

Ecological Impact Assessment

**The Ruddery, Ashwell Street, Ashwell,
Hertfordshire, SG7 5QF**

For Mr T Christy

December 2025



Report: SE2552.1

CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
2	INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES	
2.1	Introduction	5
2.2	Site Location, Description, and Development Proposals	5
2.3	Scope and Objectives.....	5
2.4	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	5
3	METHODOLOGIES	
3.1	Surveyor	6
3.2	Desk Study	6
3.3	Habitat Survey	6
3.4	Protected & Biodiversity Species Assessment	6
3.5	Ecological Evaluation.....	7
3.6	Limitations and Assumptions	8
4	RESULTS	
4.1	Desk Survey - Designated Sites and Habitats	8
4.2	Desk Survey - Protected and Biodiversity Species	8
4.3	Site Survey - Habitats	8
4.4	Protected and Notable Species Scoping Survey.....	9
5	DISCUSSION	
5.1	Designated Conservation Sites.....	12
5.2	Potential Impacts on Biodiversity	12
5.3	Ecological Evaluation.....	12
5.4	Further Ecological Surveys	12
5.5	Opportunities for Biodiversity Enhancement	12
6	RECOMMENDATIONS	
6.1	Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS).....	12
6.2	Mitigation – New Lighting	13
6.3	Enhancement Opportunities.....	14
7	REFERENCES	14
	APPENDICES	
	A1 - LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT	15

Related Documents List

SE2552.1 EclA The Ruddery Ashwell Dec 2025 f (This EclA)

SE2552.2 BNG The Ruddery Ashwell Dec 2025 f (Biodiversity Net Gain report)

SE2552.3 BNG Metric The Ruddery Ashwell Dec 2025 f (BNG metric spreadsheet)

SE2552.4 BNG HCA The Ruddery Ashwell Dec 2025 f (Habitat Condition Sheet)

LIMITATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

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This report is prepared and written in the context of the proposals stated in the introduction to this report and should not be used in a different context. If any change in circumstances occurs or after the expiry of 18 months from the date of the report, the report should be referred to the author for re-assessment and, if necessary, reappraisal.

The Summary and Recommendations sections of the report provide an overview and guidance only and should not be relied upon explicitly until considered in the context of the whole report. Interpretations and recommendations in the report represent my professional opinion, arrived at in accordance with accepted industry practices and based on the current legislation at that time. No responsibility can be accepted for inaccuracies in the supplied data.

Scientific survey data will be shared with the local biological records centre in accordance with professional codes of conduct.

Limitations of Surveys

This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of some species. It does not record any animals or plants that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident during the survey visits. The behaviour of animals can be unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in scientific literature. Therefore, this report cannot predict with absolute certainty that animal species will occur in apparently suitable locations or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear to be unsuitable. Habitats outside the site boundary were visited only when considered appropriate and when access was available.

This survey is valid for 18 months. If development does not occur within this period, it is advised that the survey should be repeated as part of a complete ecological reappraisal.

Andrew Palmer BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM
Sound Ecology – December 2025



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sound Ecology has compiled this report on behalf of Mr T Christy. It pertains to land at The Ruddery, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5QF.

The report comprises the findings and recommendations of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) - a combined Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA). A separate Biodiversity Net Gain assessment report accompanies this report.

Development Proposals

The proposal involves the construction of four residential dwellings with associated access, parking, and gardens. Comprising two similarly sized plots, the eastern one consisted of a vegetated garden with mostly native hedgerows and scattered trees. The western plot comprised pasture of modified grassland, with small amounts of tall forb, Bramble scrub and a native hedgerow with trees.

Survey Results

No evidence of protected and notable species was recorded. The site broadly offers negligible suitability for protected species, although boundary habitats are moderately suitable for commuting and foraging bats and nesting birds. However, no further surveys are merited.

Evaluation, Mitigation & Enhancement

When adequately mitigated, the proposals would have negligible negative impacts on sites, protected habitats, and species and no lasting detrimental conservation harm. A Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS) during site clearance and construction work will avoid potential low-level risks to wildlife.

The proposals will incorporate new habitat opportunities for wildlife likely to occur within the local area.

2 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

Sound Ecology has compiled this report on behalf of Mr T Christy. It pertains to land at The Ruddery, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5QF (subsequently referred to as 'the Site'). The Site is located at OS grid reference TL 2757 639839.

The report comprises the findings and recommendations of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) - a combined Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA). The assessment informs a planning application and assesses development constraints arising from ecological issues, ensuring compliance with wildlife legislation (Appendix A1). It also allows any work that may otherwise be detrimental to protected and biodiversity species to be appropriately scheduled.

Sarah Downing (SD), BSc (Hons), MCIEEM, undertook the surveys. Andrew Palmer (AP) BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM wrote the report. Both are experienced and licenced ecological surveyors.

2.2 Site Location, Description, and Development Proposals

The 0.49 ha site lies on the eastern edge of Ashwell village. The proposal involves the construction of four residential dwellings with associated access, parking, and gardens. Comprising two similarly sized plots, the eastern one consisted of a vegetated garden with mostly native hedgerows and scattered trees. The western plot comprised pasture of modified grassland, with small amounts of tall forb, Bramble scrub and a native hedgerow with trees.

The location is low-density residential with a caravan park opposite and open arable countryside beyond.

2.3 Scope and Objectives

The objectives of the survey are:

- To undertake a scoping of potential impacts upon protected habitats and species.
- To recommend follow-up species surveys if identified as needed.
- To make recommendations to mitigate potential negative impacts arising from development proposals.
- To recommend enhancing on-site habitats and wildlife opportunities, resulting in an overall net gain in biodiversity.

2.4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

A separate BNG assessment has been provided. Refer to the documents listed at the base of page 2.

3 METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Surveyor

The survey was undertaken by Sarah Downing (SD), an experienced ecologist who meets the requirements of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) as defined by BS42020:2013. SD has held a Level 1 Bat Survey Licence since 2022 (Class Licence Registration Number: 2022-10367-CL17-BAT) and Great Crested Newt and Dormouse Survey Licences (Class Licences 2015-177251-CLS-CLS and 2016-20813-CLS-CLS).

The reports (EclA and BNG) were written by Andrew Palmer (AP), an experienced ecologist who also meets the requirements of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) under BS42020:2013. AP holds a Level 2 Bat Survey Licence since 2011 (Class Licence Registration Number: 2025-84600-CL18-BAT) and Great Crested Newt and Barn Owl Survey Licences (Class Licences 2017-32763 and CL29/0057).

3.2 Desk Study

A desk study was undertaken to provide an ecological context and inform an assessment of the potential ecological constraints to development. MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) was searched in November 2025. Current Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photographs were used to identify features within 500 m of the site that might be used by protected or notable species.

The author conducted a HERC/CPERC search in 2022 at a nearby location, and this has been referenced where relevant. Therefore, given the localised and discrete nature of the proposal, it is not considered necessary to undertake a new biological records data search.

3.3 Habitat Survey

AP surveyed in July 2023 for an earlier proposal that did not proceed. This visit informed SD's 2025 survey, which involved a site visit on 5 September to record and map habitat types and ecological features. It followed the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017).

3.4 Protected & Biodiversity Species Assessment

The site was inspected for evidence of protected and notable species and assessed for its potential to support them. This included species listed under all relevant English legislation (as Appendix A1). Scientific names are not used unless they are essential to the identification of the species discussed. The following protected and notable species were considered within the assessment.

3.4.1 Amphibians

Great Crested Newt (GCN) surveys are only relevant where suitable breeding ponds are present within 250 m (this may be extended to 500 m where the habitat between the site and ponds is highly suitable). There were no suitable breeding habitats within 500 m, and consequently, the scoping survey excluded a detailed risk assessment for GCN.

3.4.2 Bats

There were no built structures on the site. Trees in the vicinity of the proposed works were thoroughly examined in accordance with the Bat Survey Guidelines (BSG) outlined in the BCT Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023). The survey searched for evidence of bat utilisation and roost suitability, with the findings categorised as per Table 1. The survey methodology comprised a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) using binoculars and high-intensity focused lighting to inspect the depth of any visible feature.

Table 1: Assessment of Bat Roosting Potential in Trees (adapted from Collins, 2023).

Suitability	Assessment of features present that potentially support roosting bats
None	Either there is no PRF, or it is highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment is required to establish if PRFs are present.
PRF	A tree with at least one potential roost feature (PRF) is present.

3.4.3 Bat Foraging and Commuting:

Using the BCT Guidelines (summarised in Table 2), the habitats' suitability for supporting bat foraging and commuting activities was assessed.

Table 2: Assessment of Bat Activity Suitability (Commuting and Foraging) in Surrounding Habitat - adapted from Collins (2023). [High Suitability is not relevant].

Suitability	Commuting and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features for commuting or foraging bats were present.
Negligible	No obvious habitat features for commuting or foraging bats are present; however, a small element of uncertainty remains.
Low	Isolated or poorly connected habitat that could potentially support small numbers of foraging and commuting bats.
Moderate	Continuous habitats connected to the wider countryside.

3.4.4 Other Species

The Site was not considered suitable for widespread reptiles. However, it was assessed for suitability to support other protected and notable fauna species/assemblages, including Badgers, nesting birds and Hedgehogs.

The site was searched for invasive non-native species (INNS), including Japanese Knotweed.

3.5 **Ecological Evaluation**

Where appropriate, the site would be assigned an ecological value based on the approach described in 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK & Ireland' published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018; updated 2022), which defines the resource (in this case, the habitat and scope for protected species) within a geographical context using the following criteria. These evaluation criteria, based on those developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, are as follows:

- International and European; National (UK/England); Regional (East of England); County (Hertfordshire); Local (North Hertfordshire); Site Level (Zone of Influence - functions within its setting but offers no more than low ecological value)

3.6 Limitations

No significant limitations existed, and the surveys did not depart from good-practice guidelines. Adjacent land was only examined closely where public access was possible.

This EclA provides an overview of the likelihood of protected and notable species occurring on the site. The absence of a species cannot be presumed where no evidence was found. Further surveys are recommended where there is a reasonable likelihood that a protected species is present and may be impacted by the development proposal.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Desk Survey - Designated Sites and Habitats

Statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations do not cover the Site. Ashwell Springs (SSSI) lies 452 m to the west. The SSSI is designated for its specialised cold water invertebrate community. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone of the Ashwell Spring SSSI and Therfield Heath SSSI, situated 4.2 km to the east. In all cases, impacts on sites of conservation interest would not be anticipated by such a small development.

Priority habitats within 2 km of the site include lowland calcareous grassland at 833 m to the north-east. The River Rhee, which is a priority chalk river, lies within Ashwell Spring SSSI. Priority habitat deciduous woodland occurs within 2km of the Site, but none falls within 500m. Such a small development is expected to have no impact on any of these habitats.

No further assessment is required for statutory conservation sites.

4.2 Desk Survey - Protected and Biodiversity Species

No European Protected Species applications were granted within 2 km.

There are at least two Great Crested Newt records from the western part of the village in 2019. There are also local records of Grass Snake up to 2015 and numerous bat records. None of these records is particularly relevant to the redevelopment of the site, provided mitigation measures are put in place during construction and for long-term management.

4.3 Habitat Survey

Figure 1 shows the distribution of measurable habitats. **No irreplaceable or priority habitats were recorded.**

The **eastern plot** (Photo set 1), comprising a vegetated garden, was mainly a regularly mown lawn, with no more than five species per square metre and lacking structural diversity. No scarce or significant plants were found. The lawn comprised typical lawn species, dominated by Rye-grass, Cock's-foot, Red Fescue, and bents, with occasional forbs such as White Clover, Creeping Buttercup, Dove's-foot Cranesbill, Daisy, Dandelion, Self-heal, Ragwort, and Ribwort Plantain.

Native species boundary hedgerows were comprised of Hawthorn, Elder and Field Maple, although no individual section was considered species-rich. Trees included Ash, Beech, Whitebeam, and ornamental Cherry. No tree was larger than medium, and all were considered semi- or early-mature. No significant ecological features associated with age were present.

In addition, there was a small vegetative garden and a non-native screen hedge of Garden Privet.

Figure 1 Baseline Habitats



The **western plot** (Photo Set 2) comprised a grazed paddock. Sheep were present in 2025, while horses grazed in 2023. Consequently, the sward was nibbled within a centimetre at most. The sward was dominated by arable productive grasses with a scattered distribution of forbs, including Nettles, Prickly Sow-thistle, Creeping Thistle, Broad-leaved Dock and Broad-leaved Plantain. The eastern boundary hedgerow comprised a native hedge with trees, mainly Ash and Sycamore.

Adjacent Habitats: The site is surrounded by low-intensity residential development with some new builds. There is a caravan park and a caravan storage facility. There is arable farmland and permanent grassland beyond the immediate residential zone.

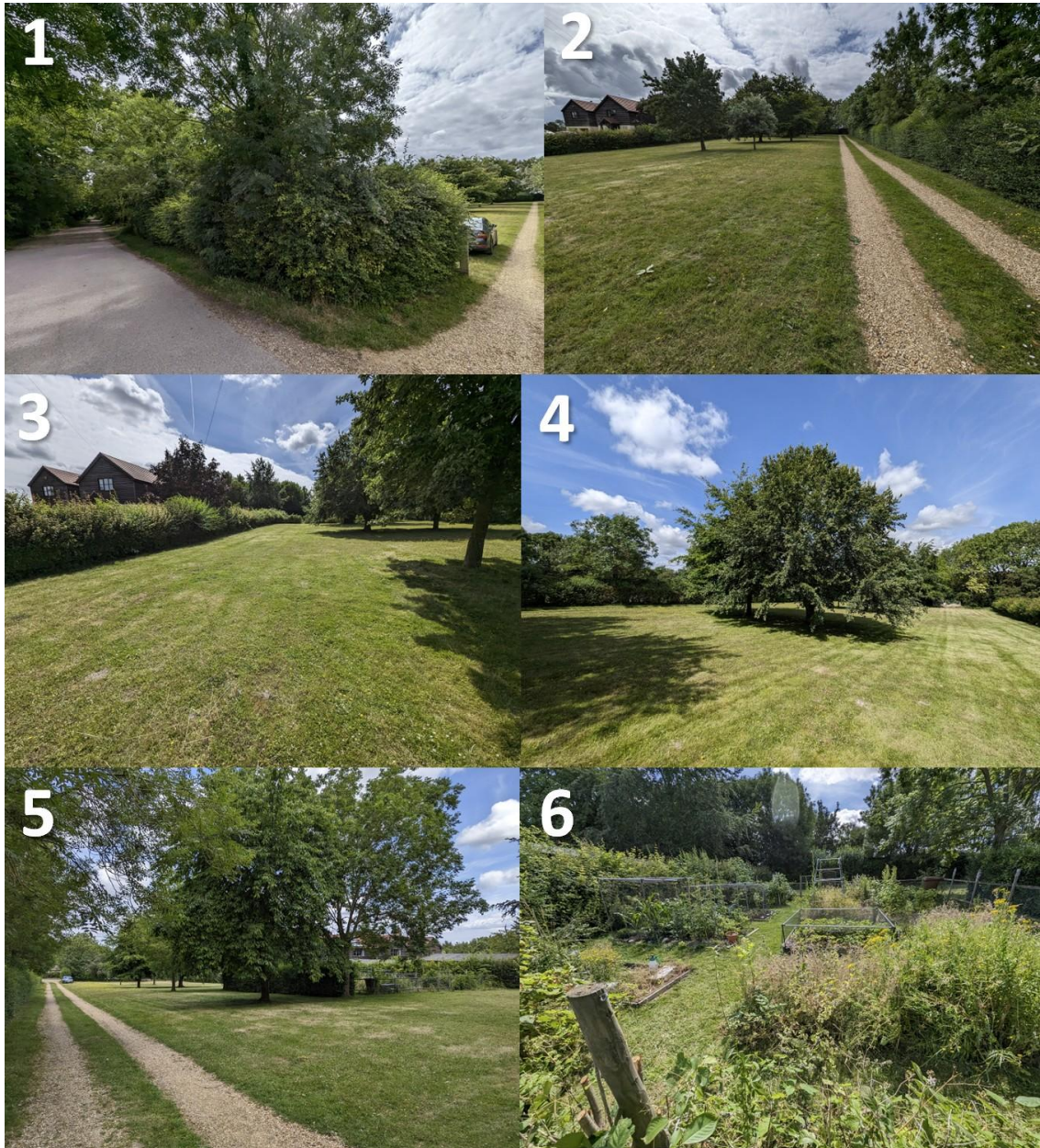
4.4 Protected and Notable Species Scoping Survey

4.4.1 Bats

No evidence of bat roost potential was observed in any trees, and the site is considered unsuitable for bat roosts. The Site offered moderate suitability for bat foraging and commuting based on the presence of small trees and shrubs. No further survey effort is

required to identify potential risks to these behaviours, which can be readily anticipated based on knowledge of similar sites (location, habitats, connectivity, and scale).

Photograph Set 1 – Eastern Plot: **1** – Native hedgerow along road frontage. **2** – Site interior with access track, grassland with trees. **3** – East edge with boundary hedgerow. **4** – Site interior looking north. **5** – Interior looking north along access track with vegetative area on the right. **6** – Vegetative growing area.



4.4.2 Other species

There was no evidence of other protected or notable (s41) species and no suitability to support these species.

Birds - Widespread bird species are likely to nest and forage within the boundary habitats. The proposed enhancements and new hedgerow and tree planting would readily offset any potential impacts arising from the works upon nesting utility.

Hedgehog – No evidence of Hedgehog utilisation was recorded. There are very few recent local records. Changes in vegetation are unlikely to have any detrimental impact on the ability of a small residual Hedgehog population to forage.

Photograph Set 2 – Western Plot: **7** – Road frontage. **8** – Site in 2023 when grazed by horses. **9** – Condition of the paddock before sheep grazing. **10** – Western boundary fence. **11** – Eastern boundary hedgerow since sheep grazing. **12** – Close-up of the grassland sward.



5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Designated Conservation Sites

The proposed redevelopment is not close enough or of sufficient scale to raise risks to local sites or more distant international sites of conservation value.

5.2 Potential Impacts on Biodiversity

Potential impacts on protected and NERC s41 species are negligible. Risks arising from increased light spill and loss of nesting habitat may arise and should be avoided, mitigated or compensated in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. Other potential low-level risks during construction will also be eliminated by adopting a Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS).

5.3 Ecological Evaluation

The site has been assigned an ecological value at the site level, i.e., it functions within its own setting but offers no more than low ecological value.

5.4 Further Ecological Surveys

The nature of potential impacts is fully understood, and consequently, no further ecological surveys are required.

5.5 Opportunities for Biodiversity Enhancement

The proposals will incorporate new opportunities to enhance biodiversity for roosting bats, nesting birds, invertebrates, and Hedgehogs through retained access corridors.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS)

PWMS applies immediately before and during construction. Therefore, a copy of this report should be kept on-site throughout clearance and construction work. All site operatives should be made aware of its contents as they relate to the tasks they are undertaking. Additionally, the contact details of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) should be available in case advice is required during the operations.

6.1.1 Protected Species and Nesting Birds

Construction personnel will conduct a brief site walkover and check excavations each day before work commences to ensure no protected species have entered the site overnight.

At any time, if protected species are found during site clearance, demolition, or construction, work will stop, and the SQE will be contacted immediately for advice. Protected species should not be handled unless they are an immediate and unavoidable danger*. If this arises, the SQE should be contacted immediately. The animal should then

be secured in an escape-proof, ventilated container and stored in a shady location before being released by the ecologist. [*Bats should only be handled with gloves so as not to injure the animal, but also to avoid being bitten.]

All bird species are offered protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) when nesting or preparing nests (typically, but not exclusively, between March and August inclusive). As such, vegetation removal should be done outside the breeding bird season (September-February inclusive) to avoid disturbing or destroying active nests. Should this time frame be unfeasible, it is recommended that, before commencing work, a nesting bird check be carried out by the SQE (which is recommended year-round). If active nests are observed, vegetation/structures must be left alone until the SQE is satisfied that the young have successfully fledged.

6.1.2 Site Clearance

Broadly, timing restrictions are not necessary for work on the building if pre-commencement checks are conducted. Therefore, checks for protected species and nesting birds will be conducted before dismantling or altering buildings. Where structures have crevices or holes, they should be checked before demolition using a torch to ensure that bats and nesting birds are not present. The checks will be carried out by the personnel responsible for the work. Request support from the SQE if necessary.

During debris clearance and timber and rubble pile removal, care should be taken to check these areas before moving to ensure that wildlife is not seeking refuge. Loose material piles should be dismantled manually rather than mechanically. It is advisable to bring only building products intended for use on the day and store them on site. If building products need to be stored on-site (e.g., overnight or for a few days), they should be stored on pallets or in bags on pallets to prevent the creation of refuges that attract wildlife. Where possible, building products should be placed on hard standings.

All excavations created during construction (e.g., for foundations or services) should be filled in and finished on the same day to avoid leaving any traps into which animals might fall. If this is unavoidable, then an escape route is provided overnight from the hole, which can be in the form of a wooden plank cut into the bank to provide a ramp, or the hole is entirely covered by a heavy sheet or slab flush to the surrounding ground and without holes at the sides to exclude wildlife from crawling beneath. If in doubt, pile soil along the slab's edges to seal the edges.

Security and work floodlighting should be used only where necessary to avoid potential detrimental impacts on commuting bats during construction. These lights should not continuously illuminate boundary vegetation at night. The principles outlined below, as set out in the Institute of Lighting Professionals' Guidance Note, should also be applied to lighting during the construction phase.

6.2 **Mitigation – New Lighting**

There should be no additional light spillage onto the surrounding boundary habitats to avoid detrimental lighting impacts on bats and nocturnal wildlife using the site. Lighting should be kept to the minimum required for safety and security and used only where needed. The following measures should be implemented within the lighting scheme:

- New column-mounted luminaires, lighting bollards, and wall-mounted luminaires should be selected, sited, and angled so they do not spill unnecessary light onto areas without illumination.
- Ensure new LED luminaires have dimming capability, a warm white spectrum (ideally less than 2700 K, but below 3500 K) with peak wavelengths higher than 550 nm, and no UV output.
- Security lamps should use a trigger (e.g., passive infrared detector) and switch off after a short period (ideally 1-2 minutes) rather than remaining on all night.

Further guidance is available in "Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK" (ILP 2023).

6.3 Enhancement Opportunities

6.3.1 Proposed Enhancements

The proposals will include habitat features proportionate to the scale of development and those which deliver meaningful benefits. Full details should be subject to a Biodiversity Enhancement Scheme (BES), conditioned upon approval.

For a four-dwelling development, up to six wall-integrated nest/roost boxes (suitable for colonial nesting species) will be provided, subject to the feasibility of establishing suitable locations that avoid nuisance while meeting the ecological requirements of the targeted species. Additionally, the scheme will include insect boxes, Hedgehog access corridors and landscape proposals including wildlife-beneficial planting.

7 REFERENCES

- Collins, J. (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th Ed. London: The Bat Conservation Trust.
- Institution of Lighting Professionals (2023). *Bats and artificial lighting in the UK*. Guidance Note 08/23.

A1 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

A1.1 Protected and Notable Species and Habitats

A1.1.1 European Protected Species (bats, great crested newts, otters, dormice, and others)

This information is intended only as guidance, and the relevant Acts should be referred to for the correct legal wording.

European Protected Species (EPS) are protected under the EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats and Species Directive). This legislation is enacted under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (the 2017 Regulations). Therefore, works that impact EPS will likely require a Natural England licence.

Broadly, it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly/deliberately injure, take, or kill a bat (or other EPS).
- To possess a bat (unless obtained legally), alive or dead.
- Intentionally or recklessly/deliberately damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that bats (or other EPS) use for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not.
- Intentionally or recklessly/deliberately disturbs a bat (or other EPS) while occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection.
- Deliberately disturb bats (or other EPS) in such a way as to be likely to affect significantly:
 - i. The ability of any significant group to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young
 - ii. The local distribution or abundance of that species.

Prosecution could result in imprisonment, fines of £5,000 per animal affected and confiscation of vehicles and equipment used.

A European Protected Species Licence is required before any development that might impact bats and their roosts or other EPS. An EPS licence could be required for (relevant examples):

- Demolition of a building known to be used by bats prior to the development of a site.
- When removing trees or pruning out features in which bats roost.
- When undertaking significant alterations to roof voids used by bats.

Exemptions can be granted from the protection afforded to bats under the Habitat Regulations by means of an EPS (European Protected Species) Habitats Regulations licence obtained from Natural England (NE).

Three tests must be satisfied before a licence can permit otherwise prohibited acts. In this case, only Regulation 53(2)(e) is relevant for preserving public health or safety, or for other overriding public-interest reasons. This includes social or economic ones, with beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment.

This is subject to Natural England's satisfaction that the application additionally meets:

- Regulation 53(9)(a) that there is no satisfactory alternative.
- Regulation 53(3)(b) that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the species concerned at favourable conservation status in their natural range.

A1.1.2 UK Protected Species (including EPS species, badgers, water voles, barn owls, reptiles, etc.)

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) through inclusion in Schedule 5. The offences under this Act, which cover the obstruction of places used for shelter or protection, disturbance, and sale, still apply to European Protected Species.

In England and Wales, the WCA is amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), which adds an additional offence ('or recklessly') to S9(4)(a) and (b)), makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions and increases penalties.

Other species receive protection at a national level, usually against injury and killing, but it may also include the destruction of a resting place, collection, and sale (the latter may also apply to selected named plants). The more common reptile species have partial protection and are also Species of Principal Importance (SPI).

Certain species are protected under other national legislation, e.g., the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which gives special protection against harm to badgers or their setts.

A1.1.3 Biodiversity Species and Habitats

Some species and habitats that do not merit national protection are nevertheless threatened or endangered at a more localised scale — usually at the county level — or have undergone rapid decline. These are listed on the UK Species/Habitats of Principal Importance (S41) list or county (Local) Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and are part of the NPPF lower tier.

A1.1.4 Birds - General

All nesting birds are protected under Section 1(1)(b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (*ibid*). It is an offence to: “... *intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.*”

Consequently, no scrub, tree clearance, or management should be undertaken during the nesting season unless works are first carried out to make the habitats unsuitable, or a detailed examination before clearance starts declares the area free. The nesting season is generally between mid-March and August if second broods are present, but warm seasons may extend this period to February-September.

A1.2 **Planning**

A1.2.1 General

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG 2024) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development and to minimise impacts, and to provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features that support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

In addition, it seeks to promote the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks, the protection and recovery of priority species, and the identification and pursuit of opportunities to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (OPSI 2006) (section 40(1)) states that: “*Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.*”

A1.2.2 Species/Habitats of Principal Importance and Biodiversity

A list of species and habitats of principal importance (SPI & HPI) has been produced to aid in assessing and evaluating biodiversity impacts. Natural England has produced standing advice (*Purpose and use of the England Biodiversity List*) regarding SPI as follows:

The England Biodiversity List has been developed to meet the requirements of Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). This legislation requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species of flora and fauna, and habitats, considered to be of principal importance for conserving biodiversity. The S41 list will be used to *guide* decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 “*to have regard*” to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions (author’s italics).

