

NHDC DECARBONISATION PROJECT- NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



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REPORT

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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 North Herts Leisure Centre, Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City SG6 2ER. 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, new air source heat pump enclosures, glass reinforced plastic enclosure, photovoltaic panels, substation and hard and soft landscaping.
- The site is approximately 0.74 ha in size and is comprised predominantly of grassland, with scattered trees throughout, a large brick building, small areas of scrub, introduced shrub, ruderals, hardstanding and unvegetated unsealed surface.
- There are three statutory and seven non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the site. No designated sites are expected to be negatively impacted by the proposal owing to their distance from the site. The nearest statutory site is Weston Hill LNR located 1.20 km east of the site. The nearest non-statutory site is Pryor Way Allotments and School Grounds LWS, located 0.29 km south-east of the site.
- The proposal will see the removal of a single tree (T2), managed and tall sward modified grassland and ruderal vegetation to facilitate the construction of the proposed ASHP enclosures, GRP enclosure and substation. Furthermore, as part of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (RPS, 2025), introduced shrub (G2) is proposed for removal under sound arboricultural reasons. All habitat removal is of low-quality habitats and/or which are small in area, as such, is not deemed significant.
- Any other potential indirect impacts to habitats from footfall or cable trenching will be returned to the same or better condition within a 2-year period from the time of any impacts.
- The removal of tall sward modified grassland may affect reptiles using this area, however, considering the small area of removal and large areas of suitable habitat surrounding, it is considered unlikely to negatively affect reptile populations. Precautionary measures have been introduced to ensure reptiles are not affected by works.
- No ponds are located within 500 m of the site that could support populations of amphibians with connectivity to the site.
- As common species of bird may use the building and tree which are to be removed 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 measures have been recommended.
- The site offers moderate suitability commuting and foraging habitat for bats, the site also has good connectivity to nearby greenspaces. If lighting is required during construction, a construction sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented to ensure no adverse impacts are experienced by the local bat population.
- 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.
- Records of badger were returned with 2 km of the site, 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, other mammals will not be impacted; furthermore, mitigation measures proposed to protect badgers will also protect these species.
- A biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment is being prepared to be submitted with the development application and will ensure a 10% net gain is delivered in line with legislative requirements.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and scope of this report

- 1.1.1 RPS was commissioned by Willmott Dixon Construction Limited on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a parcel of land, located at North Herts Leisure Centre, Baldock Road, Letchworth Garden City SG6 2ER which forms part of the NHDC Decarbonisation Project.
- 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 (EcIA) 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 east of the centre of Letchworth Garden City and has a site area of approximately 0.74 ha (**Figure 1-1**). The National Grid coordinates for the centre of the site are TL 23370 32555.
- 1.2.2 The site is bounded by industrial buildings to the north. The west and south of the site contain sports pitches and there is farmland east of the site (cropland).
- 1.2.3 The site is predominantly grassland, with scattered trees throughout, a large brick building, small areas of scrub, introduced shrub, ruderals, with hardstanding and artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface 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, new air source heat pump (ASHP) enclosures, glass reinforced plastic (GRP) enclosure, photovoltaic panels, substation and, hard and soft landscaping.
- 1.3.2 This PEA is based on the North Herts Leisure Centre- Sketch Proposed 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);
 - 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.



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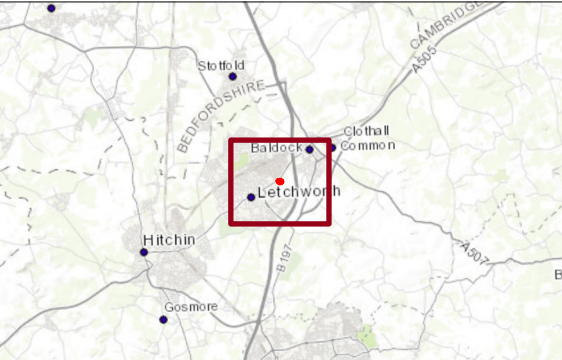
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Site Boundary



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20 Western Avenue, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4SH
T: +44(0)1235 821 888 E: rpsox@rpsgroup.com

Client Willmott Dixon Construction Limited

Project NHDC Leisure Centre Decarb (Letchworth)

Title Site Location Plan

Status Drawn By PM/Checked By
Draft AM SV

Project Number Scale @ A3 Date Created
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1.1 **01**

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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 three statutory designated sites for nature conservation value within 2 km of the site. The closest of these is Weston Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located 1.20 km east of the site.
- 3.1.2 Seven non-statutory sites are located within the 2 km search radius of the site. The closest of these is Pryor Way Allotments and School Grounds Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located 0.29 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				
Weston Hill	LNR	17.00	1.25km of new resurfaced pathways and new signs for people to learn about the local nature. Areas of rare and valuable chalk grassland rich in wildflowers, butterflies and the woodland attracts many bird species. The site has some interesting archaeology including ancient cultivation terraces and chalk workings. There are many paths throughout although some are steep. The site is carefully managed to keep a mixed habitat and encourage wildlife to flourish.	1200
Norton Common	LNR	25.69	Formerly arable and grazing land, Norton Common is a Local Nature Reserve in the heart of Letchworth. The woodland is alive with birds. Roam, through grassland full of wildflowers, find mineral-rich springs feeding the Pix Brook and see traces of ancient farming.	1370
Ivel Springs	LNR	14.71	The springs, which are the source of the River Ivel, provide a diverse area for wildlife including woodland, wetland and pasture. The site was used as a household rubbish dump until the 1950s when it reverted to rough woodland.	1670
Non-statutory Sites				
Pryor Way Allotments and School Grounds	LWS	5.18	Site important for protected species. Wildlife Site criteria: Species.	290
Icknield Way Railway Bank	LWS	1.74	Site important for protected species. Wildlife Site criteria: Species.	830
Weston Hills	LWS	18.35	Ancient chalk downland supporting typical chalk flora with open and closed hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) dominated scrub on the north-west escarpment of the Chiltern Hills. There are areas of secondary grassland and mature beech (<i>Fagus sylvestris</i>) plantation woodland with developing sycamore (<i>Acer campestre</i>) and ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) woodland plus a disused chalk pit. The grassland is quite diverse and supports several indicator species including common knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>), greater knapweed (<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>), quaking grass (<i>Briza media</i>), harebell (<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>), lady's bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), salad burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>), small scabious (<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>) and adder's-tongue (<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>). Small populations of orchids have been recorded and the site is also important for invertebrates, including butterflies, and vertebrates.	1140
Norton Common	LWS	26.02	A public open space in the centre of Letchworth Garden City. The site is surrounded by housing and is heavily used	1370

by residents. There is a range of habitats on site including, mown grass areas, neutral grassland, fen meadow and secondary woodland. The majority of the site consists of woodland. The Wildflower Meadow is located in the North Eastern area of the site and most closely resembles an MG5 NVC community. Species that have a high abundance in this compartment include, knapweed (*Centaurea nigra* agg.), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), and birds-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) with dominant grasses including false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*). The Fen meadow located at in the south-west of the site, is of high importance due to the rarity of the habitat in Hertfordshire it most closely resembles an MG22 NVC habitat. This site contains two Hertfordshire rare species, purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and parsley water dropwort (*Oenanthe lachenalli*) the last known site of this plant in Hertfordshire is Norton Common.

Norton Pond, Payne's Farm	LWS	N/S	Important ancient farm pond on the southern edge of an area of permanent pasture. goat willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>) scrub on north side of pond. Perimeter fringe of fen and swamp in the south and east supports a varied plant community that provides valuable wetland habitat. The pond supports important invertebrate and vertebrate species.	1600
Ivel Springs, Norton Road	LWS	6.70	Area of mixed habitats with the River Ivel flowing through it. Relic patches of former watercress beds, reed marsh, damp woodland and springs; the source of the Ivel with developed marginal vegetation. An interesting variety of flora, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals recorded including water vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>).	1710
Newfield Hill, Weston Hills	LWS	6.91	Site comprising chalk grassland banks with scrub plus plantation and old hedgerows surrounding a natural coombe along with ancient woodland remnants in the south. Species recorded in the calcareous sward include cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), common knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>), greater knapweed (<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>), wild basil (<i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>), salad burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>), lady's bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), field scabious (<i>Knautia arvensis</i>), bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), bulbous buttercup (<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>) and hairy violet (<i>Viola hirta</i>). A small number of very ancient ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) stools of considerable size mark the wood bank of a felled woodland.	1930

Abbreviations used in Table 3.1: LNR: Local Nature Reserve; LWS: Local Wildlife Site; ha: hectare; N/S: Not Supplied.



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- Legend**
- Site Boundary
 - 2km Buffer from Site Boundary
 - Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
 - Ancient Woodland

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20 Western Avenue, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4SH
T: +44(0)1235 821 888 E: rps@rpsgroup.com

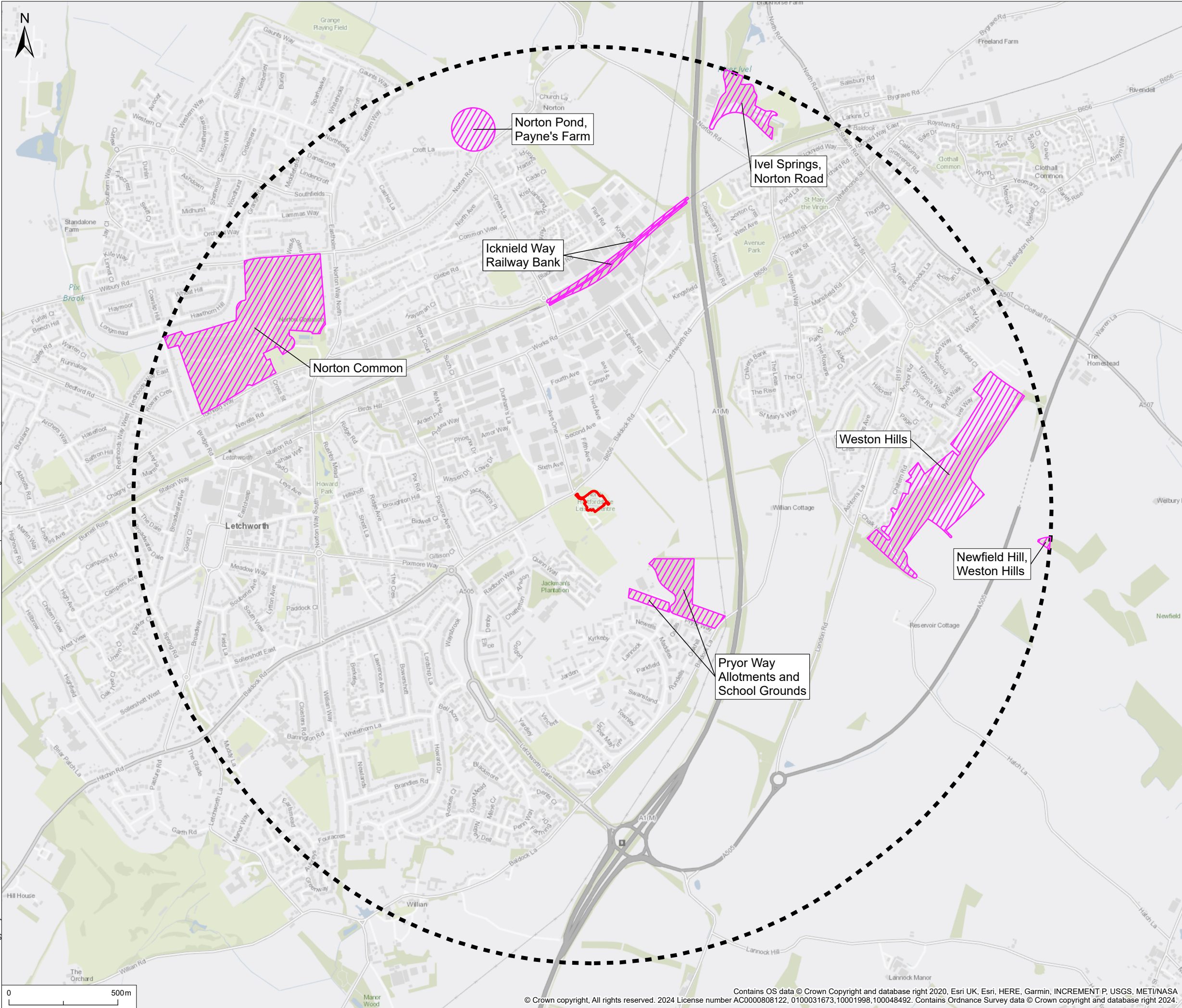
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Title **Statutory Sites within 2km**

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Project Number ECO21554	Scale @ A3 1:18,000	Date Created 18/12/24
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- Legend**
- Site Boundary
 - 2km Buffer from Site Boundary
 - Designated Sites:
 - Local Wildlife Sites

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Lakesbury House, Hittingbury Road, Chandlers Ford,
Hampshire. SO53 5SS
T: +44(0)2380 810 440 E: rpsso@rpsgroup.com

Client Wilmott Dixon Construction Limited

Project NHDC Leisure Centre Decarb
(Letchworth)

Title Non Statutory Sites within 2km

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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 Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	1.10	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	0.49	2021	HSD2p; HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; Bern2
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	0.92	2019	WCA5/9.1k/l; Sect.41; UKBAP
Birds				
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; Bern2; Herts HR; Herts LD1; WCA9
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	1.89	2016	WCA1i; Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; BAmb; BD1; Bern2; Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.RT; Herts WS
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	0.69	2017	WCA1i; BAmb; Bern2
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	0.36	2018	BAmb
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	1.25	2015	WCA1i; Bred; CMS_A2
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	0.25	2018	Bern2
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	1.40	2018	WCA1i
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	0.69	2018	CMS_A2
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	0.69	2018	CMS_A2; WCA9
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; Herts HL; Herts HR
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	0.51	2018	Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	<0.10	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; CMS_A2
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	0.36	2018	BAmb; Bern2
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	<0.10	2018	WCA9
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; BRed
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	1.37	2018	WCA1i; Bern2

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Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	0.51	2018	Bern2
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1i; BAmb; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	0.69	2018	BRed; Bern2
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1i; BAmb; CMS_A2
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	0.69	2018	Herts HL
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1ii; BAmb; CMS_A2
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	<0.10	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; HSCC.Ex; Herts LD3
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	0.69	2015	WCA1i; Sect.41; Bred; BD1; CMS_A2
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	0.69	2018	BRed
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.Resp; HSCC.RT
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	0.36	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; Bern2; CMS_A2
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1i; BD1; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	1.25	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; Bern2
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1.25	2018	BD1; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	<0.10	2018	Bern2
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; BAmb; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	0.69	2017	WCA1i; BAmb; BD1; CMS_A2
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1i; BAmb; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	<0.10	2018	WCA1i; Bred; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; Bern2
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	0.36	2018	BRed
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	0.69	2015	WCA1i; Bred; BD1; CMS_A2
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	1.25	2018	Bern2

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Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	0.69	2018	CMS_A2
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	1.90	2018	BAmb
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1.25	2018	WCA1i; BD1; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1.25	2015	BAmb; CMS_A2
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	1.25	2018	Bred; CMS_A2; Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.RT
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	0.69	2017	WCA1i; BAmb; Herts HR
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; BD1; CMS_A2; WCA9
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	1.89	2014	BAmb; Bern2; Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.Ex; Herts LD1
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	0.69	2018	WCA1i; BAmb
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; BAmb; Bern2
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	0.69	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	0.51	2018	Bern2
Ring-necked Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	1.25	2018	WCA9
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	0.69	2016	BAmb; BD1; Bern2
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2; Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.RT
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; BRed
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	0.69	2016	Bern2
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	0.69	2018	LBAP; BAmb
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2; Herts HR; HSCC.RT; Herts LD1
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1.36	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; HSCC.RT
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	0.69	2017	Bern2
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; HSCC.RT
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; Bern2
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2; Herts HL; Herts HR
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	<0.10	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; HSCC.Ex; Herts LD1
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1.76	2014	Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	0.69	2018	Bern2
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	1.25	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1.25	2018	CMS_A2
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1.25	2016	Herts HL; Herts HR; HSCC.RT; Herts LD1
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; Bern2

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White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	1.40	2014	Bern2
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	0.69	2014	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.Ex
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	1.25	2018	BAmb; CMS_A2
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	0.69	2018	BAmb; HSCC.RT; Herts LD2
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	<0.10	2018	Bred; CMS_A2; HSCC.Ex ;Herts LD3
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	0.36	2018	BAmb
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	0.69	2018	Sect.41; UKBAP; Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	0.25	2018	BAmb; Bern2
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	0.69	2018	Bred; Bern2; HSCC.RT; Herts LD3
Mammals – Terrestrial (excl. bats)				
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	0.67	2020	PBA
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	1.97	2020	HSD2p; HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; Bern2; HSCC.RT
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	1.58	2023	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	0.35	2022	Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.VU; HSCC.RT
Water Shrew	<i>Neomys fodiens</i>	1.94	2015	HSCC.RT
Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	0.35	2020	WCA9
Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	1.32	2017	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	0.53	2020	WCA9
Mammals – Terrestrial (bats)				
Bat spp.*	<i>Chiroptera spp.</i>	1.41	2015	HSD2p; HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; LBAP; UKBAP; RLGB.CR; RLGB.EN; RLGB.Lr(NT); RLGB.VU; Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	1.49	2022	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; UKBAP; Bern2; CMS_A2
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	0.25	2022	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; CMS_A2
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	1.49	2015	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; UKBAP; Bern2; CMS_A2
Pipistrelle Bat species	<i>Pipistrellus</i>	1.61	2014	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.Lr(NT); Bern2; CMS_A2; HSCC.RT
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	1.49	2015	HSD4; WCA5/9.4b; Sect.41; UKBAP; Bern2; CMS_A2
Invertebrates				
Alder Lift	<i>Heliozela resplendella</i>	1.36	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
Annulet	<i>Charissa obscurata</i>	0.56	2015	Herts Extinct (M)
Autumnal Rustic	<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; Herts End 4 (M); HSCC.RT
August Thorn	<i>Ennomos quercinaria</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP

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Beaded Chestnut	<i>Agrochola lychnidis</i>	1.58	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP
Beet Moth	<i>Scrobipalpa ocellatella</i>	1.82	2022	N
Black Oil-beetle	<i>Meloe proscarabaeus</i>	<0.10	2023	Sect.41; UKBAP; Herts HR (Col); HSCC.RT
Blood-vein	<i>Timandra comae</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Brown-spot Pinion	<i>Anchoscelis litura</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)
Buckthorn Tuft	<i>Bucculatrix frangutella</i>	1.32	2016	Herts Extinct (M)
Buff Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lutea</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Chalk Hill Blue	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>	1.59	2017	LBAP; RLGB.Lr(NT); Herts Rare (B); HSCC.RT
Chamomile Shark	<i>Cucullia chamomillae</i>	1.51	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Vul 2 (M)
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	0.36	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aglaja</i>	1.51	2015	Herts Rare (B); HSCC.RT
Dot Moth	<i>Melanchra persicariae</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Dusky Thorn	<i>Ennomos fuscantaria</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Ear Moth	<i>Amphipoea oculea</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>	1.33	2019	Herts Wide Decl (B)
Feathered Gothic	<i>Tholera decimalis</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Ghost Moth	<i>Hepialus humuli</i>	1.23	2016	Sect.41; UKBAP
Grass Rivulet	<i>Perizoma albulata</i>	1.58	2014	Herts End 2 (M); HSCC.RT
Grey Dagger	<i>Acronicta psi</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Jersey Tiger	<i>Euplagia quadripunctaria</i>	1.65	2023	HSD2p
Green-brindled Crescent	<i>Allophyes oxyacanthae</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Kent Maze-miner	<i>Phyllocnistis xenia</i>	1.36	2015	RDBGB.VU; HSCC.RT
Knot Grass	<i>Acronicta rumicis</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Lackey	<i>Malacosoma neustria</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)
Large Nutmeg	<i>Apamea anceps</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Latticed Heath	<i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)
Maple Seed Dot	<i>Etainia louisella</i>	1.36	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
Maple Stilt	<i>Caloptilia semifascia</i>	1.36	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
<i>Mintho rufiventris</i>	<i>Mintho rufiventris</i>	1.27	2018	N
Mottled Rustic	<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Mouse Moth	<i>Amphipyra tragopoginis</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Oak Hook-tip	<i>Watsonalla binaria</i>	1.58	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP
Plain Golden Y	<i>Autographa jota</i>	0.56	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)

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Rosy Minor	<i>Litoligia literosa</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Red-tailed Mason Bee	<i>Osmia bicolor</i>	1.38	2018	Nb
Rustic	<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Rosy Rustic	<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Shaded Broad-bar	<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP; HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)
Scabious Longhorn	<i>Nemophora metallica</i>	1.94	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
Shining Dogwood Cutter	<i>Antispila metallella</i>	1.36	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	1.32	2019	Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.Lr(NT); Herts Rare (B); HSCC.RT
Small Emerald	<i>Hemistola chrysoprasaria</i>	0.56	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus pamphilus</i>	1.05	2020	Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.Lr(NT)
Small Square-spot	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	1.58	2014	Sect.41; UKBAP
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	0.51	2020	Herts Wide Decl (B)
Square Spot	<i>Paradarisa consonaria</i>	0.56	2015	HSCC.RT; Herts Rare (M)
Webb's Wainscot	<i>Globia sparganii</i>	1.51	2015	Herts Vul 3 (M)
White Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	1.51	2015	Sect.41; UKBAP
Toadflax Brocade	<i>Calophasia lunula</i>	0.56	2015	RDBG.B.R; HSCC.RT
Willow Maze-miner	<i>Phyllocnistis saligna</i>	1.32	2016	Herts End 4 (M); HSCC.RT
White-letter Hairstreak	<i>Satyrium w-album</i>	1.24	2020	Sect.41; UKBAP; RLGB.EN; Herts Rare (B); HSCC.RT
White Satin Moth	<i>Leucoma salicis</i>	1.58	2014	HSCC.RT; Herts Threat 3 (M)
Higher plants (Flowering Plants)				
Alder Buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	1.53	2016	Herts Rare; HSCC.RT
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	0.74	2015	WCA8
Butcher's-broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	1.75	2022	Herts Rare as Native; HSCC.RT
Common Eyebright	<i>Euphrasia nemorosa</i>	1.51	2016	RENG.Lr(NT); RLGB.Lr(NT); HSCC.RT
Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	0.51	2016	RENG.Lr(NT)
Green-winged Orchid	<i>Anacamptis morio</i>	1.25	2022	RENG.VU; RLGB.Lr(NT); HSCC.RT
Hoary Plantain	<i>Plantago media</i>	0.25	2018	RENG.Lr(NT)
Large-leaved Lime	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	1.53	2016	NS-excludes
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum	<i>Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum</i>	0.25	2018	WCA9
Lizard Orchid	<i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i>	1.37	2023	WCA8; NS-excludes; Herts Extinct
Quaking-grass	<i>Briza media</i>	1.51	2016	RENG.Lr(NT)

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Rhododendron ponticum	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	1.25	2015	WCA9
Sanicle	<i>Sanicula europaea</i>	0.74	2015	RENG.Lr(NT)
Stinking Hellebore	<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	1.53	2016	NS-excludes
Welsh Poppy	<i>Meconopsis cambrica</i>	1.37	2015	NS-excludes
Wall Whitlowgrass	<i>Draba muralis</i>	1.47	2022	NS-excludes

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.CR: Global Red List: IUCN – Critically Endangered; RLGB.EN: Global Red List: IUCN – Endangered; 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; RENG.VU: Plant Red List for England – Vulnerable; RENG.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 WS: Birds: Winter status – Hertfordshire holding >10% of the British wintering population; Herts Rare (B): Butterflies: Herts Rare. Species with restricted distributions, and in some cases recorded infrequently and/or in low abundances; Herts Wide Decl (B): Butterflies: Herts Widespread Declining; Herts End 2 (M): Moths: Herts Endangered (Highest threat category). 2. Species categorised as 'Herts Rare' and believed to be declining in Hertfordshire; Herts Vul 2 (M): Moths: Herts Vulnerable (Middle threat category). 2. Species categorised as 'Herts Scarce' and believed to be declining in Hertfordshire; Herts Vul 3 (M): Moths: Herts Vulnerable (Middle threat category). 3. 'Herts Rare' species associated with a rare and threatened habitat, microhabitat or foodplant even if the moth itself does not appear to be declining; Herts Rare (M): Moths: Herts Rare;

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 Managed modified grassland was present on the east and north sides of the site. The grassland was generally species poor and had a low sward height. The grassland was dominated by perennial rye (*Lolium perenne*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*), and included cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), hawkweed (*Hieracium sp.*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*), bristly ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), and greater plantain (*Plantago major*).

Tree –200

- 3.3.4 Trees within the modified grassland included Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), non-native conifer and field maple (*Acer campestre*).

g4.128 - Modified grassland- tall sward

- 3.3.5 This grassland was present on the northeastern edge of the site, it was unmanaged and as such contained a tall sward height. The species present were similar to that described above

Mixed scrub – h3h

- 3.3.6 A small patch of mixed scrub was present on the eastern site boundary, it included bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), butterfly bush (*Buddleja sp.*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), dogwood (*Cornus sp.*), and traveller's joy (*Clematis vitalba*).

Urban. Introduced shrub – u.847

- 3.3.7 A small patch of introduced shrub was present in the east of the site, this was dominated by butterfly bush and include Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) and edler (*Sambucus nigra*).

Artificial Unvegetated, unsealed surface – u1c

- 3.3.8 A seating area and unpathed pathways were present on site.

Ruderal – 81

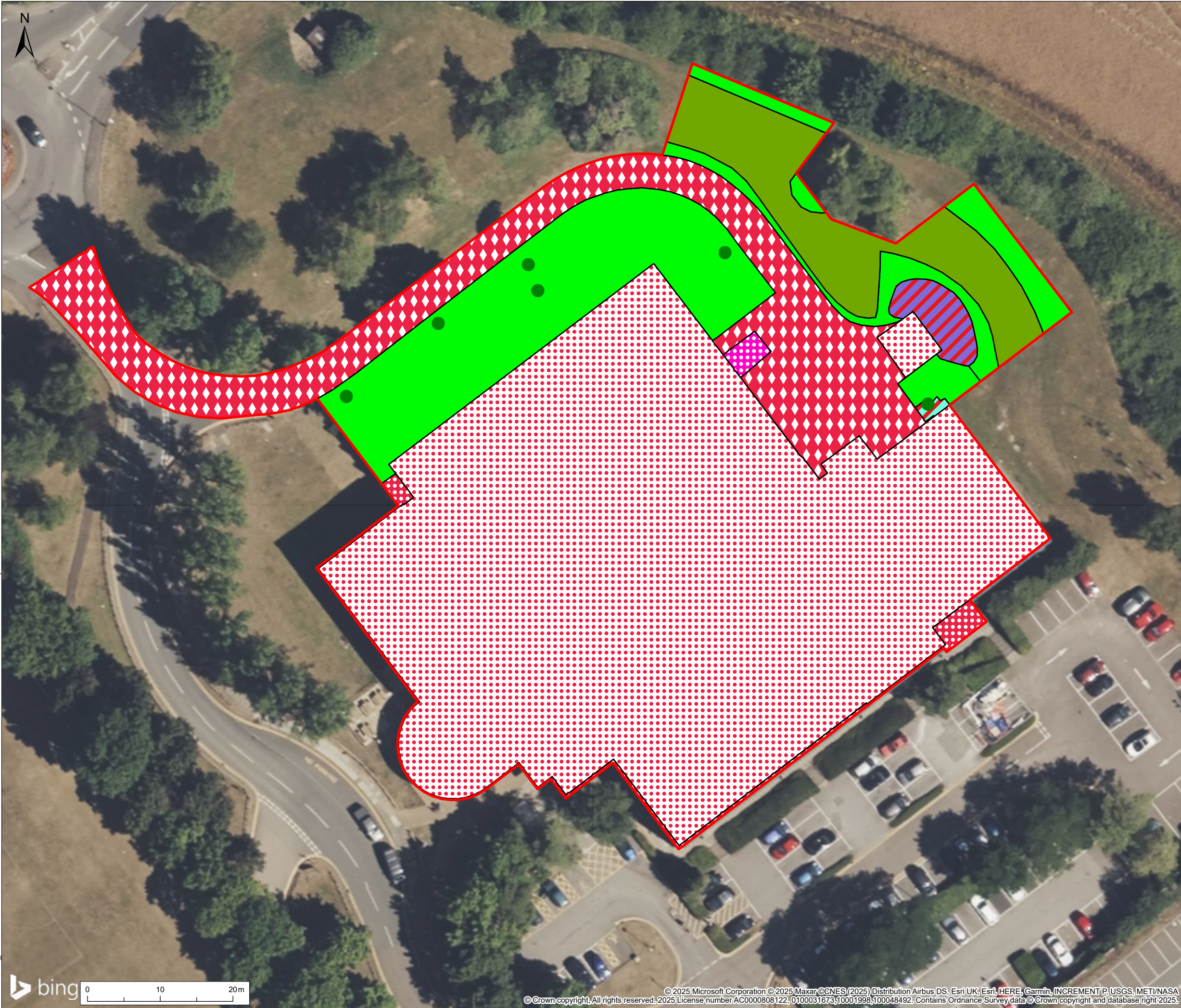
- 3.3.9 The site contained a small patch of ruderals. The habitat included nettle, white clover, dock (*Rumex sp.*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), ivy (*Hedera helix*) and brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.).

Other developed land – u1b6

- 3.3.10 A large area of the site comprised access roads, walkways and a car park.

Building – u1b5

- 3.3.11 The site contains a large building which is currently being used as a leisure centre with internal swimming pool, gym, squash courts, sauna and a cafe. It is constructed of brick with a flat roof. The building is in good condition.



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Notes

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- Legend**
- Site Boundary
 - g4 - Modified grassland
 - g4.128 - Modified grassland, tall sward
 - h3h Mixed scrub
 - u.847 Introduced scrub
 - u1b5 - Building
 - u1b6 - Artificial sealed surface / road & carpark
 - u1c - Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface
 - u1c.81 Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface - Ruderal or Ephemeral
 - g4.200 trees

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date
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A TETRA TECH COMPANY

20 Western Avenue, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4SH
T: +44(0)1235 821 888 E: rps@rpsgroup.com

Client Willmott Dixon Construction Limited

Project NHDC Leisure Centre Decarb (Letchworth)

Title UKHab Map

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
Draft	MP	AM
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created
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3.3		05

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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 and the site is not considered likely to support any populations of rare or scarce plants species.

Invertebrates

- 3.4.2 The majority of the site comprises buildings and hardstanding. The site is not considered likely to support an invertebrate assemblage of importance at more than a site level.
- 3.4.3 Burrowing bees were present on hill East of the site.

Reptiles

- 3.4.4 Records for common lizard were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The records nearest to the site were located approximately 0.92 km west of the site, in an urban area. The site has good connectivity to nearby areas of greenspace, particularly south of the site.
- 3.4.5 The tall sward modified grassland in the northeast of the site contains potential foraging opportunities for reptiles.
- 3.4.6 The scrub in the east of the site may provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for reptiles.
- 3.4.7 The managed modified grassland within the site in its current state with low sward height would not provide habitat for reptiles.

Amphibians

- 3.4.8 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 west of the site respectively, within close proximity to the Pix Brook River. It is unlikely these records have connectivity to the site due to the highly urban nature of the area between the records and the site.
- 3.4.9 The tall sward modified grassland in the northeast of the site contains potential foraging opportunities for reptiles.
- 3.4.10 The managed modified grassland within the site in its current state with low sward height would not provide habitat for amphibians.
- 3.4.11 The scrub in the east of the site may provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for amphibians.
- 3.4.12 One pond is present approx. 445 m north of the site (Google, 2024), however, does not have connectivity to the site, separated by developed areas.

Birds

- 3.4.13 The site has foraging and nesting habitat with the potential to support common and widespread breeding birds in the scattered trees, scrub, introduced shrub, and the buildings on site.
- 3.4.14 Areas offsite, including trees, scrub, hedgerows and hedgerow also has potential to support common and widespread breeding birds.

Bats

Commuting / Foraging

- 3.4.15 The grassland, scrub and trees on site and surrounding provide moderate potential foraging and commuting habitat (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023). Furthermore the vegetation on site is linked to areas of greenspace south, east and west of the site.

Roosting

- 3.4.16 Records for common bat species were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The nearest record to the site was a common pipistrelle located approximately 0.25 km south of the site.
- 3.4.17 During the walkover potential roosting features (PRFs) were identified within the buildings.

Badgers

- 3.4.18 Records for badger were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The closest of which was 0.67 km away south of the site near the A1.
- 3.4.19 No evidence of badgers was identified within the site. Considering the urban nature and sub-optimal habitat (primarily managed grassland) within the site, it is considered unlikely badgers would use the site.

Dormice

- 3.4.20 The site is not considered suitable to support dormice due to the lack of suitable habitat.
- 3.4.21 Furthermore, no dormice records were returned in the data search. Therefore, dormice are not considered further in this report.

Hedgehog

- 3.4.22 Records for hedgehog were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study. The closest of which was 0.35 km away south-west of the site in an urban area.
- 3.4.23 The modified grassland provides some habitat for foraging hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

Other Mammals

- 3.4.24 Records for brown hare and polecat were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study.
- 3.4.25 No other mammal species of conservation significance occurred on site. Scats were observed within the site, likely to be from fox.
- 3.4.26 The modified grassland of the site provides some 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 Weston Hill LNR, located approximately 1.2 km from the site.
- 4.1.2 The nearest non-statutory site is Pryor Way Allotments and School Grounds LWS, located 0.29 km from the site.
- 4.1.3 The proposal includes a small scope of works primarily proposed within existing developed land; furthermore, the designated sites are sufficiently far from the site, with urban, intervening habitats. Therefore, it is anticipated that the proposals would be unlikely to have any effect upon the features for which the sites are designated.

4.2 Habitats

- 4.2.1 The proposal will see the removal of a single tree (T2, RPS, 2025), managed and tall sward modified grassland and ruderal vegetation to facilitate the construction of the proposed ASHP enclosures, GRP enclosure and substation. Furthermore, as part of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (RPS, 2025), introduced shrub (G2) is proposed for removal under sound arboricultural reasons. All habitat removal is of low-quality habitats and/or which are small in area, as such, is not deemed significant.
- 4.2.2 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.
- 4.2.3 Any other potential indirect impacts to habitats from footfall or cable trenching will be returned to the same or better condition within a 2-year period from the time of any impacts.

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 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 The removal of tall sward modified grassland may affect reptiles using this area, however, considering the small area of removal and large areas of suitable habitat surrounding, it is considered unlikely to negatively affect reptile populations. Precautionary measures have been introduced in **Section 5.2** to ensure reptiles are not affected 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 as a species of principal importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) because of recent declines. This means that the species should be considered during planning and development.
- 4.3.6 No waterbodies with connectivity to the site were identified within 500 m of the site. Therefore, no further surveys are required, and amphibians are not considered to pose a risk to the development.

Breeding birds

- 4.3.7 Breeding birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside (WCA) Act 1981 (as amended). 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 building and tree which are to be removed 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 measures 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 offers moderate suitability for commuting/ foraging bats, bats may be impacted by lighting; therefore, mitigation measures have been introduced in **Section 5.2**.
- 4.3.11 As the vegetation removal is of a small area of low-quality habitat, it is not anticipated that commuting and foraging bats will be impacted.

Roosting

- 4.3.12 The buildings contain potential roosting features (PRFs) and the proposals involve work on the buildings that could impact bats. Roosting bats therefore have potential to be directly impacted as a result of the works.
- 4.3.13 Therefore, mitigation and further survey recommendations are provided in **Section 5.2**.

Badgers

- 4.3.14 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.
- 4.3.15 No evidence of badger activity was identified during the survey and no setts were found. Although badger records were returned within the desk study, due to small scale and nature of the works, it is not anticipated that badgers will be impacted by the works. Therefore, no further surveys are required, and badgers are unlikely to be negatively impacted by the proposed development.

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- 4.3.16 However, mitigation recommendations are provided in **Section 5.2** to ensure badgers are not impacted by works.

Hedgehog

- 4.3.17 Although it is unlikely, it is possible that hedgehog may use the site for foraging. Hedgehogs are a Section 41 species and therefore a material planning consideration.
- 4.3.18 Due to the due to small scale and nature of the works, it is not anticipated that hedgehogs will be impacted as a result of the works. Furthermore, mitigation measures outlined in **Section 5.2** to protect badgers will protect hedgehogs during works.

Other mammals

- 4.3.19 All wild mammals are protected from unnecessary suffering and asphyxiation under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.
- 4.3.20 Due to the due to small scale and nature of the works, it is not anticipated that other mammal species will be impacted as a result of the works.

5 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 Habitats

- 5.1.1 Mandatory biodiversity net gain for developments in England is set out in the Environment Act 2021. The Town & Country Planning Act 1990 has been amended, to set out the requirement of a 10% net gain to be achieved by all developments. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment will be required to be submitted with this application.

5.2 Species

Reptiles

- 5.2.1 The site should be subject to a Precautionary Method of Working (PMoW). The PMoW would include hand strimming of tall sward modified grassland 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.
- 5.2.2 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.

Breeding Birds

- 5.2.3 To avoid offences such as damaging or destroying active nests during works, prior to construction it is recommended works be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (March to September). If this is not possible, building and vegetation 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

- 5.2.4 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 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).

-
- 5.2.5 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

- 5.2.6 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 is to look for evidence of bat roosts in the building such as droppings, live/dead bats, fur/urine staining and feeding remains and to fully classify the potential for supporting roosting bats.
- 5.2.7 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.
- 5.2.8 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.

Badgers

- 5.2.9 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”.

A.5 DORMOUSE

Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is fully protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019. The Regulations prohibit:

- Intentionally, recklessly or deliberately kill, injure or take a Dormouse;
- The deliberate disturbance of this species in such a way as to be significantly likely to affect:
 - Their ability of to survive, hibernate, migrate, breed, or rear or nurture their young; or;
 - The local distribution or abundance of Dormice.
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (nest);
- The possession or transport of Dormice or any other part of.

Dormice are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion in Schedule 5. Under the Act, they are protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level);
- Obstruction of access to any place of shelter, breeding or rest;
- Selling, bartering or exchange of these species, or parts of.

Offences can be deliberate, intentional or reckless and penalties for any of the above include fines of up to £5k and imprisonment of up to 6 months, per animal affected.

Dormice are also listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as a Species of Principal Importance; national objectives & targets include the maintenance of the geographical range and viability of existing Dormice populations to ensure that it remains in favourable conservation status.

Appendix B Site Photos

Description	Photo
Photo taken from northwestern corner of the building facing northeast, showing trees and modified grassland in the north of the site.	
Photo taken from east facing west, showing location of proposed ASHP compound enclosures, tree and managed and tall sward modified grass removal.	