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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

17 Bedford Road, Ickleford, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3XH

Client:

Prime Properties Partners Ltd

Survey date:

28th July 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with North Hertfordshire District Council. The proposal is described as:
Demolition of one outbuilding and creation of one dwelling.

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

Site Location and Context			
The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference TL1771031368 and has an area of approximately 0.027ha.			
The site comprises a portion of grassland which was previously apart of a residential dwelling. The site is now surrounded by wooden fencing, with an outbuilding and a small portion of grassland. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings with Bedford Road to the West and Ryder Avenue to the south. The wider landscape comprises arable fields with hedgerows to the north and west with built-up areas of Hitchin to the south and east.			
Survey Details			
The site survey was undertaken by Rhiannon Jensen O'Brien BSc (Hons), MSc, Consultant Ecologist with two years' experience. Natural England GCN licence number- 2024-12480-CL08-GCN, Bat Licence Number: 2024-12554-CL17-BAT and qualifying member of CIEEM.			
The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.			
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)
28/07/2025	22	55	80
			Wind (mph)
			7
			Rain
			None
Survey limitations			
It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the searches of historical biological records.			
A biological records data search has not been undertaken. However, given the location of the site, the nature of the habitats present and the assessed suitability of the site for protected or notable species, it is not anticipated that the purchase of biological records data will add any significant weight or alter the conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report.			
An interior inspection of B1 was not completed as access could not be granted, however the interior could be viewed from the windows to help identify materials. In addition the exterior appeared well sealed with a lack of access opportunities thus an full interior inspection is not considered to change the outcomes of the report.			
Executive Summary			
- A biodiversity net gain assessment is required. - Precautionary working methods are recommended for reptiles, foraging and commuting bats and terrestrial mammals.			

Ecological Factor	Survey	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plan in appendix 3).		
Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).		
Summary of Survey Findings	On-site habitat descriptions	
(UKHab codes used)	u1b5 – <u>Buildings</u> There is 1 building on-site. g4 – <u>Modified grassland</u> The site comprises a recently unmanaged area of grass, the site was previously part of an adjacent residential garden since approximately 2023. The garden has since been fenced off and is not connected to any residential property. The sward is relatively low at approximately 20cm. The grassland does not appear damaged and bare ground is low. Species include abundant cocks foot, frequent false oat grass, occasional yarrow, cats ear, white clover, common nettle, rare bristly oxtongue creeping buttercup, creeping thistle, ribwort plantain, poppy, field bindweed, herb Robert, creeping cinquefoil dock and self heal. Some shrubs are located along the northern boundary including rose, cherry and pine.	
<u>Modified grassland condition assessment</u>		

	A) There are less than 6 species per m2. While a large number of species were found to be present species listed as rare were present in a small group or very infrequently, thus within a metre square approximately 4-5 species were present. B) Sward height is varied C) There is less than 20% scrub D) There is less than 5% damage E) Bare ground is between 1-10% F) There is no bracken G) No invasive plant species are present. Score: poor – passes 6 criteria excluding essential criterion A. Local notable habitats Local notable habitats within 2km of the site include: • Deciduous woodland located 250m north • Lowland meadows located 800m south-west • Coastal floodplain and grazing marsh located 1km east • Lowland fen located 1.7km north
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site habitats The proposed development will result in the loss of grassland. This is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. Notable habitats No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site habitats Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution must be implemented during construction. Notable habitats None. Biodiversity net gain The Environment Act (2021) requires all developments (excluding exemptions) to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity. This is mandatory for larger developments and comes into force for smaller developments on 2nd April 2024. Therefore, the planning

	application must be accompanied by a landscaping/habitat creation and enhancement strategy, biodiversity net gain calculations and a habitat management and monitoring plan to ensure the proposed development delivers a 10% net gain.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	On-site designations The site is not subject to any designation. Statutory designated sites (within 2km) There are 2 statutory sites within 2km of the site: <u>Oughtonhead Common LNR</u> – located 400m south 'a wide variety of habitats with the river Oughton alongside the common' <u>Oughtonhead Lane SSSI</u>- located 1.5km south Designated for its geological value. The site lies within the impact risk zone for Oughtonhead Lane SSSI the proposed development is not listed as a possible high risk for this designation. Non-statutory designated sites The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC).
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site designations No impacts foreseen. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site designations None required. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	

Summary of Survey Findings	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.			
Foreseen Impacts	N/A			
Recommendations	No further surveys but remain vigilant.			
Invertebrates				
Summary of Survey Findings	The habitats present on-site are likely to provide common invertebrates with opportunities to forage and shelter. The site contains no further notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.			
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.			
Recommendations	No further surveys.			
Bats				
Summary of Survey Findings	EPSL data A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the licence or will relocate to other known roosts sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There are 2 EPSLs within a 2km radius of site as detailed below:			
	EPSL reference	Bat species affected	Distance from site	Impacts allowed by licence
	EPSM2012-5071	Common pipistrelle	300m south	Destruction of a resting place
	2016-21240-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle	1.6km south	Destruction of a resting place
Foraging and commuting habitat The grassland onsite can provide low value foraging and commuting opportunities for bats, however due to the extent of these habitats they are not assessed to provide a significant resource within the landscape.				
Roosting habitat Buildings and trees to be impacted by the proposed development are assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats below. There is one building onsite. No evidence of roosting bats was identified on or around B1.				
B1 Building description				Photographs

<i>Summary</i> B1 is an outbuilding comprising wooden weatherboarding exterior and a flat roof containing bitumen felt and lead flashing. The fascia and doors are wooden and the windows are uPVC. The wooden weatherboarding appears in good condition with no gaps or cracks. The eaves are open but well sealed with no gaps that can provide interior access. The bitumen felt along the roof edge is also well sealed. The windows and doors are in good condition. The interior could not be accessed however could be viewed from windows, as the building is well sealed on the exterior and there is a lack of voids present it is considered unlikely the building is used by void dwelling bats. It is considered unlikely that a full interior inspection would change the outcomes of the report. The building will be demolished. The building has negligible habitat value.				
Feature	Materials	Condition/description/suitability	Photograph(s)	

Walls	Wooden weatherboarding	Condition/description Good condition. Suitability/access/evidence of bats No gaps for bats.		
Roof	Bitumen and lead flashing	Condition/description Good condition. Suitability/access/evidence of bats No gaps for bats.		
Eaves	timber	Condition/description Good condition. Suitability/access/evidence of bats No access or roosting opportunities for bats.		

Internal voids	Wooden boarding	Condition/description The interior could not be accessed however was viewed from windows around the building. The interior is boarded with no interior lining. There are no loft spaces present. Suitability/access/evidence of bats The lack of suitable voids and surrounding windows increases lux levels in the interior reducing suitability for bats. In addition the building is well sealed thus there are no apparent points of access for bats.	
Foreseen Impacts		Roosting habitat [Buildings] Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within this building and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats in this location as a result of the proposed development. Foraging and commuting habitat The proposed development will result in the loss of small areas of grassland but given their low value and the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, this is likely to be inconsequential for bats. Artificial lighting The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained building without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.	

	The proposal could provide additional lighting impact foraging and commuting routes, however given the presence of existing lighting, and the light pollution of the surrounding residential area, this is not considered to be a significant impact.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Roosting habitat [Buildings] In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice. Foraging and commuting habitat No further surveys are required. Artificial lighting A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of a bat box at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat box will be incorporated into the fabric of the new dwelling. They will be suitable for pipistrelles (which have been identified locally through EPSL data). Suitable bat boxes include Integrated Eco Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box, WoodStone Beaumaris Bat Box or similar alternative brand. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Buildings No evidence of nesting birds was identified on or within B1. B1 is deemed to provide negligible habitat value for nesting birds due to a lack of suitable nesting sites or access points. Trees and vegetation The grassland is not a typical sward height or structure to be suitable for nesting birds. Barn owls The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls. Overwintering birds Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.

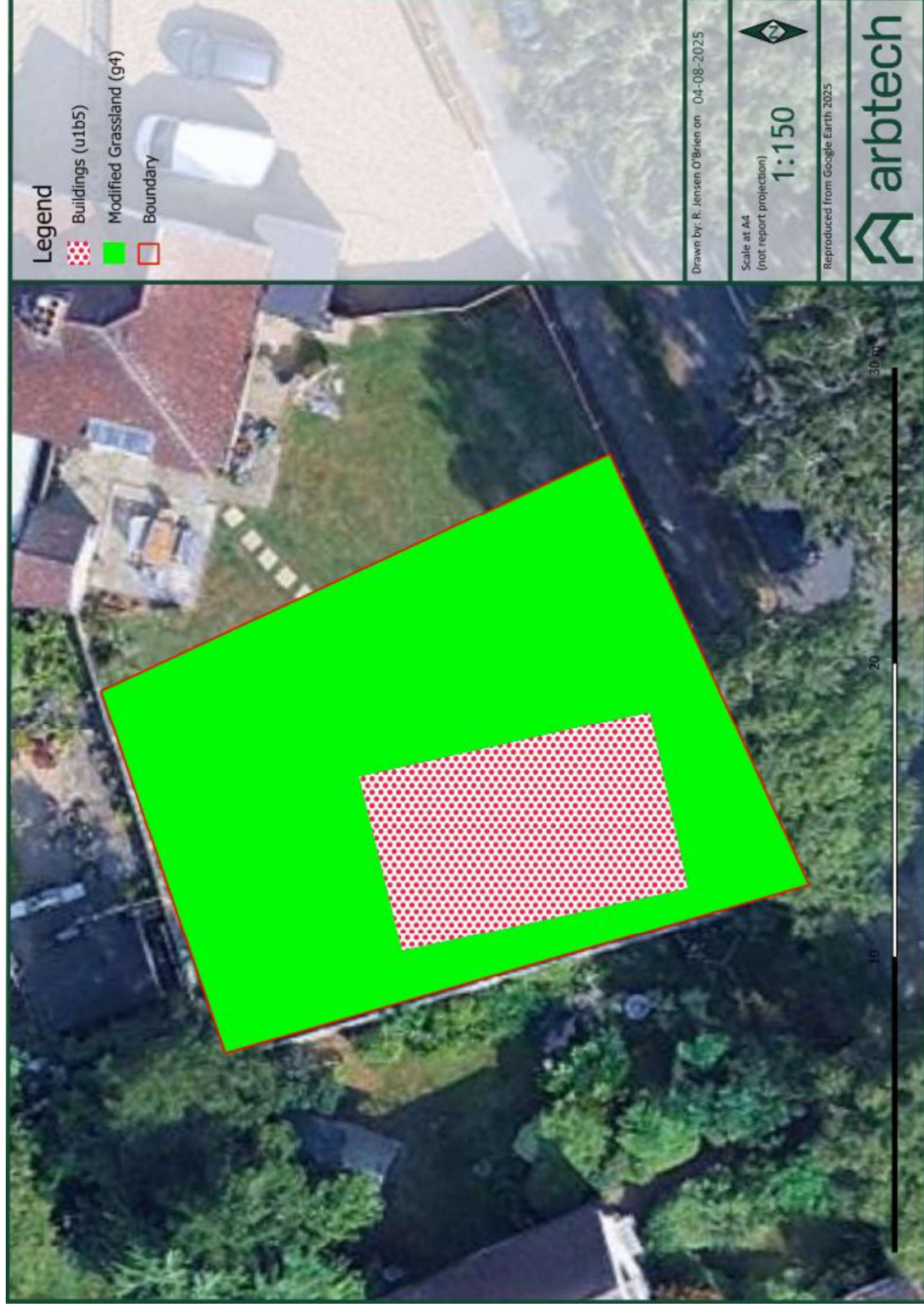
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Buildings/trees No impacts are anticipated on nesting birds as a result of the proposed development. Barn owls None foreseen. Overwintering birds None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Buildings/trees Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests in surrounding trees so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. Barn owls None required. Overwintering birds None required. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of a bird box integrated to the dwelling will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Woodstone Nest Box Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Nest Box Or a similar alternative brand. Tree boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole. Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of a building and can be incorporated into the fabric of the building during construction.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Habitat suitability The grassland with areas of taller sward can provide foraging and refuge opportunities for reptiles, however due to the extent of these habitats these are not assessed to provide a significant resource in the landscape. There is also some stored items within the grass which could provide basking and refuge. The site is surrounded by further residential areas providing similar opportunities for reptiles. Thus a small number of reptiles present on site cannot be discounted.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Although a small area of suitable habitat is being removed as part of the development, there is a low risk that a low number of reptiles could be present in the vicinity of the works. These could be injured or killed without mitigation.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures: • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any reptiles to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter reptiles from the working area. • Stored items should be removed or dismantled by hand. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advise must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL and survey data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for great crested newts within 2km of the site. Further, no positive class survey licence return or DLL historic survey data (2017 – 2019) were present within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability There are no ponds on the site, but a review of aerial imagery (MAGIC and OS Maps) indicates the presence of a singular pond within 500m; the pond (P1) is located ~400m southwest of the site and is situated on the far side of multiple roads. This landscape feature is likely to represent a significant barrier to dispersal due to heavy traffic flow and high kerbs along the road, eliminating connectivity to the site for great crested newts. Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds, the presence of great crested newts on site is considered unlikely. However, common amphibians may still be present within suitable areas of habitat on-site as they can travel great distances from ponds. Areas of shrubbery may provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for amphibians. No hibernation opportunities were identified on-site. Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds within 500m of the site, the presence of GCN on-site is considered unlikely and therefore impacts to amphibians as a result of the proposed development are deemed to be acceptably low. Common amphibians will benefit from the precautionary working methods outlined for reptiles.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	
<i>Recommendations</i>	
Badger	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No badger setts were noted on site or within a 30m radius of the site. The site is considered unsuitable for badgers given the lack of suitable sett excavation areas/ground. Further, there is limited suitable badger foraging habitat on site given the lack of fruiting trees/scrub. The site is surrounded by wooden fencing with no push throughs, limiting access for badgers. The site is also surrounded by urban development (i.e. roads and buildings), which is sub-optimal habitat therefore reducing the likelihood of badgers being present within the surrounding area of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on badgers as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for otters or water voles within 2km of the site. There are no water courses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability Dormice typically utilise a three-dimensional habitat structure as to commute between feeding and breeding sites whilst avoiding predation. As such habitats on site are considered unsuitable for hazel dormice and therefore the likelihood of this species being present on site is considered acceptably low.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The habitats onsite provide foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs, with suitable opportunities in the surrounding landscape.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Grassland will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.

	• The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs: • Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities. • Creation of brash piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas. • Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site.
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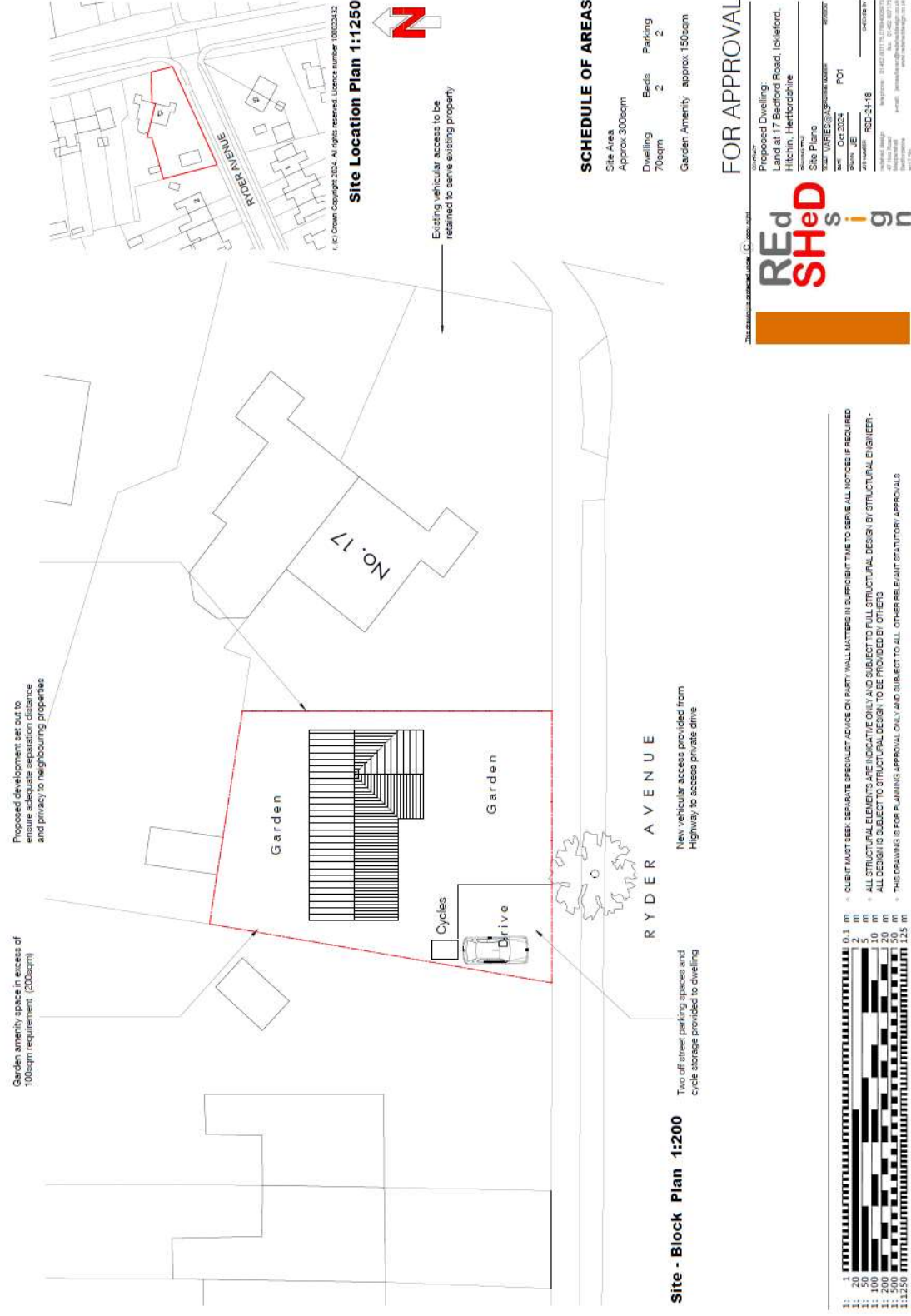
Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Proposed plan



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Version control			
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Final	1.0	Rhiannon Jensen O'Brien BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist	04/08/2025