectivity with the Site, and the reasons for their designation. This information was used to determine whether they may be within the proposed development's Zone of Influence (Zol).
- 3.4 Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC) was contacted for details of any non-statutory nature conservation designations and records of protected/notable habitats and species. This information was requested for an area encompassing the Site and adjacent land within c. 2km of its central grid reference. This search area was selected to include the likely zone of influence upon non-statutory designations and protected or notable habitats and species.
- 3.5 Further online resources were reviewed for information which may aid the identification of important ecological features. The Woodland Trust's online Ancient Tree Inventory was reviewed for known ancient or veteran trees within the Site and adjacent land. Interactive online mapping provided by the charity 'Buglife' was used to determine whether the Site falls within an Important Invertebrate Area.
- 3.6 In accordance with Natural England's Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (2001), a desktop search was undertaken to identify ponds within 500m of the Site which may have potential to support breeding great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, using Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, the MAGIC database and aerial photography.
- 3.7 Where possible under the terms of the data provider, relevant desk study data are presented in Appendix C.

Field Survey

- 3.8 A UK Habitat Classification ('UKHab') survey was carried out in fine and dry weather conditions on 17 July and 07 August 2025 by Alex Cole MCIEEM, FISC Level 4 and Revae Tilbury, encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed.
- 3.9 UKHab is a unified and comprehensive system for mapping and classifying habitats, designed to provide a simple and robust approach to surveying and monitoring, and replaces Phase 1 Habitat survey methods. The method allows for identification of important habitat types, including habitats of Principal Importance under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act (2006) and Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. This method also allows for direct translation of habitats into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2024).
- 3.10 The following parameters were adopted for the UKHab survey undertaken for this PEA:
- UKHab Professional edition (Butcher *et al.*, 2023, commercial End User Licence Agreement (EULA))
 - Minimum Mappable Unit (MMU):
 - 10m²/0.001ha (polygons)
 - 5m (linear)
 - Primary Habitats recorded to a minimum of Level 2 (see below) with UKHab codes provided
 - Mandatory secondary codes used
 - Base-mapping comprising a combination of aerial imagery and topographic information
- 3.11 Primary Habitats are recorded to a minimum of Level 2. Where the survey is conducted at an appropriate time of year (e.g. May to July for grassland) habitats may be recorded to Level 3, 4 or 5, only if conditions and the experience of the surveyor allow.
- 3.12 To assist with classification of grassland habitats, quadrat samples were taken during UKHab survey/dedicated botanical survey on 17 July and 07 August 2025 by Alex Cole MCIEEM, FISC Level 4 and Revae Tilbury. Representative sample locations were identified within each grassland parcel, spread evenly to avoid habitat transitions or ecotones, following a 'W' shape through the parcel and covering a minimum of five sampling locations. Both average (mean) species count per m² and peak species counts are reported for comparison.
- 3.13 Quadrats of 1m x 1m were used, repeated five times in each sample location (i.e. 2m x 2m or 4m²). This technique assists, for example, with distinguishing between modified (g4) and other neutral (g3c) grasslands (using the threshold of nine species per m², reporting an average of the

four samples) and of lowland meadows (g3a) (using the threshold of 35 species per 2m x 2m samples).

3.14 Alongside the UKHab survey, additional field survey information was collected, comprising:

- Detailed floral species lists recorded for each identified habitat/parcel
- Evidence of, or potential for, European Protected Species (EPS) (including bats, great crested newt, dormouse and otter)
- Evidence of, or potential for, other protected species (including birds, reptiles, water vole, badger and certain invertebrates)
- Evidence of, or potential for, other notable species (including S41 Species of Principal Importance as well as notable, rare, protected or controlled plants and invertebrates)
- Any other survey information relevant to ecological matters

3.15 Results of the UKHab survey are presented on the Habitats Plan in Appendix A. Appendix D provides photographs of the habitats at the Site and Appendix E provides a list of floral species recorded in each habitat parcel. Nomenclature for higher plants within this report is consistent with the fourth edition of The New Flora of the British Isles (Stace, 2019).

Limitations

3.16 There were no specific limitations to the desk study. The field survey was conducted in good conditions, but due to time of year and the hot/dry conditions earlier in the year, plants were not in optimal condition for identification. However, this is not considered to have affected on the overall results of the survey.

Evaluation and Assessment

3.17 The evaluation and assessment of ecological features is beyond the scope of a PEA and has therefore not been undertaken here. Formal evaluation and assessment of any identified important ecological features should be undertaken as part of either a full EclA, or receptor-specific survey and assessment in accordance with the published CIEEM method (CIEEM, 2018).

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Nature Conservation Designations

Statutory

- 4.1 There are no statutory designations covering any part of the Site.
- 4.2 No international statutory designations were identified within 10km of the Site.
- 4.3 Two national statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site: Wain Wood SSSI (c. 1.7km south of the Site) and Oughtonhead Lane SSSI (c. 2.9km north-west of the Site).
- 4.4 One local statutory designation was identified within 3km of the Site: Purwell Meadow LNR (c. 2.3km north-east of the Site).
- 4.5 These statutory designations are described in Table 1 below.

Non-Statutory

- 4.6 Twelve non-statutory designations were identified within 2km of the Site. These non-statutory designations are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations within search radii

Site Name & Designation	Distance & Direction from Survey Area	Special Interests or Qualifying Features
International Designations within 10km		
-	-	-
National Designations within 3km		
Wain Wood SSSI	c. 1.7km south of the Site	An ancient semi-natural oak <i>Quercus</i> sp. and hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i> woodland which has now much reduced in size due to woodland clearance and felling. A small patch of unimproved acidic grassland is also present.
Oughtonhead Lane SSSI	c. 2.9km north-west of the Site	Designated for geological interests only
Local Designations within 3km		
Purwell Meadow LNR	c. 2.3km north-east	Combination of meadow land, wetland, and play areas. The majority of the site is grazed with periodic scrub clearance. The River Purwell flows through the site which is mainly left unmanaged.
Non-Statutory Designations within 2km		
Folly Alder Swamp LWS	c. 0.23km north-east of the Site	Old semi-natural alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> woodland with neutral/acid fen and marshy grassland remnants bordering Ippollytts Brook. A system of spring seepages is present plus old hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i> pollards. The site supports a rich assemblage of flora,

		including greater tussock-sedge <i>Carex paniculata</i> and marsh marigold <i>Caltha palustris</i> .
Maydencroft Manor Farm, Gosmore LWS	c. 0.66km west of the Site	Buildings and surrounding areas support important protected species (bats)
St Ibbs Bush LWS	c. 0.68km south-east of the Site	Buildings and surrounding areas support important protected species.
Sperberry Hill House Meadow LWS	c. 0.92km south-east of the Site	A meadow of unimproved neutral-calcareous grassland to the east of Ippollyts Brook with old hedges and scattered trees.
Wymondley Transforming Station LWS	c. 1.03km east of the Site	An old gravel pit landscaped to form the grounds of transforming station, supporting coarse calcareous grassland with scrub invading slowly from the edges. Notable grassland species include ploughman's spikenard <i>Inula conyza</i> , and Pyramidal Orchid <i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i> .
Priory Park Icehouse LWS	c. 1.07km north-west of the Site	Building and environment are important for protected species.
Vicar's Grove LWS	c. 1.23km south of the Site	Infilled gravel pit, on the site of an ancient woodland, a small remnant of which remains around the site boundary. Flower-rich banks occur along the south-west margin of the site plus areas of secondary scrub and ruderals.
Charlton Mill Pool LWS	c. 1.25km west of the Site	Old mill pool formed by the widening of the river channel with fluctuating water levels. South of the lake the river flows in several shallow muddy channels through swamp and wet woodland.
Windmill Hill LWS	c. 1.39km north of the Site	Calcareous gravel hill supporting short grassland. The steep roadside bank supports an interesting grassland flora including wild clary <i>Salvia verbenaca</i> , a rare species in Hertfordshire.
The Willows (Hitchin) LWS	c. 1.49km north-west of the Site	Alder and willow fen woodland with areas of marshy grassland and scrub. This site contains small streams and springs which form a source of the River Hiz.
Purwell Railway LWS	c. 1.62km north-east of the Site	Railway embankment supporting species-rich neutral and calcareous grassland with scrub. A diversity of butterfly species has also been recorded.
The Warren E. of Wain Wood LWS	c. 1.75km south-west of the Site	Consists of areas of woodland which have been removed from Wain Wood SSSI.

Habitats and Flora

- 4.7 Habitats recorded on-site are illustrated in Appendix A with detailed species lists provided in Appendix E. Relevant UKHab codes are

provided within parentheses for each habitat type recorded [e.g. Other neutral grassland (g3c)].

Irreplaceable Habitats

- 4.8 There is no ancient woodland, as shown on the ancient woodland inventory, covering any part of the Site or immediately adjacent land.
- 4.9 No trees on or adjacent to Site are listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory.

Notable Flora Records

- 4.10 The HERC provided 272 records of 94 notable plant species from within the search area. Those of potential relevance to the Site include bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*, and harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.
- 4.11 Six records of Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* were returned by HERC for within the search area from 1987 to 2023. However, the resolution of these records is only accurate to a 2km² area, therefore exact proximity to the Site is unknown. None was noted during the Site walkover.
- 4.12 Variegated yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum*, is present within the area of on-site woodland, as described below. This species is listed as a non-native invasive species under Schedule 9 of Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As such, it is an offence to cause the growth of this plant within the wild and all reasonable steps and due diligence must be taken to avoid this.

Other neutral grassland (g3c)

- 4.13 Areas of other neutral grassland dominate the Site across both fields F1 and F2. Species across both fields are fairly similar, but sward height is notably different, with field F2 containing more variation and being generally shorter. Areas of significantly different grassland dominated by common nettle *Urtica dioica* are also present in patches around F1.
- 4.14 The sward in field F1 is dominated by false-oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, with frequent common nettle. Some species indicating greater ecological interest are present, but with lesser frequency than we would see in a higher quality grassland. Topography undulated, with localised areas of bare ground and earth piles where a BMX run has been created.
- 4.15 Grassland in field F2 comprises a similar range and proportion of species: it is dominated by false-oat grass, but with Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* being frequent instead of the higher proportion of common nettle in F1. Cover of bare ground is higher here due to the combination of the well-used footpaths, ant-hills, and rabbit holes, but sward height is more varied.

- 4.16 Areas dominated by common nettle within the Site represent the lowest ecological interest out of the grasslands present on-Site, with fewer grass and herb species represented, and those present being indicative of nutrient enrichment. Encroaching scrub and woodland edge is occurring in some places.

Other broadleaved woodland (w1g)

- 4.17 A small wooded copse comprised primarily of young ash trees is present in the western corner of the western field (W1). Other species present include hawthorn, elder, and hazel. Ground flora is dominated by common nettle, with some areas on woodland edges continuous with the grassland F1. Some early ash dieback symptoms have been noted in the trees in this woodland.
- 4.18 A woodland edge area on the unmanaged (site-side) of H1 is present along the northern boundary of the western field (W2). Tree species include hawthorn, field maple, crab apple, and sycamore and ground flora is dominated by common nettle.
- 4.19 Between the two fields of the Site is a small area of woodland (W3) with a footpath running through it. Trees north of the footpath consist primarily early and semi mature sycamore, with those south of the path mature hornbeams. The ground flora here is limited, with areas of bare ground with common nettle with hogweed, field bindweed, and cleavers.
- 4.20 An area of broad-leaved woodland is present within the north of the eastern field (W4). Within the woodland are a small number of large mature horse-chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* and oak *Quercus* sp. trees. Understorey species include ash and hawthorn. The ground flora is dominated by common nettle, with other species including lords-and-ladies, wood avens, and creeping buttercup. Variegated yellow archangel (listed as an invasive species under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act [1981]) was also found in this area of woodland.

Blackthorn scrub (h3a)

- 4.21 A small area of blackthorn scrub lies adjacent to the south-east corner of W4. The scrub here is very dense and does not contain other species.

Bramble scrub (h3d)

- 4.22 Areas of dense bramble scrub are present throughout the Site. Other species within these areas include common nettle, false-oat grass, elder, and elm.

Mixed scrub (h3h)

- 4.23 Areas of mixed scrub lie intermittently along the east and south borders of the eastern field. The scrub is made up of English elm, bramble, elder, blackthorn, oak, ivy, and hawthorn.

Individual Trees

- 4.24 A number of individual trees, not associated with woodland or hedgerows, are present within the Site. Those of particular ecological interest include larger mature trees, such as those standing within the grasslands of the fields.

Buildings (u1b5)

- 5.0 The remains of a building are located in the north-west of the eastern field, within W4. All that is left of the building is the foundations and a few layers of the brick walls.

Hedgerows

- 5.1 There are seven hedgerows present within the Site, labelled H1-H7 on the Habitats Plan (Appendix A), as detailed below. All on-site hedgerows besides H5 qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance (HoPI) as they consist of over 80% native species cover. Additionally, hedgerows H1, H2, H6, and H7 qualify as being species-rich as they contain five or more woody species within a 30m stretch.
- 5.2 H1, H2, H6, and H7 comprise out-grown hedgerows which mark the boundaries between the Site and adjacent roads or fields. Management of these hedgerows is limited and seems to be restricted to the sides which face out of the Site, meaning their bounds are poorly defined. These hedgerows all contain many woody species, including hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, hazel, ash, elm, oak, sycamore, elder, crab apple, and dog-rose. Ground flora largely consists of common nettle and dense bramble for these hedgerows.
- 5.3 H3, H4, and H5 are managed dense hedgerows marking the boundary to the adjacent care home from the Site. Each of these hedgerows is comprised of one woody species: beech, holly, and Leyland cypress respectively, although white bryony can also be found climbing in H5. Common nettle is the primary species found along the bases of these hedgerows.

Fauna

Bats

- 5.4 A total of 149 bat records were identified within the search area, dating from 1973 to 2021. These records comprise the following species: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, unidentified myotis bat species *Myotis* sp., Daubenton's bat *M. daubentonii*, and Natterer's bat *M. nattereri*. The closest records are of common pipistrelle, 0.2km to the south of the Site, from 2002.

- 5.5 HERC has provided 34 non-historic (2000-present) records of bat roosts within the search area. The closest is a Natterer's bat roost associated with Priory Park Icehouse LWS. The roost here was first recorded in 1998 but has been consistently re-documented since with a max count of 46 individuals. There are also records of roosts for brown long-eared bats, common pipistrelle, and Natterer's bat in other locations within the search area.
- 5.6 A number of trees were identified to have features suitable for roosting bats, with further surveys underway.

Preliminary Roost Assessment - Structures

- 5.7 Both on-site structures were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Of these buildings (labelled B1 & B2) on the Habitats Plan in Appendix A), are considered to have 'Negligible' potential. Due to the dilapidated state of the buildings, there are no void spaces which would provide roosting cavities. Similarly, the remaining masonry appears to be free of cavities and the covering of ivy would appear to make these less desirable to bats.

Badger

- 5.8 HERC has provided 84 records of badger *Meles meles* from within the search area, dating from 1970 to 2023. The closest record is of a young badger on Hitchin Road from 2013, c. 0.4km from the Site. Records are distributed across the search area, but there is a hotspot by the A602 c. 1.2km east of the Site.
- 5.9 Habitats on-site have good potential for supporting badgers with the grassland, woodland and scrub providing good foraging and sett-building potential. Arable fields in the wider landscape increase the suitability for badgers, however it is limited by the roads passing close to the site in all directions and reducing the connectivity of nearby habitats.
- 5.10 No evidence was found during the previous survey undertaken in 2019. Badger surveys are underway at the Site in 2025.

Dormouse

- 5.11 No records of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* were identified within the search area.
- 5.12 The presence of some hedgerows and woodland on-Site makes it suitable for dormice, however the lack of connectivity to suitable habitats in the wider area as well as the dormice's absence from Hertfordshire means it is unlikely that they would be using the Site and are considered likely absent.

Riparian mammals

- 5.13 Five records of otter *Lutra lutra* were identified within the search area, dating from 1974 to 2022. None of the records' specific locations were given, so their distance from the Site could not be determined.
- 5.14 Four records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were identified within the search area, dating from 1983 to 2012. The closest record is from Ippolytts Brook c. 0.3km east of the Site from 2012.
- 5.15 No aquatic habitat is present on or adjacent to the Site. With this in mind, riparian mammals are likely absent from the Site and not considered further within the context of this report.

Other Mammals

Brown Hare

- 5.16 There were 145 records of brown hare *Lepus europaeus* identified within the search area, dating from 1975 to 2023. The closest record is c. 1.1km from the Site, dating to 2019.
- 5.17 There is limited habitat for hare on the Site and while there is extensive arable farmland in the surrounding landscape, there is limited connectivity to it due to the roads around the Site.

Hedgehog

- 5.18 There were 106 records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* identified within the search area, dating from 1966 to 2021. The closest record is c. 0.03km north of the Site at Mill Farm, from 2021. Records are distributed throughout the local area, including within the town of Hitchin.
- 5.19 It is likely that the current habitat provides foraging opportunities for hedgehog with the disused buildings offering hibernaculum potential.

Harvest Mouse

- 5.20 Three records of harvest mouse *Micromys minutus* were identified within the search area, although all are historic (predating 2000). There is some limited suitable grassland habitat on Site, but there is evidence of the species being present.

Birds

- 5.21 A total of 10003 records of 96 bird species were identified within the search area, dating from 2001 to 2019. Those of potential relevance to the Site include barn owl *Tyto alba*, greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, and redwing *Turdus iliacus*. Of the bird species recorded, 33 are amber listed, 17 are red listed, 15 are Sch 1 listed, and 24 are S41 listed.
- 5.22 The mix of habitats on-Site provide foraging opportunities for a range of birds and the woodland and hedges also provide nesting opportunities. Adjacent arable land also provides opportunities for farmland birds.

Reptiles

- 5.23 HERC returned 26 records of four reptile species identified within the search area: grass snake *Natrix Helvetica*, adder *Vipera berus*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, dating from 1934 to 2018. Most records were given to a low degree of accuracy, so their distance from the Site could not be determined. Most records were also historic, with the four non-historic records all being of slow-worm.
- 5.24 The Site provides opportunities for reptiles to be present throughout with basking and foraging opportunities provided within the grassland and hibernation opportunities within the hedgerows, woodland and scrub. Reptiles surveys underway at the Site in 2025 have identified common lizard to be present.

Amphibians

- 5.25 A total of 32 records of two amphibian species were identified within the search area: common toad *Bufo bufo* and great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, dating from 1926 to 2021. The closest record is of over 20 common toads in 2020, c. 0.7km south-east of the Site in St Ippolytts Pond. High densities of amphibians were recorded in this area, suggesting site fidelity to a number of nearby ponds. All the records of great crested newt where a specific location could be determined are also in the area around St Ippolytts Pond.
- 5.26 A more detailed appraisal of the Site in respect of great crested newt is provided below.

Great Crested Newt

- 5.27 Despite spending much of their annual lifecycle within the terrestrial environment, great crested newts are dependent upon the presence of suitable aquatic breeding habitat in order for a population to persist. No potential breeding ponds were identified on-site during the site survey, while three appear to be present within a dispersible range of the Site, based on OS mapping. The on-site terrestrial habitat presents attractive hibernation and foraging habitats, but barriers between the Site and suitable water bodies suggest they are unlikely to be present on Site.

Invertebrates

- 5.28 A total of 605 records of 167 invertebrate species were identified within the search area. Those of potential relevance to the Site include pollinators such as small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene* and Essex skipper *Thymelicus lineola*. Exposed sandy soils offer burrowing opportunities for several bee species recorded from the area including big-headed mining bee *Andrena bucephalia*.
- 5.29 Areas of exposed sandy soil on the Site, dilapidated buildings and a significant amount of dead wood offer some desirable habitat for a

range of invertebrate groups, although it is unlikely that the invertebrate assemblage would be of high significance in total.

5.30 The Site is not located within an Important Invertebrate Area (IAA).

6.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nature Conservation Designations

Wain Wood SSSI

- 6.1 The Site lies c. 1.7km from this SSSI such that no direct effects are possible during construction or in occupation of residential development at the Site. Furthermore, given the small scale of development and the relative distance of the SSSI from the Site, no indirect recreational impacts are predicted.

Purwell Meadow LNR

- 6.2 The Site lies 2.3km from the LNR such that no direct effects are possible during construction or in occupation of residential development at the Site. Furthermore, given the small scale of development and the relative distance of the LNR from the Site, no indirect recreational impacts are predicted.

Non-Statutory Designations

- 6.3 Four Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are present within 1km of the Site. All are located within private land with no public access. None are located adjacent to the Site. In light of this, no impact pathways to these designations from the proposed development have been identified.
- 6.4 The remaining eight LWSs identified are located beyond 1km of the Site and therefore, given the small scale of development proposed no indirect recreational impacts are predicted.

Habitats and Flora

Other neutral grassland (g3c)

- 6.5 The grassland habitats on Site, given their composition being species-poor, do not comprise priority habitat/ Section 41 habitat of principal importance. However further botanical survey work is underway to determine the character and condition of the grassland across the Site to inform a robust assessment of potential impacts.
- 6.6 Retention and enhancement of the grassland will help minimise the losses in biodiversity net gain. However, careful consideration must be given to the impact of increased recreation in these areas of grassland (including increased dog fouling and trampling).

Other broadleaved woodland (w1g)

- 6.7 The woodland on-site is unlikely to comprise priority habitat/ Section 41 habitat of principal importance, and no indicators of ancient woodland status have been identified. Further botanical surveys are nevertheless recommended to determine the specific character and condition.

- 6.8 Retention and enhancement of the woodland as far as is practicable will help minimise the losses in biodiversity net gain. However, careful consideration must be given to the impact of increased recreation in these areas of grassland (including increased dog fowling and trampling).

Hedgerows and individual trees

- 6.9 The Site is bounded by native species hedgerows as indicated on the Habitats Plan (see Appendix A). Native hedgerows (all onsite bar H5), are a Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance, a LBAP priority habitat in Hertfordshire, and represent important foraging, refuge and dispersal habitat for a range of fauna, so should be retained and protected wherever possible. H1, H2, H6, and H7 are species-rich in composition, with H2 including several mature trees, and if practicable should be buffered from development edge effects.
- 6.10 Some individual trees are present outside of hedgerows in H1 and H2, including mature small-leaved lime, pedunculate oak, and walnut trees. Trees, especially mature specimens should be retained wherever practicable.

Fauna

Bats

- 6.11 All British bat species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 6.12 The Site offers some foraging opportunities for bats in association with hedgerows, woodland, grassland, and scrub, with potential roosting opportunities provided by on-site trees within the woodland, grassland, and hedgerows. The hedgerows also provide navigational features and connectivity to the wider landscape. To ensure functionality is retained, retention and buffering of the hedgerow network is recommended as far as is practicable. Additionally, to enhance opportunities for foraging/commuting bats at the Site, strengthening of existing hedgerows and new hedgerow/shrub planting is recommended.
- 6.13 Given the presence of navigational features and potential foraging and roosting opportunities for bats at the Site, monitoring of bat activity is underway determine the species present, pattern of use and overall value of the Site to bats. Furthermore, where hedgerows and trees and to be removed or subject to significant arboricultural works are being subject Preliminary Roost Assessment to assess their potential to support roosting bats.
- 6.14 The proposals are likely to result in an increase in artificial lighting at the Site. Artificial lighting of retained and created habitat during construction and operational phases has the potential to disturb bats

and other nocturnal wildlife. To ensure ecological functionality of retained hedgerows and boundary habitats for bats a sensitive external lighting scheme will be prepared. The future lighting scheme will be developed in consultation with a bat ecologist to avoid/minimise light spill onto retained and created habitat. This is to maintain dark corridors for bats and other nocturnal wildlife.

Badger

- 6.15 Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). Killing or injury of a badger, or interference with a sett is prohibited. A full badger survey is underway to identify and map any evidence of badger on-site, including sett entrances, mammal paths, latrines etc.
- 6.16 Priority should be given to retention and protection of setts, in addition to appropriate Site design to ensure continuity and connectivity of suitable habitat for this species across the Site and into adjoining habitats. However, should any setts fall within the development area, area of works or become isolated by proposed development then a Natural England mitigation licence may be required to relocate any main setts (if identified) and close any entrances impacted by the works.
- 6.17 Given the above, during the construction phase, badgers are at risk of falling into open excavations or entering open ended pipework (above 150mm diameter), risking an offence under the above legislation. Given the protection badgers received under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the following precautionary measures will be implemented which could be secured via a Planning Condition:
- Pre-construction badger survey and monitoring for signs of new sett digging
 - Covering any open excavations with wooden boards, or fitting them with appropriate escape ramps, in order to prevent badgers falling into them and injuring themselves or becoming trapped.
 - Monitoring of site for any new sett excavation during prolonged remediation, construction or landscaping works.

Other Mammals

Hedgehog

- 6.18 Hedgehog and other small mammals may make use of the Site for foraging, shelter and dispersal. During the construction phase there is a risk of these species falling into and becoming trapped within open excavations. The above measures recommended to safeguard badgers will also mitigate these risks.
- 6.19 Given that hedgehog likely make use of the Site, appropriate design/enhancement measures should be considered for this species as detailed below.

Birds

- 6.20 All wild birds are protected from killing and injury, and their nests and eggs are protected from damage and destruction, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Therefore, any clearance of nesting habitat or features required to facilitate the development should avoid the period between March and August (inclusive) when nesting birds are most likely to be present. If this is not possible, habitat will need to be checked for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to clearance with works only proceeding if no nesting evidence or behaviour are observed.
- 6.21 The Site has the potential to be used by a range of birds during the breeding season. Breeding bird surveys are underway to determine the importance of the Site for local bird populations.

Reptiles

- 6.22 All British reptile species are listed within Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are afforded protection against killing and injury under parts of sub-section 9(1) of the Act. In addition, all British reptile species are S41 priority species in England.
- 6.23 Suitable reptile habitat is present on/adjacent to the Site, including opportunities for hibernation. Furthermore, there are records of adder, common lizard, grass snake, and slow-worm within the local area. Given this and the legal protection afforded to reptiles, reptile surveys are underway at the Site to identify any populations of reptiles and to determine the scope of any mitigation or enhancement measures which are necessary.

Great Crested Newt

- 6.24 Great crested newt (GCN) and their habitats are strictly protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. In combination this legislation protects great crested newts from deliberate capture, killing and injury, intentional or reckless disturbance, damage or destruction of a resting site or breeding place, and intentional or reckless damage, destruction or obstruction of a breeding site or rest place.
- 6.25 Three ponds are present within 500m of the Site boundary, and terrestrial habitats within the Site, are suitable to support dispersal, refuge and foraging by great crested newts. Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of ponds P1, P2, and P3 is underway to determine their suitability to support great crested newt breeding.

Opportunities for Ecological Enhancement

6.26 To promote adherence to the NPPF and Policy NE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, the following opportunities for ecological enhancement have been identified:

- Incorporation of native plants and those of wildlife importance in to landscaping scheme to provide foraging opportunities for birds, invertebrates and bats
- Retention and enhancement of grassland, woodland, and hedgerows where possible
- Improved connectivity of green infrastructure with new hedgerow planting and infill planting
- Provision of new bat roosting opportunities within new buildings and retained mature trees
- Provision of bird nesting opportunities within new buildings and retained mature trees
- Provision of hedgehog gaps in new fencing to promote habitat connectivity across and within the Site

7.0 REFERENCES

British Standards Institution, 2013. *BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity — Code of practice for planning and development*. London: BSI.

British Standards Institution, 2012. *BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction: Recommendations*. London: BSI.

Buglife, no date. *Important Invertebrate Areas*. [online] Available at: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/important-invertebrate-areas/> [Accessed July 2024].

Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L., and Treweek, J., 2023. *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* [pdf] UKHab Ltd. Available at <http://www.ukhab.org/> [Accessed July 2024].

CIEEM, 2017. *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM, 2017. *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM, 2018. *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.3*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM, 2020. *Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Collins, J., ed., 2023. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th ed. London: The Bat Conservation Trust.

Defra, 2011. *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*. London: Defra.

Defra, 2024. *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide*. London: Defra.

English Nature, 2001. *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. Peterborough: EN.

JNCC and Defra (on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group), 2012. *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*. [pdf] Peterborough: JNCC. Available at: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6189> [Accessed July 2025].

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. London: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), 2013. *Interactive Map*. [online] Available at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> [Accessed July 2025].

Natural England and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2014. *Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities*. [online, last updated April 2025] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals> [Accessed July 2025].

North Hertfordshire District Council, 2025. *North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031*. [pdf] Available at: [North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.pdf](#) [Accessed July 2025].

Oldham, R. S., Keeble, J., Swan, M. J. S. & Jeffcote, M., 2000. Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). *Herpetological Journal*, 10(4), pp.143-155.

Stace, C. A., 2019. *New Flora of the British Isles*. 4th ed. Suffolk: C & M Floristics.

Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D. and Win, I., 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds*, 114, pp.723-747.

The Woodland Trust, no date. *Ancient Tree Inventory*. [online] Available at: <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/> [Accessed July 2025].

Appendix A

Habitats Plan & Habitat Summary Table



- Site boundary
- Other neutral grassland with tall herbs (g3c 16)
- Other neutral grassland (g3c)
- Other woodland-broadleaved (w1g)
- Blackthorn scrub (h3a)
- Bramble scrub (h3d)
- Mixed scrub (h3h)
- Buildings (u1b5)
- Hedgerows (h2)
- Hedgerows (Priority Habitat) (h2a)
- Trees and groups of trees



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	November 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/120
Drawing Title	Habitats Plan	Scale	A3@1:1250	Rev	B
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Limited	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW

Appendix B

Legislation and Planning Policy

- 1.1. The **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** (as amended) make prescriptions for the designation and protection of Sites of Community Importance ('European sites', i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and European Protected Species (EPS). The latter include all native bats, great crested newts, dormice, otters and certain reptiles, listed under Annex II of the Regulations. Following the UK's departure from the European Union, the provisions of the Regulations have been retained through enactment of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which came into force on 31 December 2020.
- 1.2. The **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** (as amended, principally by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) forms the basis for protection of statutory designated sites of national importance (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest; SSSIs) and native species that are rare and vulnerable in a national context. Additionally, badgers are protected under the **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**.
- 1.3. The **Environment Act 2021** received Royal Assent in November 2021. Through an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Environment Act introduced a mandatory requirement for all planning permissions to be conditional upon the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan for approval by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan will need to demonstrate a net gain of at least 10% in the biodiversity value of the development site.
- 1.4. Section 40(1) of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006** (as amended) states that each public authority, "must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity." This legislation makes it clear that planning authorities should consider impacts to biodiversity when determining planning applications, with particular regard to the Section 41 (S41) lists of 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been superseded by the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy, however Local BAPs continue to influence biodiversity management and conservation effort, including through the spatial planning system, at the local scale.
- 1.5. The **National Planning Policy Framework (2024)** (NPPF) sets out government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. With regards to ecology and biodiversity, Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, paragraph 187, states that the planning system and planning policies should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

- 1.6. Paragraph 193 sets out the principles that local planning authorities should apply when determining planning applications:
- If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
 - Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
 - Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
 - Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.
- 1.7. Accompanying the NPPF, central government guidance on the implementation of planning policies is set out within online Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). The Natural Environment PPG addresses principles across a broad spectrum of topics targeting biodiversity conservation, from individual site and species protection through to the supporting of ecosystem services, and the use of local ecological networks to support the national Nature Recovery Network. In particular, the PPG promotes the delivery of measurable Biodiversity Net Gain through the creation and enhancement of habitats alongside development.
- 1.8. The **Government Circular 06/2005**, which is referred to within the NPPF, defines statutory nature conservation sites and protected species as a material consideration in the planning process.
- 1.9. Local planning policies of relevance to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation have been set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of regional and local planning policy relating to ecology

Policy	Summary
North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2022)	

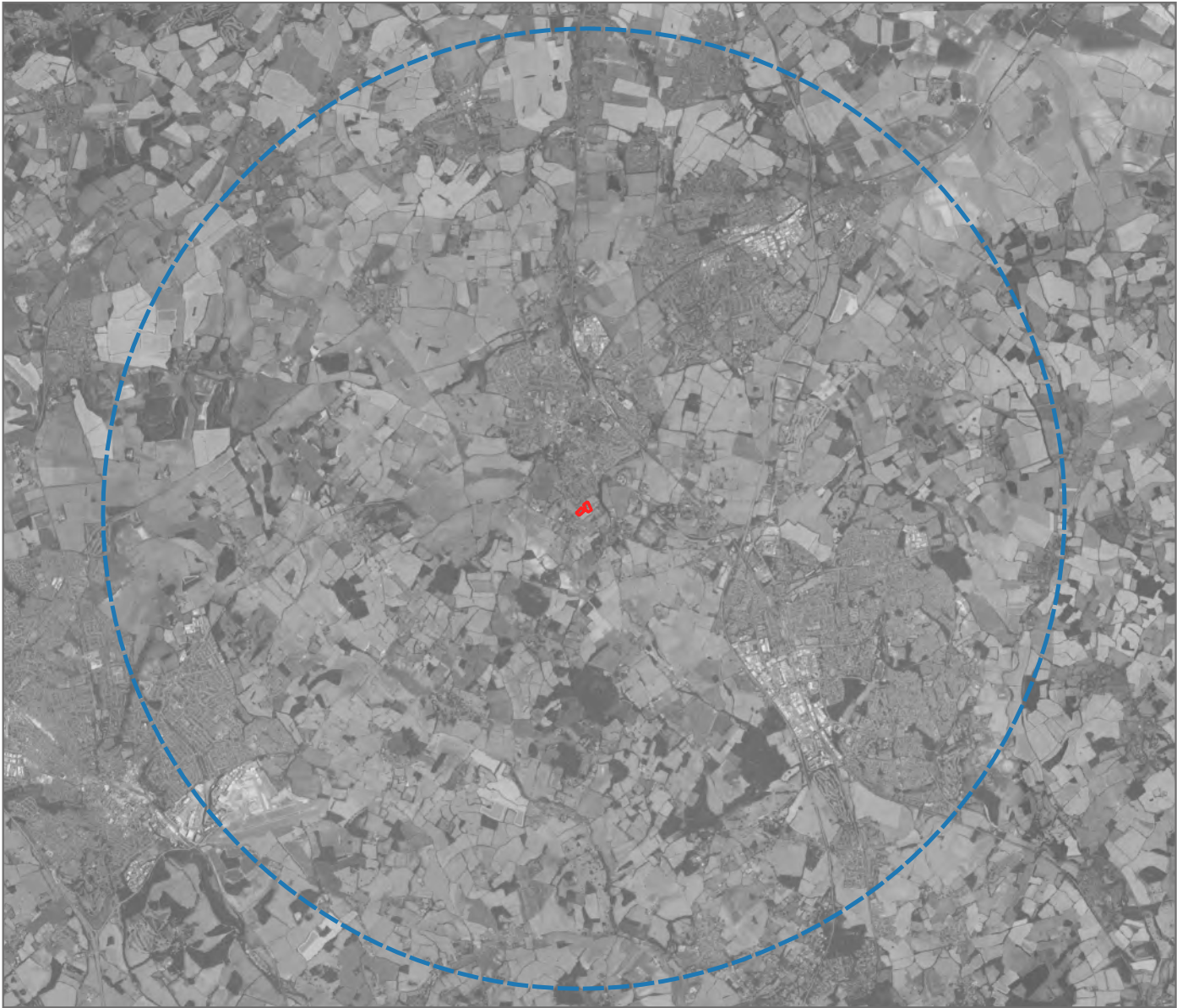
Policy	Summary
Policy SP5: Countryside and Green belt	We support the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside. Green Belt and Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt are shown on the Policies Map. We: a) Have conducted a comprehensive review of the Green Belt. Land has been removed from the Green Belt to: i. enable strategic development at the locations referred to in Policies SP8 and SP3; ii. enable local development around a number of the District's towns and villages; and iii. define boundaries for villages referred to in Policy SP2 which fall within the Green Belt but were previously 'washed over' by this designation; b) Have provided new Green Belt to cover, in general terms, the area bounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt to the east, the Luton Green Belt to the west and the A505 Offley bypass to the north; c) Will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated; and d) Will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of our detailed policies.
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape, and biodiversity	We will accommodate significant growth during the plan period whilst ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced. We will: a) Protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure; b) Consider and respect landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features, particularly in relation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; c) Protect, enhance and manage designated sites in accordance with the following hierarchy of designations and features: • Internationally designated sites • Nationally designated sites • Locally designated sites; • Non-designated sites that include important habitats and species d) Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity networks including wildlife corridors, ancient woodlands and hedgerows, wetland and riverine habitats, Local Geological Sites, protected species, priority species and habitats, and non-designated sites of ecological value and ensure measurable net gains for biodiversity; and e) Protect other open spaces and support provision of new and improved open space.
Policy NE1: Strategic green infrastructure	Planning permission will be granted provided that development: a) Protects, conserves and where possible enhances the strategic green infrastructure network; b) Avoids the loss, fragmentation, severance or negative impact on the function of the strategic green infrastructure network;

Policy	Summary
	c) Creates new strategic green infrastructure where appropriate and is accompanied by a plan for its long-term maintenance and management; and d) Has suitable mitigation measures or appropriate replacement to satisfactorily address adverse impacts on the strategic green infrastructure network.
Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites	Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in Policy SP12. All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment, and/or restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible. Applicants should, having regard to the status of any affected site(s) or feature(s): a) Submit an ecological survey that is commensurate to the scale and location of the development and the likely impact on biodiversity, the legal protection or other status of the site; b) Demonstrate that adverse effects can be avoided and / or satisfactorily minimised having regard to the hierarchy of protection below: i. locating on an alternative site with a less harmful impact; ii. providing adequate mitigation measures; or iii. as a last resort compensated for. The acceptability of approach(es) to avoidance, mitigation and compensation will be commensurate with the status of the asset(s) likely to be affected by the application; Compensation is unlikely to be an appropriate solution for proposals affecting nationally or internationally designated sites other than in the most exceptional circumstances. c) Include appropriate measures to manage construction impacts by demonstrating how existing wildlife habitats supporting protected or priority species will be retained, safeguarded and managed during construction; d) Integrate appropriate buffers of complimentary habitat for designated sites and other connective features, wildlife habitats, priority habitats and species into the ecological mitigation and design. The appropriateness of any buffers will be considered having regard to the status of the relevant habitat. 12 metres of complimentary habitat should be provided around wildlife sites (locally designated sites and above), trees and hedgerows. It may be necessary to exceed this distance for fragile habitats such as ancient woodland or to provide appropriate root protection for mature trees; and e) Provide a long-term management and monitoring plan including mitigation measures as necessary. Local Geological Sites are ratified by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) and are afforded the same protection as Local Wildlife Sites.
Policy NE5: Protecting open space	Planning permission will only be granted for any proposed loss of open space provided that: a) It can be demonstrated that the open space is surplus to requirements and justified on the basis of:

Policy	Summary
	i. the quality and accessibility of the open space; ii. the extent to which the open space is serving its purpose; iii. the quality and accessibility of alternative public open space; and b) It is mitigated against by: i. re-provision of an appropriate open space taking into account quality and accessibility; and/ or ii. financial contributions towards new or existing open space where: • the required provision cannot reasonably be delivered on-site; or • the required provision cannot be provided on site in full; and the proposal has over-riding planning benefits.

Appendix C

Desk Study Information



-  Site boundary
-  10km buffer

*No International Statutory Designations found within search area



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.

CSA

environmental

Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

† 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/112
Drawing Title	International Statutory Designations	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



- Site boundary
- 3km buffer
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/113
Drawing Title	National and Local Statutory Designations	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



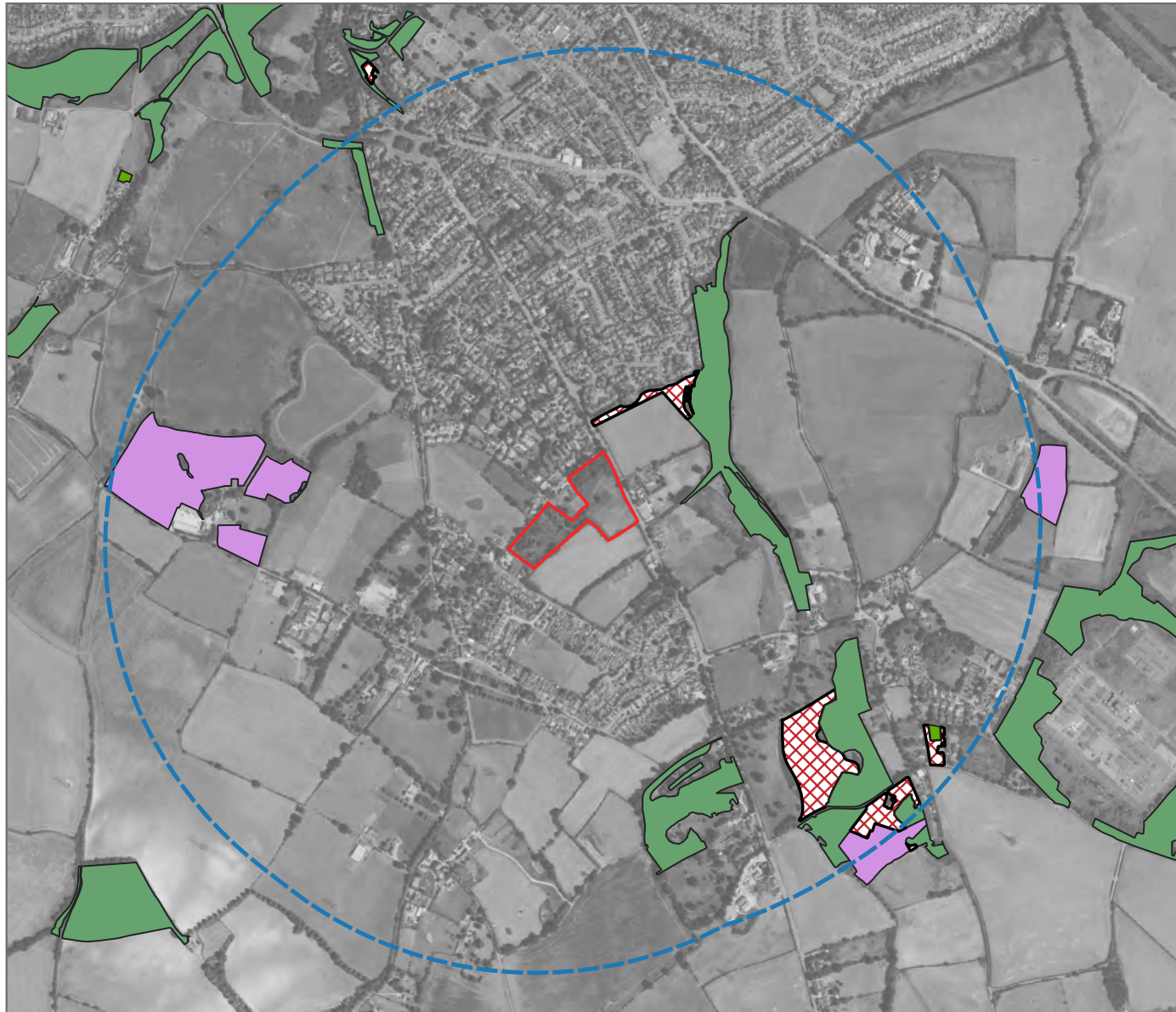
-  Site boundary
-  2km buffer
-  Local Wildlife Site (LWS)

Contains information from Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC). Exact boundaries of designations may differ.
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/114
Drawing Title	Non-Statutory Designations	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



-  Site boundary
-  1km buffer
-  Deciduous woodland
-  Good quality semi improved grassland
-  No main habitat but additional habitats present
-  Traditional orchard



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

† 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/115
Drawing Title	Priority Habitats	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



-  Site boundary
-  2km buffer
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland
-  Ancient Replanted Woodland



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

† 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/116
Drawing Title	Ancient Woodland	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



- Site boundary
- 1km buffer
- Granted European Protected Species (EPS)
Licence Applications: Bats

*No Great Crested Newt (GCN) Class Survey
Licence Returns found within search area



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may
be made.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

† 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/117
Drawing Title	Granted EPS and GCN Licences	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW



-  Site boundary
-  250m buffer
-  500m buffer
-  Ponds (with reference)



Contains Bing maps © Microsoft 2025
For reference purpose only. No further copies may be made.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

† 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Date	September 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/118
Drawing Title	Pond Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn	RT	Checked	JW

Appendix D

Photographs



Photograph 1. False oat grass sward which dominates grassland at the Site



Photograph 2. Woodland W1.



Photograph 3. Dense bramble scrub.



Photograph 4. Woodland W4.



Photograph 5. Looking SE across F2 towards dense bramble scrub and H6 behind



Photograph 6. Mixed scrub in the E corner of F2 with grassland in front.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire
SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Office 20, Citibase,
95 Ditchling Road,
Brighton BN1 4ST

t 01273 573871
e brighton@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

3 Ripple Court,
Brockridge Park, Twynning,
Tewkesbury GL20 6FG

t 01386 751100
e tewkesbury@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Wizu Workspace, 32 Eyre
St, Sheffield City Centre,
Sheffield S1 4QZ

t 07838 290741
e sheffield@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Worting House,
Church Lane, Basingstoke,
RG23 8PY

t 01256 632340
e basingstoke@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk