

NHDC DECARBONISATION PROJECT- HITCHIN SWIMMING AND FITNESS CENTRE

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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Prepared for:
Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd on Behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- RPS was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a parcel of land, located at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, Fishponds Road, Hitchin SG5 1HA. This comprised a desk study, UK Habitat Survey and an ecological scoping survey, which assessed the potential of the site to support species of conservation concern or other species which could present a constraint to the development of the site.
- The proposal is for decarbonisation works, comprising the introduction of external rendering, a new Air Source Heat Pump, substation, photovoltaic panels, ground reinforcement and associated landscaping.
- The site is approximately 0.55 ha in size and is comprised predominantly of buildings and hardstanding with areas of mown modified grassland, trees, paving and garden.
- There are three statutory and twelve non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site. The nearest statutory site is Oughtonhead Lane SSSI, located approximately 0.85 km from the site. The nearest non-statutory site is Windmill Hill LWS, located 0.57 km from the site. No designated sites are expected to be negatively impacted by the proposal owing to their distance from the site and the small-scale/nature of the works.
- Removal of modified grassland, a non-native tree and width reduction trimming of a non-native hedgerow is proposed to facilitate the proposal. This is not considered significant considering its low value and large scale of higher quality grasslands surrounding.
- The Air Source Heat Pump enclosure in the southern extent of the site qualifies for permitted development and is not subject to this application (nor the associated impact on habitats).
- The boundary hedgerow is ornamental and small areas of grassland are mown modified grasslands within the site and as such are unlikely to support reptiles; however, precautionary measures have been implemented to ensure reptiles will not be affected by the works.
- Butts Close Pond is in close proximity to the site; however, the boundary hedgerow is ornamental and small areas of grassland are mown modified grasslands within the site and as such are unlikely to support reptiles; however, precautionary measures have been implemented to ensure reptiles will not be affected by the works.
- As common species of bird may use the building, trees and hedgerow for nesting and Schedule 1 WCA species could be disturbed if nesting in surrounding vegetation, in order to prevent any legislative offences during construction, mitigation measure have been recommended.
- The site offers moderate suitability commuting and foraging habitat for bats, the site also has good connectivity to nearby greenspace. A construction sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented to ensure no adverse impacts are experienced if lighting is required during construction.
- The site offers potential roosting habitat for bats within the buildings present on site. A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment has been recommended (and completed, RPS, 2024) to identify whether the buildings are being used by roosting bats and whether further surveys are required.
- Badgers are known to inhabit the area, while they are unlikely to be affected by the scope of works, mitigation has been recommended to ensure no impacts to badgers are experienced.
- Habitat for hedgehog and other mammals was identified surrounding the site. Due to the nature of the works focussing on the buildings, other mammals will not be impacted by the works; furthermore, mitigation measure propose to protect badgers will also protect these species.
- In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory for all qualifying developments, with developers required to demonstrate a 10% net gain for biodiversity as a result of development. A BNG assessment will be submitted with this application (RPS, 2025).

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- Appendix A Relevant Legislation
- Appendix B Site Photos

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and scope of this report

- 1.1.1 RPS was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a parcel of land, located at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, Fishponds Road, Hitchin SG5 1HA.
- 1.1.2 To undertake an initial assessment of the potential ecological impact of the proposals, a desk study, UK Habitat Survey, and a preliminary protected species assessment were carried out. This is termed as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) in accordance with CIEEM (2017). This assessment is considered 'preliminary' until any required protected species, habitat or invasive species surveys are completed, and the results incorporated into a final Ecological Appraisal or Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) which supports the planning application.
- 1.1.3 The PEA aims to:
- Undertake a desk-based review of designated sites and records of protected species and other species that could present a constraint;
 - Map and assess the habitats present on site;
 - Assess the site for potential to support protected species or other species that could present a constraint, and make appropriate recommendations for further survey work if necessary;
 - Provide outline options for mitigation measures as appropriate; and
 - Make recommendations for appropriate biodiversity enhancements in line with national and local planning policy.
- 1.1.4 This report pertains to these results only; recommendations included within this report are the professional opinion of an experienced ecologist and therefore the view of RPS. The surveys and desk-based assessments undertaken as part of this review and subsequent report including the Ecological Appraisal Notes are prepared in accordance with the British Standard for Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BS42020:2013).

1.2 Study area and Zone of Influence

- 1.2.1 The site is located immediately north-west of the centre of Hitchin and has a site area of approximately 0.55 ha (**Figure 3-3**). The National Grid coordinates for the centre of the site are TL 18207 29623.
- 1.2.2 The site is bounded by sports pitches to the east and greenspace to the west and south. North of the site and beyond the aforementioned sports pitches and greenspace are urban housing and retail stores which make up the town of Hitchin.
- 1.2.3 The site is predominantly grassland, with a few trees throughout, two brick buildings, hedgerows and artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface are also present.
- 1.2.4 The term Zone of Influence is used to describe the geographic extent of potential impacts of a proposed development. The Zone of Influence is determined by the nature of the development and also in relation to designated sites, habitats or species which might be affected by the proposals.
- 1.2.5 For this site, the Zone of Influence is considered to be the site and 500 m from the site.

1.3 Development proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposal is for decarbonisation works, comprising the introduction of external rendering, a new Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) enclosure, substation, photovoltaic panels, ground reinforcement and associated landscaping.
- 1.3.2 The ASHP enclosure in the southern extent of the site qualifies for permitted development and is not subject to this application (nor the associated impact on habitats).
- 1.3.3 The assessment is based on the Hitchin Swimming Centre- Sketch Site Plan (P04) (Saunders Boston Architects, 2025).

1.4 Legislation and policy

- 1.4.1 Relevant legislation, policy guidance and both Local and National Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) are referred to throughout this report where appropriate. Their context and application are explained in the relevant sections of this report.
- 1.4.2 The relevant articles of legislation are:
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024);
 - Planning Practice Guidance (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024);
 - The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031;
 - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit Amendment);
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
 - The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
 - The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; and
 - The Environment Act 2021.
- 1.4.3 A summary of legislation relevant to protected or other species identified as potential constraints in this report is provided in Appendix A.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 Ecological records within a 2 km radius of the site were requested from Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC; 2024). Data requests were limited to records for protected species recorded within the last ten years and sites of nature conservation interest within 2 km of the site. This included a review of existing statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Area of Conservation (SACs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and non-statutory sites, such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).
- 2.1.2 Locations of statutory designated sites were accessed via the government 'MAGIC' website (MagicMap, 2024).
- 2.1.3 A 1:25,000 OS map was used to identify nearby features such as ponds or green corridors that could provide habitat or connectivity to other areas.

2.2 Ecological Appraisal

- 2.2.1 The Ecological Appraisal was undertaken on the 24th September 2024, by RPS suitably qualified Consultant Ecologist, Toni Winbourne.
- 2.2.2 The Ecological Appraisal consisted of two components: a UKHab Survey and a scoping survey for protected species and other species of conservation concern which could present a constraint to development.
- 2.2.3 Broad habitat types within the site were identified in accordance with UK Habitat Classification v2.0 (UKHab, 2023). This includes applying The UK Habitat Classification Primary Habitat Hierarchy and where necessary, Secondary Code Groupings. In summary, this comprised walking over the survey area and recording the habitat types and boundary features present. The survey was also undertaken as described in the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment (CIEEM, 2017).
- 2.2.4 A protected species scoping survey was carried out in conjunction with the UKHabs survey. The site was assessed for its suitability to support protected species, in particular great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, reptiles, birds, badgers *Meles meles*, bats, and other species of conservation importance that could pose a planning constraint.
- 2.2.5 The surveyor looked for evidence of use including signs such as burrows, droppings, footprints, paths, hairs, refugia and particular habitat types known to be used by certain groups such as ponds. Any mammal paths were also noted down and where possible followed. Fence boundaries were walked to establish any entry points or animals' signs such as latrines. Areas of bare earth were inspected for mammal prints. Areas of habitat considered suitable for protected species or those of conservation interest were recorded.

2.3 Impact Appraisal

- 2.3.1 The overall ecological appraisal is based on the standard best practice methodology provided by the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017). The assessment identifies sites, habitats, species and other ecological features that are of value based on factors such as legal protection, statutory or local site designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) or inclusion on Red Data Book Lists or Biodiversity Action Plans.

- 2.3.2 The assessment also refers to planning policy guidance (e.g. NPPF) where relevant to relate the value of the site and potential impacts of development to the planning process, identifying constraints and opportunities for ecological enhancement in line with both national and local policy.
- 2.3.3 The methodology for evaluation of the nature conservation value of ecological features affected by development (ecological receptors) is adapted from the current Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (CIEEM, 2016). These guidelines recommend assignment of value (or potential value) to ecological receptors in accordance with the following scale:
1. International;
 2. UK;
 3. National (i.e., England/Northern Ireland/Scotland/Wales);
 4. Regional;
 5. County (or Metropolitan – e.g., in London);
 6. District (or Unitary Authority, City, or Borough);
 7. Local or Parish; and/or
 8. within immediate zone of influence only.
- 2.3.4 Following on from the above, potential constraints to development are identified on that basis, with recommendations for further, more detailed surveys made as appropriate, for example to fully investigate botanical value or to confirm presence / likely absence of a protected species.
- 2.3.5 In appraising any impacts, the review considers the client's site proposals and any subsequent recommendations made are proportionate and appropriate to the site and have considered the Mitigation Hierarchy as identified below:
- **Avoid:** Provide advice on how the development may proceed by avoiding impacts to any species or sites by either consideration of site design or identification of an alternative option.
 - **Mitigate:** Where avoidance cannot be implemented mitigation proposals are put forward to minimise impacts to species or sites as a result of the proposals. Mitigation put forward is proportionate to the site.
 - **Compensate:** Where avoidance cannot be achieved any mitigation strategy will consider the requirements for site compensatory measures.
 - **Enhance:** The assessment refers to planning policy guidance (e.g. NPPF) to relate the ecological value of the site and identify appropriate and proportionate ecological enhancement in line with both national and local policy.
- 2.3.6 When describing impacts on ecosystem structure and function, reference is made to the following aspects where appropriate:
1. extent;
 2. magnitude;
 3. duration;
 4. reversibility;
 5. timing and frequency; and
 6. Understanding the nature of the impact enables determination of the effect on the ecological integrity of the ecological receptor. This in turn is assessed against the importance of the receptor to determine the significance of the effect on nature conservation interests as being (i) not significant, or (ii) a significant positive or adverse impact.

2.4 Limitations

Desk Based Assessment

- 2.4.1 The desk study data is third party controlled data, purchased for the purposes of this report only. RPS cannot vouch for its accuracy and cannot be held liable for any error(s) in these data.

Survey

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

Accurate Lifespan of Ecological Data

- 2.4.4 The majority of ecological data remain valid for only short periods due to the inherently transient nature of the subject. The survey results contained in this report are considered accurate for two years, assuming no significant considerable changes to the site conditions.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Sites

- 3.1.1 There are 3 statutory designated sites for nature conservation value within 2 km of the site. The closest of these is Oughtonhead Lane Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI), located 0.85 km west of the site.
- 3.1.2 14 non-statutory sites are located within the 2 km search radius of the site. The closest of these is Windmill Hill Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located 0.57 km south-east of the site.
- 3.1.2 A summary of these sites is provided in **Table 3-1** below and the location of each site is detailed in **Figure 3-1** and **Figure 3-2**.

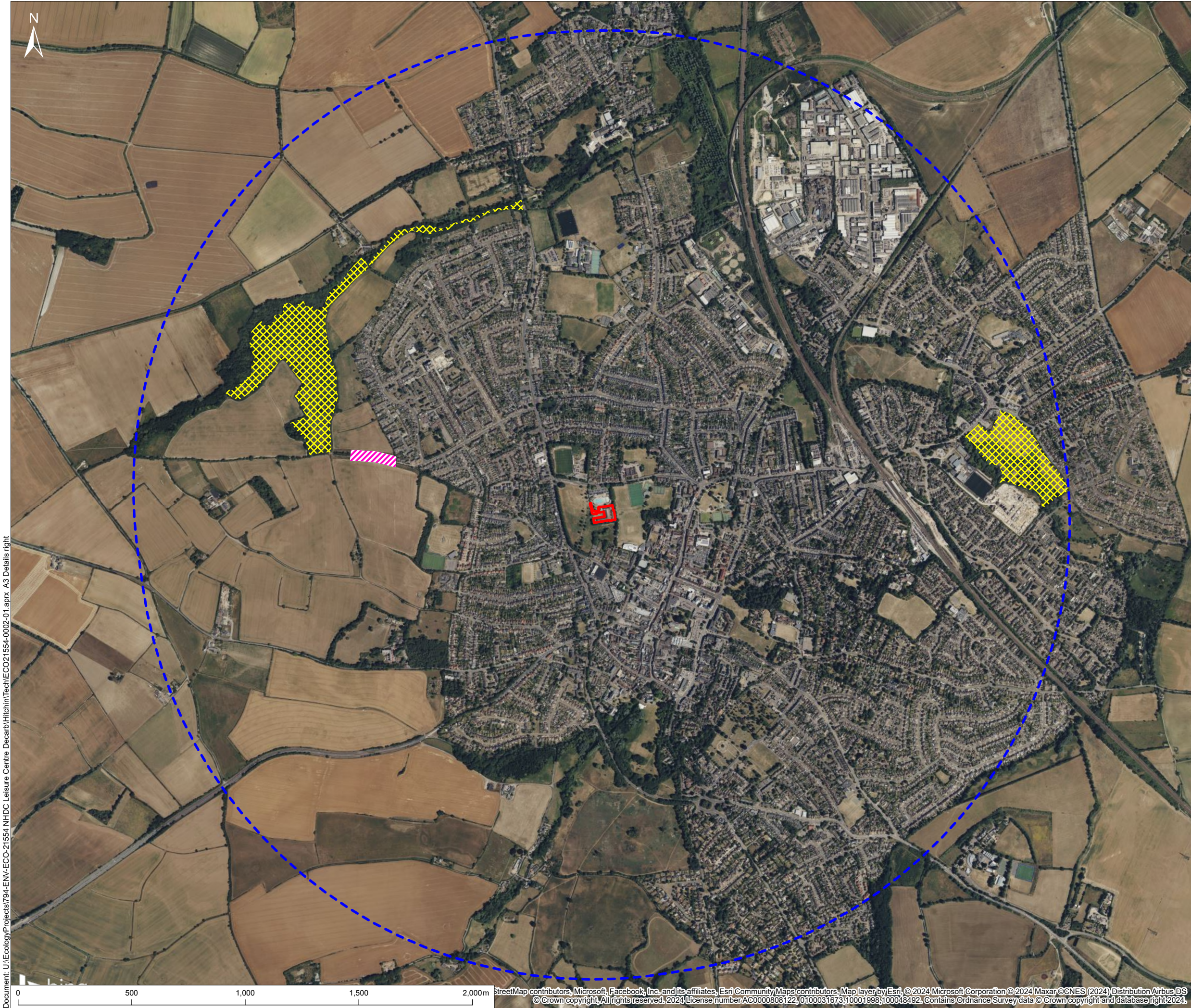
Table 3-1 Designated sites within 2 km of the study area (HERC, 2024)

Site name	Type	Approx. area (ha)	Interest Features	Distance from site (m)
Statutory Sites				
Oughtonhead Lane	SSSI	0.98	Oughtonhead Lane is important for Quaternary studies. It is one of two interglacial tufa sites which are noted for much richer assemblages of fossil land snails than other Middle Pleistocene sites in Britain. The tufa at Oughtonhead Lane also contains a fossil fauna of small mammals which is significant for interpreting the age of the deposit. Oughtonhead Lane provides important evidence for Quaternary environmental reconstruction and dating, and through its stratigraphic position the tufa has a bearing on the interpretation of the age of glaciation in East Anglia.	850
Oughtonhead Common	LNR	17.35	Oughtonhead Common is a local nature reserve with a wide variety of wildlife habitats. River Oughton flows alongside the common.	1140
Purwell Meadows	LNR	8.59	Purwell Meadows is a mixture of meadow land and play areas, The River Purwell flows through the area joining the River Hiz further downstream in Walsworth, kingfishers are native to the area.	1570
Non-statutory Sites				
Windmill Hill	LWS	2.81	Public open space on a calcareous gravel hill supporting short grassland. A steep roadside bank supports an interesting grassland flora including wild clay (<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>), a species rare in Hertfordshire.	570
The Willos (Hitchin)	LWS	3.74	Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)/willow (<i>Salix spp.</i>) fen woodland with areas of marshy grassland and scrub. Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) with hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) coppice below becomes dominant to the western end. Lesser pond-sedge (<i>Carex acutiformis</i>) is frequent in the wetter parts. Contains small streams and springs, a source of the River Hiz.	1000
Priory Park Icehouse	LWS	1.04	Building and environs important for protected species	1040
Oughton Head	LWS	25.26	Oughton Head consists of the main area of common in the south-east and the Wildlife Trust nature reserve to the north. The common supports marshy grassland with fen but with drier areas of neutral grassland, scrub and woodland. An unusual geology has resulted in a very diverse flora. Mixed wet woodland forms a belt of varying width along the north bank of the River Oughton which has its source at the western end. The site is one of the larger fen woodlands in Hertfordshire and has a long history of being managed as a fen. The western sections are dominated by mature alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) carr (an unusual habitat in Hertfordshire).	1130

			The river itself supports aquatic plants of note, the remnant fen components are notable within the county and the area is important for a range of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, with grass snake (<i>Natrix natrix</i>), harvest mouse (<i>Micromys minutus</i>), european hare (<i>Lepus europaeus</i>) and water voles (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) recorded.	
Hitchin Railway Cutting	RIGS	2.27	Chalk faces above Hitchin railway station car park. Middle Chalk above Melbourn rock. Southern wall stratigraphically important. Former SSSI.	1150
River Purwell, Walsworth Common	LWS	11.89	River Purwell and banks with some botanical interest and record of water vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>).	1220
Cadwell Marsh & Burymead Springs	LWS	0.33	A mosaic site supporting a variety of habitats including derelict marshy meadows, scrub, reed beds, hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) coppice, willow (<i>Salix sp.</i>) plantation, a dismantled railway embankment, an old hedge (along the Icknield Way) and spring-fed pools (old borrow pits). The site is bordered by the Rivers Hiz and Purwell. water voles (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) have been recorded beside the Purwell and harvest mice (<i>Micromys minutus</i>) within Burymead Springs.	1250
Hitchin Railway Cutting	LWS	0.00	Chalk cutting with calcareous grassland, scrub and bare rocky ground. Also, railway station with old shunting yards and old water tank. Site with great crested newt, smooth newt, toad and frog.	1280
Oughtonhead	HMWT NR	5.54	NS	1410
Westmill Lane, Ickleford	LWS	0.00	Buildings and environs important for protected species.	1420
Purwell Meadows	LWS	9.53	Old pastures along the River Purwell and its associated streams, mostly of unimproved calcareous grassland with areas of marshy ground and associated springs, some scrub, a former cress bed and secondary neutral grassland. The site supports a diversity of lower and higher plant species including a number of species uncommon or rare in Hertfordshire. Species of interest recorded include quaking grass (<i>Briza media</i>), spiny rest-harrow (<i>Ononis spinosa</i>), greater bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>), common fleabane (<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>), water horsetail (<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>), blunt-flowering rush (<i>Juncus subnodulosus</i>), brown sedge (<i>Carex disticha</i>), bottle sedge (<i>C. rostrata</i>), adder's-tongue (<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>) and southern marsh-orchid (<i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i>). The meadows are of local importance to birds especially for passage and feeding. Protected species have been recorded on the site.	1570
Charlton Mill Pool	LWS	1.04	Old mill pool formed by the widening of the river channel with fluctuating water level. South of the lake the river flows in several shallow muddy channels through swamp and wet willow (<i>Salix sp.</i>)/alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) woodland on the spring source. When the water level is high the river probably floods most of the wood. Some planted hybrid black poplar (<i>Populus x canadensis</i>) is present.	1600
Cadwell Lane Gasworks Meadow	LWS	3.16	Site dominated by dense hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) scrub in the south with open patches of herb rich communities on calcareous spoil. Some remnant old grassland is present at the northern end of the site. Species of interest recorded include agrimony (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>), common knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>), greater knapweed (<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>), lady's bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), wild basil (<i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>) and meadow vetchling (<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>). Two orchids, common spotted-orchid (<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>) and southern marsh-orchid (<i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i>), have	1820

			been recorded. Across the lower third of the site is an old boundary feature and there is a hedgerow to the eastern border. Protected species have been recorded from the site.	
Folly Alder Swamp	LWS	5.69	An old semi-natural alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) woodland with neutral/acid fen and marshy grassland remnants bordering Ippollitts Brook. A system of spring seepages is present plus an old pollarded hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) hedge borders the eastern side. The site supports a rich higher plant flora with species recorded such as greater tussock-sedge (<i>Carex paniculata</i>), lesser pond-sedge (<i>Carex acutiformis</i>), hemp-agrimony (<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>), marsh horsetail (<i>Equisetum palustre</i>), bog stitchwort (<i>Stellaria uliginosa</i>) and marsh marigold (<i>Caltha palustris</i>) in the fen/marsh areas; and woodland indicators in the ground layer including yellow archangel (<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>), broad buckler-fern (<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>) and bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>).	1890

Abbreviations used in Table 3.1: LNR: Local Nature Reserve; LWS: Local Wildlife Site; RIGs: Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Site; HMWTNR: Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves; SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest; ha: hectare; NS: Not Supplied.



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Legend

- Site Boundary
- Search Area (2km)
- LNR
- SSSI



Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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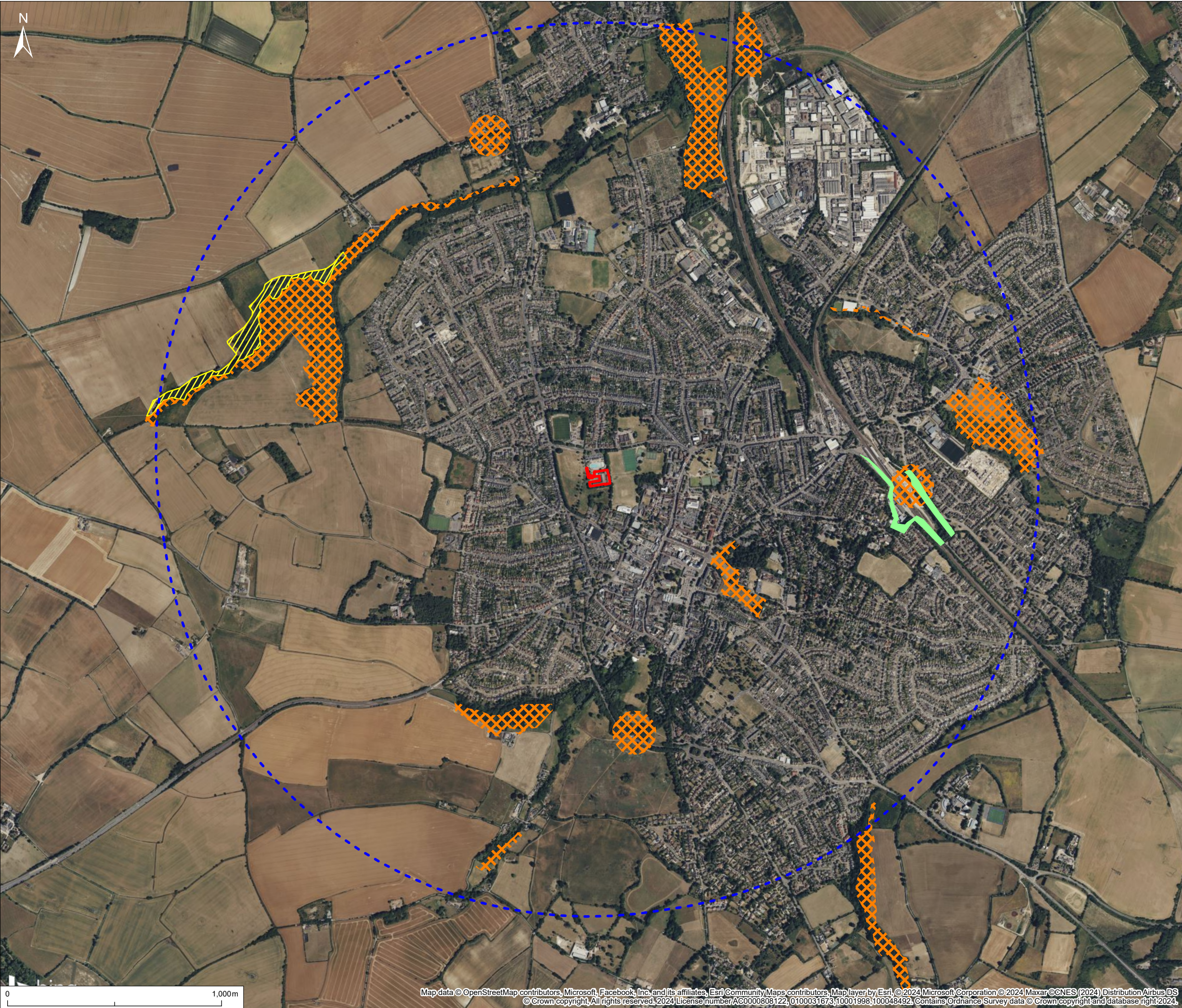
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Client	Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd		
Project	NHDC Leisure Centre Decarb (Hitchin)		
Title	Statutory Designated Sites		

Status Final	Drawn By GNL	PM/Checked By AM
Project Number ECO21554	Scale @ A3 1:16,000	Date Created 17/12/24
Figure Number 3.1	Rev -	

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Legend

- Site Boundary
- Search Area (2km)
- HMWT Nature Reserves
- Local Wildlife Sites
- RIGS



Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Project NHDC Leisure Centre Decarb (Hitchin)

Title Non-statutory Designated Sites

Status Final	Drawn By GNL	PM/Checked By AM
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3.2 Species

- 3.2.1 Records of protected species were obtained from HERC. A number of species of conservation importance or otherwise notable species were recorded within the 2 km search radius of the site. A summary of these records is provided in **Table 3-2**.
- 3.2.2 In order to simplify the results, only records of species from the last 10 years are shown. In addition, only data with a 6-figure grid reference resolution or higher are provided since locations given at a lower resolution do not allow accurate calculation of distance to the site boundary.

Table 3-2 Species records from the last 10 years within 2 km of the site (HERC, 2024)

Common name	Scientific name	Nearest distance from site (km)	Year of most recent record	Conservation Status
Amphibians & Reptiles				
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	1.77	2022	WCA5/9.1k/I; Sect.41; UKBAP
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	1.71	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	0.56	2019	HSD2p; HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; Bern2
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	0.16	2022	WCA5/9.1k/I; Sect.41; UKBAP
Birds				
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	0.82	2018	WCA1i; Bern2; Herts HR; Herts LD1; WCA9
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	0.82	2015	BAmb
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	1.46	2015	Bern2
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	0.82	2016	WCA1i
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	0.82	2017	BAmb
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	0.82	2016	CMS_A2
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	0.82	2014	BAmb; BD1; Bern2
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	0.82	2018	Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	0.82	2016	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	1.46	2015	BAmb; Bern2
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	0.82	2018	WCA1i; BRed
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	0.82	2016	WCA1i; Bern2
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	0.82	2015	Bern2
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	0.96	2018	BAmb
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	1.70	2014	Bern2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	0.82	2016	Bern2
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	0.82	2015	Bern2
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	0.82	2014	Herts HL
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	0.82	2017	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	0.37	2018	BAmb; Bern2; HSCC.RT

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Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	0.82	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; HSCC.Ex; Herts LD3
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	0.82	2017	WCA1i; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.Resp; HSCC.RT
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	0.82	2015	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	0.82	2017	BAmb; Bern2; CMS_A2
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	0.37	2018	WCA1i; BD1; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	0.82	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	0.82	2018	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	0.82	2017	Bred; Bern2
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	0.82	2018	BD1; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	1.70	2018	Bern2
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	0.82	2014	WCA1i; BAmb; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeus melanocephalus</i>	0.82	2016	WCA1i; BAmb; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	1.70	2015	WCA1i; Bred; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	0.82	2014	BRed
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1.70	2014	BAmb; CMS_A2
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	0.82	2014	Bern2
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	0.82	2016	CMS_A2
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	0.82	2017	WCA1i; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	0.72	2015	Bern2
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	0.82	2014	BAmb; CMS_A2
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	1.97	2016	WCA1ii; BAmb; CMS_A2
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	0.24	2018	WCA1i; BD1; CMS_A2; WCA9
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	1.70	2014	BAmb; Bern2; Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.Ex; Herts LD1
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	0.82	2018	WCA1i; BAmb
Ring-necked Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	0.82	2015	WCA9
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	1.70	2015	BAmb; BD1; Bern2
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1.70	2017	BAmb
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	0.82	2018	Bern2
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	0.82	2017	BAmb; CMS_A2; Herts HR; HSCC.RT; Herts LD1
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	0.82	2017	BAmb; CMS_A2
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1.41	2016	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1.46	2015	Bred; HSCC.RT
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1.70	2016	BAmb
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	0.82	2018	Bern2
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	0.26	2018	Bred; HSCC.RT
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	0.82	2015	Bern2
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1.70	2018	BAmb; Bern2

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Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1.46	2015	Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1.70	2014	Bern2
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	1.97	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	0.82	2017	CMS_A2
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1.70	2016	Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.RT; Herts LD1
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	0.82	2018	BAmb; Bern2
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	1.70	2018	BAmb
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	0.82	2017	BAmb; HSCC.RT; Herts LD2
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	0.82	2017	WCA1i; UKBAP; Bern2; HSCC.Ex
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	0.82	2018	BAmb
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	0.82	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1.70	2014	BAmb; Bern2
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	0.82	2018	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Mammals – Terrestrial (excl. bats)				
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	0.40	2023	PBA
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	0.26	2023	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	0.12	2023	Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.VU; HSCC.RT
Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	0.10	2023	WCA9
Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	1.75	2017	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	0.46	2022	WCA9
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	1.65	2017	HSCC.RT
Mammals – Terrestrial (bats)				
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	0.16	2014	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; CMS_A2
Natterer's Bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	1.56	2017	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; LBAP; Bern2; CMS_A2
Pipistrelle Bat species	<i>Pipistrellus</i>	0.03	2023	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.Lr(NT); Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Invertebrates				
Adonis' Ladybird	<i>Hippodamia variegata</i>	0.56	2022	Nb
Alder Leaf Beetle	<i>Agelastica alni</i>	1.15	2023	Herts HE (Col)
Alder Lift	<i>Heliozela resplendella</i>	1.76	2016	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
<i>Aphanus rolandri</i>	<i>Aphanus rolandri</i>	1.02	2022	Na
Bee Wolf	<i>Philanthus triangulum</i>	0.62	2023	RDBG.VU
Big-headed Mining Bee	<i>Andrena bucephala</i>	1.04	2020	Na
Black Oil-beetle	<i>Meloe proscarabaeus</i>	1.80	2023	Sect.41; UKBAP; Herts HR (Col); HSCC.RT
Brown Leaf Weevil	<i>Phyllobius oblongus</i>	1.27	2023	HertsLocal

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Buckthorn Tuft	<i>Bucculatrix frangutella</i>	1.26	2015	Herts Extinct (M)
<i>Chrysolina banksii</i>	<i>Chrysolina banksii</i>	1.40	2022	Herts HR (Col)
<i>Cistogaster globosa</i>	<i>Cistogaster globosa</i>	0.57	2023	RDBGB.EN
<i>Dolichovespula media</i>	<i>Dolichovespula media</i>	1.09	2022	Na
Fen Snout	<i>Nemotelus pantherinus</i>	1.86	2019	HSCC.RT
Field Digger Wasp	<i>Mellinus arvensis</i>	1.09	2020	HertsRare
<i>Gorytes laticinctus</i>	<i>Gorytes laticinctus</i>	0.57	2023	RDBGB.R
Hazel Leaf-roller	<i>Apoderus coryli</i>	1.36	2021	Herts HR (Col)
<i>Iassus scutellaris</i>	<i>Iassus scutellaris</i>	1.20	2018	Na
Jersey Tiger	<i>Euplagia quadripunctaria</i>	1.17	2019	HSD2p
Kent Maze-miner	<i>Phyllocnistis xenia</i>	0.82	2016	RDBGB.VU; HSCC.RT
Large Scabious Mining Bee	<i>Andrena hattorfiana</i>	0.69	2020	RDBGB.R
<i>Lasiorhynchites cavifrons</i>	<i>Lasiorhynchites cavifrons</i>	1.09	2022	Nb
<i>Leptura quadrifasciata</i>	<i>Leptura quadrifasciata</i>	1.76	2021	Herts HR (Col); HSCC.RT
<i>Lygus pratensis</i>	<i>Lygus pratensis</i>	0.72	2022	RDBGB.R
<i>Margarinotus merdarius</i>	<i>Margarinotus merdarius</i>	1.02	2021	Herts HR? (Col); HSCC.RT
<i>Microdynerus exilis</i>	<i>Microdynerus exilis</i>	0.97	2022	Nb
<i>Nephus quadrimaculatus</i>	<i>Nephus quadrimaculatus</i>	1.02	2021	RDBGB.VU
<i>Nicrophorus interruptus</i>	<i>Nicrophorus interruptus</i>	0.12	2020	Nb
<i>Obrium brunneum</i>	<i>Obrium brunneum</i>	0.96	2022	Herts HR (Col); HSCC.RT
Ornate Tailed Digger Wasp	<i>Cerceris rybyensis</i>	1.02	2022	HertsRare
Painted Nomad Bee	<i>Nomada fucata</i>	0.96	2020	Na
Pantaloön Bee	<i>Dasypoda hirtipes</i>	0.52	2021	Nb
<i>Placochilus seladonicus</i>	<i>Placochilus seladonicus</i>	1.36	2021	RDBGB.IK
<i>Polydrusus formosus</i>	<i>Polydrusus formosus</i>	1.09	2020	Na
<i>Raglius alboacuminatus</i>	<i>Raglius alboacuminatus</i>	0.55	2022	Nb
Red-tailed Mason Bee	<i>Osmia bicolor</i>	1.02	2020	Nb
Ridge-saddled Carpenter Bee	<i>Heriades truncorum</i>	0.52	2022	RDBGB.IK
Signal Crayfish	<i>Pacifastacus leniusculus</i>	1.29	2016	WCA9

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<i>Small Ranunculus</i>	<i>Hecatera dysodea</i>	1.26	2015	RDBGB.EX
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	0.38	2015	Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP
<i>Stictoleptura rubra</i>	<i>Stictoleptura rubra</i>	1.70	2019	Herts HR? (Col); HSCC.RT
<i>Thanatophilus sinuatus</i>	<i>Thanatophilus sinuatus</i>	0.84	2022	HSCC.RT
Violet Ground Beetle	<i>Carabus violaceus</i>	0.12	2022	HSCC.RT
Willow Maze-miner	<i>Phyllocnistis saligna</i>	1.26	2016	Herts End 4 (M); HSCC.RT
Higher plants (Flowering Plants)				
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	1.85	2015	WCA8
Box	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	1.04	2017	NR-excludes
Chicory	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	1.26	2015	RENG.VU
Cornflower	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	1.22	2022	Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP
Dittander	<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	1.30	2022	NS-excludes
Dwarf Spurge	<i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	1.36	2021	RENG.VU; RLGB.VU
Dyer's Greenweed	<i>Genista tinctoria</i>	1.76	2017	RENG.VU; HSCC.RT; Herts Vulnerable/Herts RareQ
Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	0.82	2022	RENG.Lr(NT)
Greater Broomrape	<i>Orobanche rapum-genistae</i>	1.76	2022	RENG.VU; RLGB.Lr(NT); NS-excludes; HSCC.Ex
Green-winged Orchid	<i>Anacamptis morio</i>	1.76	2019	RENG.VU; RLGB.Lr(NT); HSCC.RT
Himalayan Balsam	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	1.31	2023	WCA9
Hoary Plantain	<i>Plantago media</i>	1.26	2018	RENG.Lr(NT)
Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	0.76	2023	WCA9
Knotted Pearlwort	<i>Sagina nodosa</i>	1.59	2016	RENG.VU; Herts ExtinctQ; HSCC.RT
<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>argentatum</i>	<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>argentatum</i>	0.12	2023	WCA9
Large-leaved Lime	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	1.53	2023	NS-excludes
Lizard Orchid	<i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i>	1.80	2023	WCA8; NS-excludes; Herts Extinct
Marsh Willowherb	<i>Epilobium palustre</i>	1.26	2015	Herts Rare; HSCC.RT
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia pottsii</i> x <i>aurea</i> = <i>C. x crocosmiiflora</i>	1.85	2015	WCA9
Ragged-Robin	<i>Silene flos-cuculi</i>	0.76	2022	RENG.Lr(NT)
<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	0.56	2015	WCA9
Spiny Restharrow	<i>Ononis spinosa</i>	0.76	2023	RENG.Lr(NT); HSCC.RT
Stinking Hellebore	<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	1.58	2023	NS-excludes
Tawny Sedge	<i>Carex hostiana</i>	1.53	2015	Herts Rare; HSCC.RT

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Toothed Medick	<i>Medicago polymorpha</i>	0.96	2023	NS-excludes
Wall Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	0.76	2015	WCA9
Wild Clary	<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	0.74	2022	RENG.Lr(NT); Herts Rare; HSCC.RT
Wild Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	0.76	2023	RENG.Lr(NT)
Wood-sorrel	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	1.80	2018	RENG.Lr(NT)
Wood Vetch	<i>Vicia sylvatica</i>	1.85	2015	Herts Rare; HSCC.RT

Abbreviations used in Table 3.2: HSD2p: Habitats and Species Directive (Annex 2 – priority species); HSD4: Habitats and Species Directive (Annex 4); WCA1i: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Schedule 1 part 1; WCA5 (s9.1t; s9.1k; s9.4a; s9.4b; s9.4c): Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Schedule 5 (Section 9 part 1 (taking); Section 9 part 1 (killing/ injuring; Section 9 part 4a/ 4b/ 4c); WCA8: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Schedule 8; WCA9: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 9; Sect.41: Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Section 41; UKBAP: UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species; LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species; PBA: Protection of Badgers Act 1982; BAmb: Bird Population Status – Amber; Bred: Bird Population Status – Red; RLGB.VU: Global Red List: IUCN – Vulnerable; RDBGB.R: Red List for Great Britain (pre-1994) – Rare; RLGB.Lr(NT): Red List for Great Britain: IUCN – Lower Risk – near Threatened; RENGL.VU: Plant Red List for England – Vulnerable; RENGL.Lr(NT): Plant Red List for England – Lower Risk – Near Threatened; BD1: Bird Directive (Annex 1); Bern2: The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Appendix 2); CMS_A2: The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Appendix 2); HSCC.RT: Species identified as being rare, in decline or a special responsibility within Hertfordshire for their overall national status; HSCC.Ex: Species believed to have gone extinct from Hertfordshire since 1970; HSCC.Resp: Species whose national welfare could be dependent on their status in Hertfordshire; Herts HR (Col): Beetles – Native species without any national status, known to occur in five or fewer localities in the county; Herts HL: Birds – Hertfordshire local breeding pairs with 10 or less occupied breeding tetrads; Herts HR: Birds: Hertfordshire rare breeding species with less than 25 breeding pairs; Herts LD1: Birds: Local decline. Hertfordshire breeding species with greater than 50% decline in occupied tetrads between 1970 and 1990 based on the 1967-73 and 1988-92 atlases; Herts LD2: Birds: Recent local decline. Hertfordshire breeding species with greater than 25% decline between 1994 and 2000 based on the Hertfordshire BBS data; Herts LD3: Birds: Local decline based on records submitted to the county Bird Report or the results of specific Herts Bird Club surveys; Herts Rare (B): Butterflies: Herts Rare. Species with restricted distributions, and in some cases recorded infrequently and/or in low abundances; Herts Rare (M): Moths: Herts Rare; Na: Taxa which do not fall within RDB categories but which are none-the-less uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in 30 or fewer 10km squares of the National Grid or, for less well-recorded groups, within seven or fewer vice-counties. Superseded by Nationally Scarce, and therefore no longer in use; Nb: Taxa which do not fall within RDB categories but which are none-the-less uncommon in Great Britain and thought to occur in between 31 and 100 10km squares of the National Grid or, for less-well recorded groups between eight and twenty vice-counties. Superseded by Nationally Scarce, and therefore no longer in use; NS-excludes: Nationally Scarce. Occurring in 16-100 hectads in Great Britain. Excludes rare species qualifying under the main IUCN criteria; NR-excludes: Nationally Rare. Occurring in 15 or fewer hectads in Great Britain. Excludes rare species qualifying under the main IUCN criteria.

3.3 UK Habitat Survey

- 3.3.1 The survey results are presented in the form of a map with the habitat types and boundary features displayed in **Figure 3-3**.
- 3.3.2 Habitat types were identified in accordance with UK Habitat Classification v2.0 (UKHab, 2023). Descriptions of the habitat types and boundary features are detailed below. Where they applied, secondary codes are included.

Modified Grassland – g4

- 3.3.3 Mown modified grassland was present on the western side of the site. The grassland was species poor, including cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial rye (*Lolium perenne*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), mallow (*Malva sp.*), hawkweed (*Hieracium sp.*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), and greater plantain (*Plantago major*).

Tree – 200

- 3.3.4 A medium sized Norway maple Norway maple *Acer platanoides* and an Italian alder *Alnus cordata* are present within modified grassland within the site.

Non-native ornamental hedgerow – h2b

- 3.3.5 A hedgerow was present on the northeastern boundary of the site. The hedgerow was dominated by ornamental *Ligustrum sp.*

Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface, vegetated garden – u1d.828

- 3.3.6 This included vegetated gardens bordering the building and Elmside Walk on the western extent of the site.

Building – u1b5

- 3.3.7 The site contains two buildings both of which are constructed with brick and have tiled, gable style roofing. The buildings are both single storey and are in relatively good condition.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – u1c

- 3.3.8 A large area of the site comprised areas of paving and gravel.

Developed Land; sealed surface – u1b

- 3.3.9 Hardstanding is present in the northwest of the site.

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Notes

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Legend

Site Boundary

UKHab

g4 - modified grassland

u1b - developed land, sealed surface

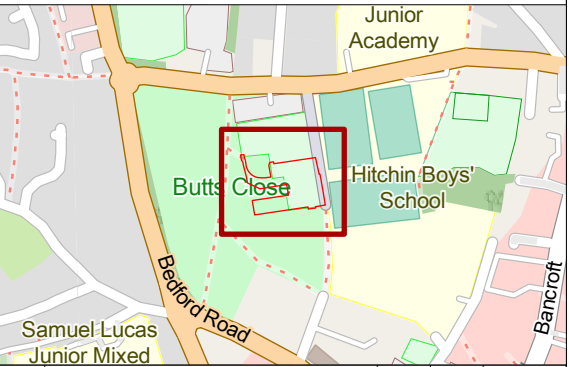
u1b5 - buildings

u1c - artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

u1d (828) - suburban mosaic of developed and natural surfaces (vegetated garden)

h2b - non-native and ornamental hedgerow

● g4.200 trees



Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Project NHDC Decarb Project: Hitchin

Title UKHab Map

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3.3	03	

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3.4 Ecological Scoping Survey

Plants

- 3.4.1 No plant species of conservation interest were noted on site during the site assessment. The site is not considered likely to support any populations of rare or scarce native plants considering its urban nature and current management.

Invertebrates

- 3.4.2 The majority of the site comprises buildings and paving. The site is not considered likely to support an invertebrate assemblage of importance at more than a site level.

Reptiles

- 3.4.3 Records for common lizard and slow worm were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The records nearest to the site were located approximately 0.16 km south-west of the site, within the adjacent parkland. The site has some connectivity to the areas of adjacent parkland, beyond that parkland the surrounding habitat is urban with poor connectivity.
- 3.4.4 Hedgerows and unmanaged grassland south of the site boundary, could provide foraging habitat for reptiles. The groundskeeping refuse heaps to the south and east of the site have potential for hibernating reptiles.
- 3.4.5 Within the site hedgerow is ornamental and grassland mown modified grassland and as such are unlikely to support reptiles. However, if swards were left unmanaged these areas could provide foraging habitat for reptiles.

Amphibians

- 3.4.6 Great crested newt (GCN) and common toad records were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. Both of these records were located south of the site, the closest of which was a GCN record 560 m south.
- 3.4.7 A pond is present 40 m south of the site boundary surround by unmanaged grassland which could provide foraging and breeding habitat for amphibians. The groundskeeping refuse heaps to the south and east of the site have potential for hibernating amphibians.
- 3.4.8 Within the site hedgerow is ornamental and grassland mown modified grassland and as such are unlikely to support amphibians. However, if swards were left unmanaged these areas could provide foraging habitat for amphibians.

Birds

- 3.4.9 The site offers potential nesting opportunities in the form of a hedgerow, a tree and a building.
- 3.4.10 The scattered trees and shrub areas surrounding the site have foraging and nesting habitat with the potential to support common and widespread breeding bird species.

Bats

Commuting / Foraging

- 3.4.11 The surrounds of the site offers moderate suitability to support commuting and foraging habitat (BCT, 2023), The surrounding grassland, hedges and trees, especially to the south of the site

where there is standing water, have potential to provide foraging and commuting habitat corridors for bats in the local area.

Roosting

- 3.4.12 Records for common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and Natter's bat (*Myotis nattereri*) were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The nearest record to the site was located approximately 0.03 km south of the site, near the Butts Close Pond.
- 3.4.13 During the walkover potential roosting features (PRFs) were identified within the building.

Badgers

- 3.4.14 Numerous records for badger were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The nearest living record to the site was located approximately 0.58 km east of the site, near the River Hiz.
- 3.4.15 No evidence of badgers were identified within or directly surrounding the site. Considering the urban nature of the site, it is considered unlikely badgers would use the site.

Dormouse

- 3.4.16 The site is not considered suitable to support dormice due to the lack of suitable habitat and poor connectivity to suitable habitats.
- 3.4.17 Furthermore, no dormice records were returned in the data search.

Hedgehogs

- 3.4.18 Records for hedgehog were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The closest of which was 0.12 km away north-west of the site.
- 3.4.19 The modified grassland and hedges surrounding the site have potential for use for foraging by Hedgehog. Hibernating opportunities exist within the hedges surrounding the site.

Other Mammals

- 3.4.20 Records for brown hare, stoat and polecat were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study.
- 3.4.21 No other mammal species of conservation significance were noted on site.
- 3.4.22 The site provides suitable foraging habitat for small mammals.

4 EVALUATION AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

4.1 Designated sites

- 4.1.1 The proposals will not directly affect any statutory or non-statutory designated sites. The closest statutory site is Oughtonhead Lane Woods SSSI, located approximately 0.85 km from the site. The nearest non-statutory site is Windmill Hill LWS, located 0.57 km from the site.
- 4.1.2 All of the designated sites are sufficiently far from the site, with urban, intervening habitats, meaning that the proposals (especially considering the small nature of the works) would be unlikely to have any effect upon the features for which the sites are designated.

4.2 Habitats

- 4.2.1 The proposal is for decarbonisation works, comprising the introduction of external rendering, a new ASHP enclosure, substation, photovoltaic panels, ground reinforcement and associated landscaping.
- 4.2.2 Removal of modified grassland, non-native trees and width reduction trimming of a non-native hedgerow is proposed to facilitate the construction of the ASHP compound, substation, ground reinforcement and landscaping. This is not considered significant considering the modified grassland is of low value and the large scale of higher quality grasslands surrounding the site.
- 4.2.3 The ASHP enclosure in the southern extent of the site qualifies as permitted development and therefore is not subject to this application (nor the associated impact on habitats).
- 4.2.4 Furthermore, any other potential indirect impacts to habitats (e.g. from footfall, ground re-enforcement) will be returned to the same or better condition within a 2-year period from the time of any impacts.
- 4.2.5 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory for all qualifying developments, with developers required to demonstrate a 10% net gain for biodiversity as a result of development.

4.3 Species

Plants

- 4.3.1 No plants of conservation significance or concern were identified during the site assessment; therefore, no further surveys or management actions are required.

Reptiles

- 4.3.2 All common UK reptile species (adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow worm *Anguis fragilis*) are protected through part of Section 9(1 and 5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These species are also listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.
- 4.3.3 Due to the sub-optimal habitats present, small scale and nature of the works (revolving primarily around the building and not impacting on the surrounding habitats), it is not anticipated that reptiles will be impacted as a result of the works, however precautionary measures have been recommended in **Section 5.2** to ensure reptiles are not impacted by works.

Amphibians

- 4.3.4 Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which affords the species protected under Section 9. This species is also listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit Amendment).
- 4.3.5 Common Toads are listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 making them a material planning consideration.
- 4.3.6 Due to the sub-optimal habitats present, small scale and nature of the works (revolving primarily around the building and with minimal impact surrounding habitats), it is not anticipated that amphibians will be impacted as a result of the works; however precautionary measures have been recommended in **Section 5.2** to ensure they are not impacted by works.

Breeding birds

- 4.3.7 Breeding birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take the birds or their eggs, or to intentionally destroy or disturb a nest, when it is in use or being built.
- 4.3.8 As common species of bird may use the hedgerow, trees and building for nesting and Schedule 1 WCA species could be disturbed if nesting in surrounding vegetation, in order to prevent any legislative offences during construction, mitigation measure have been recommended in **Section 5.2**.

Bats

- 4.3.9 All species of bat present in the UK receive full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Several bat species are also listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. These include the widespread species soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, and the rarer woodland species such as Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii* and barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*.

Commuting/ Foraging

- 4.3.10 As the site surrounds offers moderate suitability for commuting/ foraging bats, bats may be impacted by lighting; therefore, mitigation measures have been introduced in **Section 5.2**.

Roosting

- 4.3.11 The site was assessed to have moderate roosting suitability. The buildings contains potential roosting features (PRFs) and the proposals involve various works to the buildings that could affect bats.
- 4.3.12 Roosting bats therefore have potential to be impacted as a result of the works. Therefore, mitigation and further survey recommendations are provided in **Section 5.2**.

Badgers

- 4.3.13 Badgers and their setts are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This makes it a criminal offence to kill/injure a badger, interfere with or damage a sett or disturb a badger occupying a sett. If a sett is likely to be disturbed or destroyed a license will be required from Natural England and options to minimise impact to the species should be considered.

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- 4.3.14 No evidence of badger activity was identified during the survey and no setts were found; however, badgers are known to inhabit the surrounding area.
- 4.3.15 Due to the nature of the works revolving around the building, it is unlikely that badgers will be impacted. However, mitigation recommendations are provided in **Section 5.2** to ensure badgers are not impacted by works.

Dormouse

- 4.3.16 Hazel dormouse is a European protected species and is provided full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended).
- 4.3.17 There was no habitat suitable for supporting dormice within the site and the site lacked connectivity to other areas of suitable habitat. Moreover, no records for dormice were returned within the desk study. Therefore, no further surveys are required, and dormice are not considered to pose a risk to the development.

Hedgehogs

- 4.3.18 Although it is unlikely, it is possible that hedgehog may use areas surrounding the site for foraging. Hedgehogs are a Section 41 species and therefore a material planning consideration.
- 4.3.19 Due to the nature of the works revolving around the building and not impacting on the surrounding habitats, hedgehogs are not anticipated to be impacted as a result of the works. Furthermore, mitigation measures outlined in **Section 5.2** to protect badgers and reptiles will protect hedgehogs during works.

Other mammals

- 4.3.20 All wild mammals are protected from unnecessary suffering and asphyxiation under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996. Polecats and hares are Section 41 species and therefore a material planning consideration.
- 4.3.21 Due to the nature of the works revolving around the building and not impacting on the surrounding habitats, small mammals will not be impacted as a result of the works. Furthermore, mitigation measures outlined in **Section 5.2** to protect badgers will protect hedgehogs during works.

5 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 Habitats

- 5.1.1 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory for all qualifying developments, with developers required to demonstrate a 10% net gain for biodiversity as a result of development. A BNG assessment will be submitted with this application (RPS, 2025).

5.2 Species

Breeding birds

- 5.2.1 To avoid offences such as damaging or destroying active nests during works, it is recommended vegetation removal and external construction works be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (March to September). If this is not possible, vegetation proposed for removal and external work areas should be checked prior to clearance by a suitably experienced ecologist, and any active nests found must be left undisturbed, with a suitable buffer, until the chicks have fledged.

Bats

Commuting / foraging

- 5.2.2 In order to protect foraging/commuting bats, should any lighting be deemed necessary during construction a sensitive lighting scheme should be implemented so that no increase in the amount of light is experienced by vegetated areas adjacent to the site. The points listed below will help to minimise potential impact from lighting:
- Avoid illumination of retained boundary features including trees, hedges and neighbouring vegetation;
 - Use light sources that emit minimal ultraviolet light and avoid white or blue wavelengths to avoid attracting lots of insects (attracting insects to lamps may reduce their abundance in darker foraging areas favoured by bats);
 - 2700 Kelvin colour temperature LED floodlights delivering warm white spectrum lighting;
 - Back shields and side shields added to all AMNIS LED floodlights, to reduce spill light and back light as much as practically possible; and
 - LED floodlights with >550nm peak wavelengths to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats (Stone, 2012).
- 5.2.3 If the above lighting recommendations cannot be adhered to, further, more detailed bat night-time walkover surveys may be necessary, to determine the level of bat activity present on site.

Roosting

- 5.2.4 A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) of the building should be completed in line with current industry standards (Collins, 2023). The purpose of these initial surveys are to look for evidence of bat roosts in the buildings such as droppings, live/dead bats, fur/urine staining and feeding remains and to fully classify the potential for supporting roosting bats.
- 5.2.5 Where suitable roosting features are identified, further surveys will be required such as dusk emergence surveys. Surveys should coincide with the survey season (May-September inclusive). If multiple surveys are required (dependent on the results of the PBRA), then these should be carried out at least three weeks apart.

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- 5.2.6 The results of this survey will inform the required mitigation. Should bats be found roosting in any of the structures on site, a license will be required from Natural England to proceed with the works, detailing specific measures to ensure any bat species are not harmed as a result of the development.

Reptiles

- 5.2.7 The site should be subject to a Precautionary Method of Working (PMoW). The PMoW would include hand strimming of hedgerow that could support reptiles at a time of year when reptiles are active (March to November). The strimming would be in two phases – a first cut to 15 cm to encourage any animals present to move out of the area. It should be completed directionally towards the adjacent retained greenspace to ensure that animals can disperse into the wider landscape. A second cut would then be completed circa 24 hours later to ground level. A final destructive search would be undertaken of any potential resting place to ensure that no animals remain. This would include vegetation and rubbish dumping.
- 5.2.8 Such works will be undertaken/supervised by suitably qualified ecologists. If any reptiles were found during clearance works, they should be relocated to suitable habitat adjacent to the site.

Amphibians

- 5.2.9 The PMoW identified above for reptiles would protect amphibians (including GCN and Toads) during works. In the unlikely event that a GCN is found during works, all works shall stop, an Ecologist licensed by Natural England should be contacted and Natural England mitigation license applied for.

Badger

- 5.2.10 During construction the following should be implemented in order to prevent harm to foraging and commuting badgers (and other species) will need to be implemented to prevent harm as follows:
- All rubbish to be picked up daily and stored appropriately;
 - Any open excavations must be covered overnight; and
 - Any hazardous materials to be stored in a secure store.

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Appendix A Relevant Legislation

A.1 REPTILES

All common UK reptile species (adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow worm *Anguis fragilis*) are protected through part of Section 9 (1 and 5) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This prohibits:

- Intentional or reckless injuring or killing;
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, or having in possession or transporting for the purpose of sale, any live or dead wild animal or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal; or
- Publishing or causing to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying buying or selling, or intending to buy or sell, any of those things.

A.2 BIRDS

All birds, their nests and eggs are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as updated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 birds cannot be intentionally or recklessly disturbed when nesting and there are increased penalties for doing so. Licences can be issued to visit the nests of such birds for conservation, scientific or photographic purposes but not to allow disturbance during a development even in circumstances where that development is fully authorised by consents such as a valid planning permission.

A.3 BATS

All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as updated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. All British bats are also included on Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 as European Protected Species. It is an offence to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
- deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not); and
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts

A roost is defined as 'any structure or place which [a bat] uses for shelter or protection'. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time of survey.

A licence will therefore be required by those who carry out any operation that would otherwise result in offences being committed.

The following bat species are listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, (commonly referred to as UKBAP Priority species): barbastelle, Bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, greater horseshoe, and lesser horseshoe.

A.4 BADGER

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This act is based on the need to protect badgers from baiting and deliberate harm or injury. The act makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or attempt to do so;

- Intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access routes.

A sett is defined as “any structure or place that displays signs indicating current use by a badger”.

Appendix B Site Photos

Description	Photo
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Modified Grassland to be impacted by ASHP compound in foreground.



Site building from northwest looking southeast.



Description	Photo
Site building from southwest facing northeast.	

Example PRFs- vents

