LIZARD

Landscape Design and Ecology

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Q Leisure, The Old Sand Pit, London Road, Albourne

On behalf of: The Padel Club Ltd

	The Padel Club Ltd			
	Q Leisure, The Old Sand Pit, London Road, Albourne			
	LLD3538-ECO-REP-001-00-PEA			
00	19/06/25	Angus Cairncross (Bsc)	Catherine O'Reilly MCIEEM	Catherine O'Reilly MCIEEM

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Validity:

This report is valid for 18 months from the date of the site visit. If works have not commenced by this date, an updated site visit should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the habitats present on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

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SUMMARY

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology (LLDE) has been commissioned by The Padel Club Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Q Leisure, The Old Sand Pit, London Road, Albourne (located around central grid reference: TQ 2691 1540 – hereafter referred to as 'the site'). This report presents the results of an initial scoping survey which was undertaken on the 14th of May 2025 to evaluate the existing ecological resources within and adjacent to the site, to highlight any potential ecological constraints and opportunities to inform scheme design, and to identify the need for further assessment prior to application, where required.

It is understood that the proposals are to build 6 paddle courts and remove 2no. existing buildings on site, providing guest facilities.

The 0.24ha site is predominately hardstanding, with a small area of modified grassland and artificial unsealed surface. More ecologically valuable habitats of treelines, woodland and scrub can be found adjacent and within the wider landscape.

The site potentially supports habitat for amphibians, reptiles, bats, birds, badgers, invertebrates and other small mammals. While most impacts can be mitigated through reasonable avoidance measures, at least one bat survey is required on each building, given that the scale of works shall result in high levels of disturbance or destruction of any bat roosts, should they be present. As protected species are a material planning consideration, necessary surveys must be completed before determination.

Due to the scale of development and intervening distance to statutory designated sites, no detrimental impacts are expected.

Table No. 01 - Summary of Recommendations

[redacted]		
Bats	1no. bat emergence survey of B01 and B02.	May - August
Reptiles & amphibians	Removal of any grassland directionally away from astro-pitches.	Mid-March – October inclusive
[redacted]		N/A

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology (LLDE) has been commissioned by The Padel Club Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Q Leisure, The Old Sand Pit, London Road, Albourne (located around central grid reference: TQ 2691 1540 – hereafter referred to as 'the site').

1.2 The purpose of this report is to establish the site's suitability for development, inform the design process for future proposals, record the ecological baseline and identify key potential ecological constraints and opportunities associated with future development proposals. This report has been prepared with due consideration for existing best practice guidance (CIEEM, 2017) (BSI, 2013) and aims to provide general advice on ecological constraints associated with development of the site. The report includes recommendations for further assessment where necessary. It is not intended that this report should be submitted with a planning application for development of the site, unless supported by the results of further surveys and a detailed assessment of the effects of the proposed development.

Site Information

1.3 The site covers an area of c. 0.24 ha and consists of a roughly rectangular shaped plot. It is comprised of predominately hardstanding, including a gravel path, 2no. buildings and an astroturf court, with surrounding grassland. Adjacent habitats include scrub, grassland and trees.

Surrounding Landscape

1.4 The site is located within a rural setting c. 3.65km east of Hassocks, c. 12km southwest of Haywards Heath and c. 15km from Brighton and Hove. There is good connection to surrounding towns and villages via the A23. The overall surrounds are predominately arable fields, small patches of woodland, and scattered patches of human infrastructure.

Development Proposals

1.5 It is understood that the proposals are to build 6 paddle courts and renovate 2no. existing buildings on site, providing guest facilities.

2.0 SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

2.1 In accordance with current guidance (CIEEM, 2017), the aim of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been to:

- Identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project;
- Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required, following the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' (BSI, 2013);
- Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA); and
- Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was consulted for information regarding the location of waterbodies, priority habitats, statutory designated sites and existing wildlife mitigation licences, within a potential zone of influence of the site. Additionally, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) website was consulted for information regarding the location of non-statutory designated areas, and satellite imagery and historic mapping was used to inform an assessment of the recent land use changes and habitat types within the area. The following potential zones of Influence's have been used for the following potential ecological receptors during the desk study assessment:

Table No. 02 – Zones of Influences for Ecological Receptors

0.5km	• Ponds, ditches and other water bodies.
2.0km	• Priority Habitats (UKBAP) (NERC, 2006); • European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs); • Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); • National Nature Reserves; • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); and • Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) / Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).
10.0km	• Special Protection Areas (SPAs); • potential Special Protection Areas (pSPAs); • Ramsars (Wetlands of International Importance); • proposed Ramsars (pRamsar); • Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and • possible Special Areas of Conservation (pSACs).
12.0km	• Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and possible Special Areas of Conservation (pSACs) designated for supporting Annex II bat species.

3.1.2 Given the quantum of development proposed / broad low ecological value of the site and the surrounding area, a local biological records centre search has not been provided. This is an approach in line with current guidance (CIEEM, 2020).

3.1.3 The Local Planning Authority website was consulted to inform of additional relevant information to this assessment, including local development plan policies in relation to ecology and biodiversity (see *Appendix A – Planning Policy and Legislation*) as well as any Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) etc.

3.2 Field Survey

3.2.1 The field survey was undertaken on 14th of May 2025 by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (Angus Cairncross, Bsc). Weather conditions were warm (c.17°C), with a moderate wind (Beaufort Scale 2), and 20% cloud cover

3.2.2 The field survey comprised a walkover inspection of the site, immediately adjacent land and boundaries features, in which ecological features were noted and mapped in accordance with principles of the UKHabs-Professional Classification System (UKHabs Ltd., 2023). A minimum mapping unit of 25m^2 / 5m length was used and habitats were identified to at least level 4 wherever practicable. Habitat categories were slightly amended to be consistent with those used as part of Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.

3.2.3 A list of plant species noted was compiled, together with an estimate of relative abundance made according to the DAFOR scale. In addition, Target Notes were used to provide supplementary information where necessary on any features encountered which were notable, relevant to the assessment or too small to map.

3.3 Evaluation of Ecological Features

3.3.1 An assessment was made to determine the likely importance of any flora / habitats present, as well as determining whether any qualified as being of conservation merit, such as those listed as habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (NERC, 2006). Likely importance was determined in reference to a predefined geographical frame of reference, as laid out in *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment* (CIEEM, 2022), this was assessed in accordance with the accordance with the criteria outlined below:

Table No. 03 – Likely Importance Assessment Criteria

Negligible	Of no notable ecological value.
Site	Ecologically valuable within the context of the site
Local	Ecologically valuable within the context of the immediate surrounds, i.e., c. 1km^2
District	Ecologically valuable within the context of the wider surrounds / LPA district, i.e., c. 10km^2
County	Ecologically valuable within the context of the wider county, i.e., c. 100km^2
Regional	Of ecological value within the region, i.e., south east, south west, midlands etc.
National	Of ecological value within the context of the United Kingdom, such as a SSSIs, NNR's etc.
International	Ecological value of global significance, such as SACs, SPAs etc.

3.3.2 Habitats within and adjacent to the site were assessed to determine their potential to support protected and notable fauna. This assessment was based on professional judgment and experience, with due consideration to industry standard best practice guidance for the relevant taxa, as laid out in the table below. The possible presence of each taxon was summarised as either negligible, low, moderate, high or confirmed.

Table No. 04 – Habitat Suitability Assessment References

Great Crested Newts	*Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook* (Langton *et al*, 2001) & *Evaluating the Suitability of Habitat for the Great Crested Newt* (Oldham *et al,* 2000)
Reptiles	*Herpetofauna Workers' Manual* (Gent and Gibson, 2003)
Bats	*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)* (Collins, 2023)
Dormice	*The Dormice Conservation Handbook* (English Nature, 2006)
[redacted]	
Water Vole	*The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook* (Dean *et al,* 2016)
Birds	*Guidance for Bird Surveys in Relation to Development* (NE, 2022)
Invertebrates	*Considering Terrestrial Invertebrates in Preliminary Ecological Appraisals* (Jukes, 2021) and *Organising Surveys to Determine Site Quality for Invertebrates* (English Nature, 2005)

3.3.3 Photographs were taken as evidence and to illustrate any notable ecological features on site. These have been provided within the body of the relevant parts of the Results section, where appropriate.

3.4 Daytime Bat Walkover Survey

3.4.1 A Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) survey was undertaken as part of the field survey assessment by the suitably experienced surveyor (Angus Cairncross, Accredited Agent under 2016-20460-CLS-CLS).

3.4.2 The Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) survey entailed a slow walkover of the site, during which time the surveyor identified any structures, trees and other features that could be suitable for bats to roost in, and any habitats which could be suitable for bats to commute, forage or swarm in.

3.4.3 During this survey any direct evidence of bats was searched for and recorded, such as grease marks, urine stains, bat droppings, feeding remains and dead / live bats. Furthermore, any structures or trees which offered features with the potential to support bats were noted. For trees this included the identification of features typically associated with decay, such as, but not limited to, cracks, crevices and holes naturally formed by trees. For structures this included the identification of features such as, but not limited to, slipped, missing or uneven tiles, gaps around the soffit / barge board and raised flashing etc.

3.4.4 All suitable bat habitat was assessed in accordance best practice criteria (Collins, 2023), which is outlined herein. During the survey all trees within and immediately adjacent to the site were assessed using the following criteria:

Table No. 05 – Criteria for Assessing the Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees

None	Either no potential roosting features in the tree, or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if potential roosting features are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one potential roosting feature present.

3.4.5 If it was possible to adequately assess a Potential Roosting Feature (PRF) from ground level then this was completed, and the feature classified as either:

- **PRF-I**: Feature only suitable for individual or very small numbers of bats, either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitat; or
- **PRF-M**: PRF is suitable for multiple bats and therefore has the potential to be used by a maternity colony.

3.4.6 Furthermore, all structures were assessed externally, and internally wherever possible for their potential to support bats, using the following criteria:

Table No. 06 – Criteria for Assessing the Bat Roosting Suitability of Structures

None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year.
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats. However, some small uncertainty remains, as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features occasionally.

Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of year. However, these do not provide enough shelter, space, protection, appropriate conditions or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
Moderate	A structure with one of more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status, irrespective of species conservation status.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat, with the potential to support high conservation status roosts irrespective of species conservation status.
Confirmed	Direct evidence of bats identified.

3.4.7 Finally, an assessment of the winter hibernation potential of the structures was made in consideration of the criteria used for assessing structures and trees, in combination with the potential presence of classic hibernation features, known roosts and suitability of habitat in the surrounds.

3.5 Great Crested Newts – Habitat Suitability Assessment

3.5.1 Any ponds identified within or adjacent to the site were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment to determine their suitability to support GCN, in line with current guidance (Oldham *et al*, 2000). The HSI is a numerical index, between 0 and 1 (0 representing completely unsuitable habitat and 1 representing optimal habitat), calculated based on the suitability of 10 calculable indices.

3.5.2 HSI assessment is useful to aid in determining how suitable a given waterbody is for GCN, but it does not directly correlate with GCN presence or population numbers and serves as information only.

3.5.3 The 10 indices considered as part of the HSI assessment include geographic area, pond area, permanence of waterbody, water quality, shading, waterfowl presence, fish presence, number of ponds within 1.0km, suitability of terrestrial habitat and macrophyte cover, which were investigated during the field survey assessment.

[redacted]

3.7 Constraints and Limitations

3.7.1 Due to the field survey consisting of only one site visit, certain species, particularly some of the flowering plants, may not have been visible or may have been otherwise inconspicuous at the time of the survey and hence overlooked. These are accepted constraints associated with the UKHabs Survey Methodology.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Desk Study

Pond Study

4.1.1 5no. ponds were found within 500m of the site, based on OS mapping and satellite imagery.

Table No. 07 – Ponds within 500m of the site.

1	Large ornamental pond within Q leisure grounds.	c. 160m S
2	Small ornamental pond within Q leisure grounds.	c. 180m S
3	Within woodland	c. 300m W
4	Within private garden	c. 300m N
5	Within golf course	c. 465m SW

Priority Habitats

4.1.2 In accordance with the MAGIC dataset, within a 2.0km search radii of the site there were UKBAP Priority Habitats (NERC, 2006) of Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (much of which was ancient), Woodpasture and Parkland and Traditional Orchards.

European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) Search

4.1.3 1no. mitigation licence in relation to bats has been issued within 2.0km of the site for common pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bats: 2019-39268-EPS-MIT located c. 1.9km northwest.

Local Non-Statutory Designated Areas

4.1.4 No non-statutory designated areas were identified within 2.0km of the site.

Statutory Designated Sites

4.1.5 Statutory designated sites identified within a potential zone of influence of the site include:

Table No. 08 – Statutory Designated Sites

Wolstonbury Hill SSSI	The chalk downland of Wolstonbury Hill is rich in flowering plants and includes a number of uncommon species. Woodland is established in parts of the site.	c. 1.6km SE
None found		

4.1.6 The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of Wolstonbury Hill SSSI, however development proposals do not meet the criteria which would require the LPA to consult with Natural England regarding potential impacts.

4.2 Existing Habitat Assessment

Site Assessment

4.2.1 Habitats within and adjacent to the site include:

- Modified grassland
- Buildings
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface.

Modified grassland

4.2.2 The sward was c. 10 – 20 cm long at the time of the survey and dominated by grasses including red fescue *Festuca rubra* and perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne.* Forbs noted occasionally include common vetch *Vicia sativa* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens.* This habitat is of **site** value.

Photograph No: 1 – Eastern (left) and northern (right) aspects of grassland.

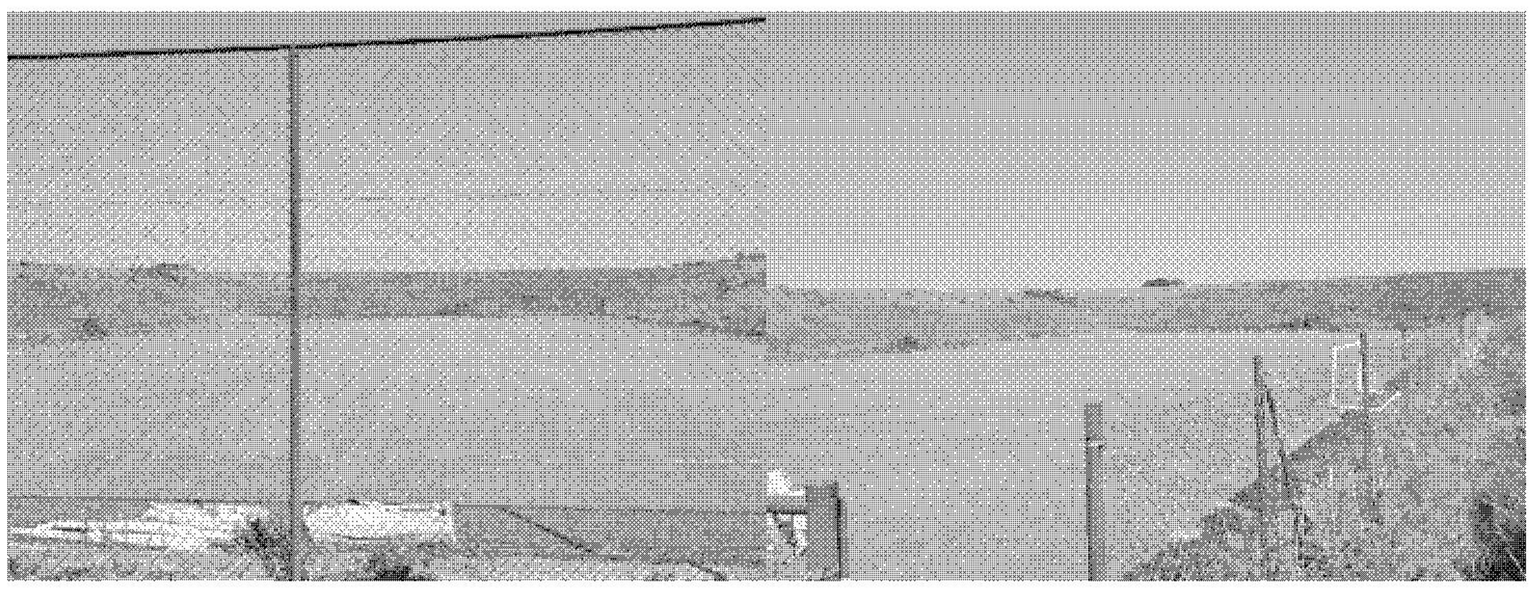
Buildings

4.2.3 There were two small wooden buildings on site, B02 was being used for go-kart storage and B01 was empty. This habitat is of **negligible** botanic value, however the value of the buildings for protected species is discussed further within section 4.3 below.

Photograph No: 2 – B02 (left) & B01 (right).

Developed land; sealed surface

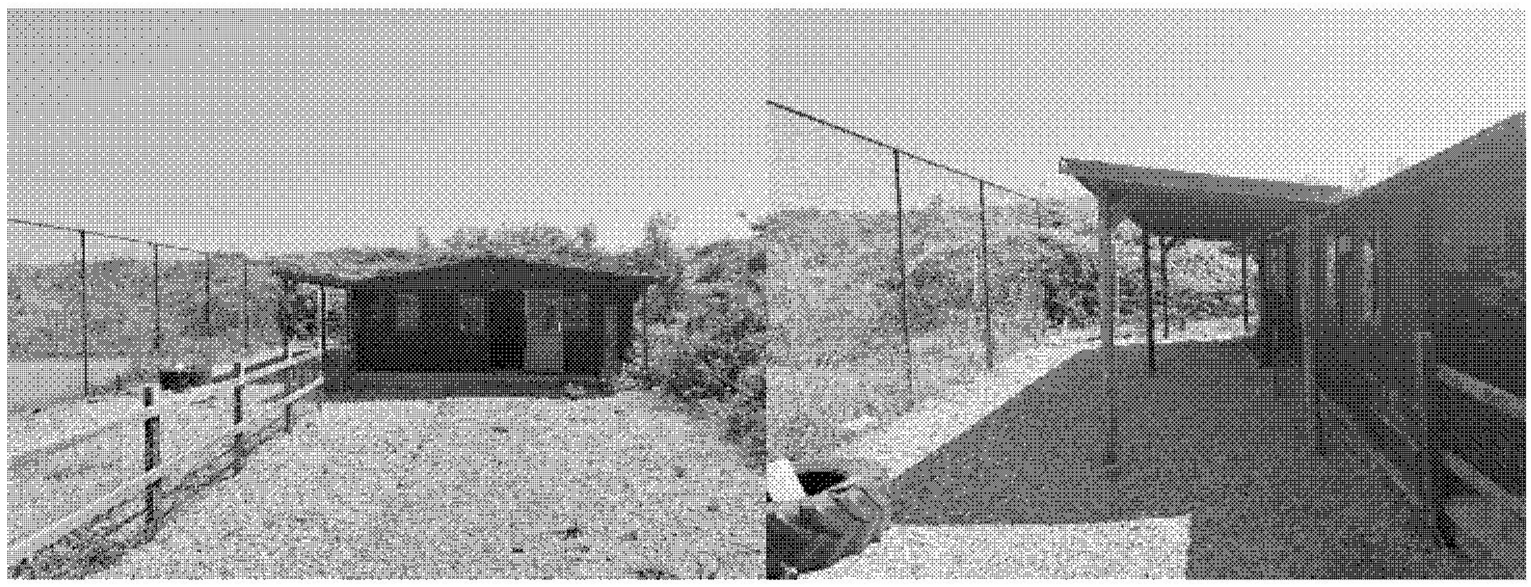
4.2.4 This comprised of an astroturf pitch. This habitat is of **negligible** value.



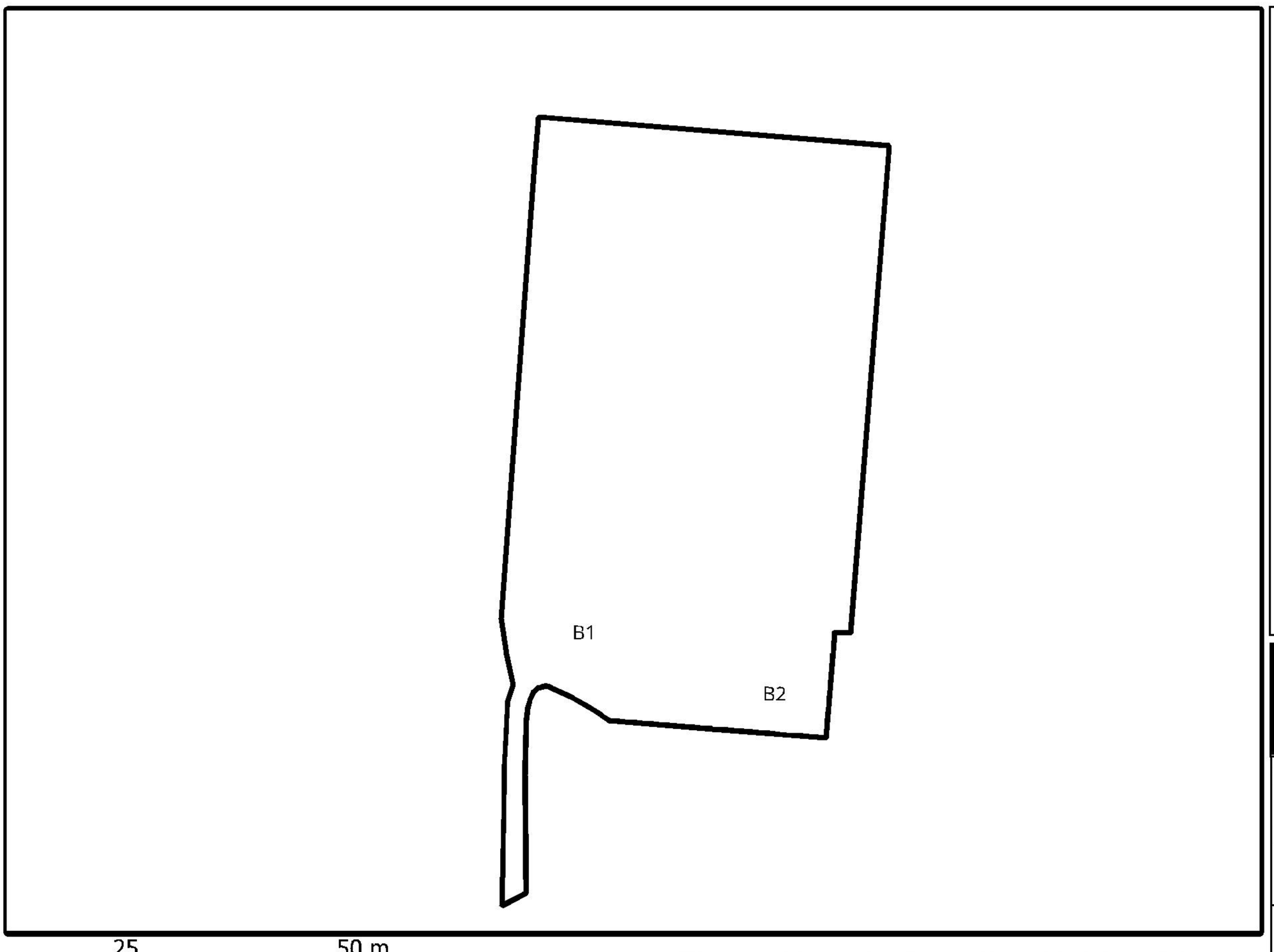
Photograph No: 3 – Astroturf pitch.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

4.2.5 Gravel / pebble path leading into the site and around the buildings. This habitat has **negligible** ecological value



Photograph No: 4 – Unsealed pebble surface.



25 50 m

1:600

Figure No. 01 - Baseline Habitat Plan

Legend

Red Line Boundary

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

Developed land; sealed surface

Modified grassland

Building

[redacted]

Client
The Padel Club Ltd

Project Title & Location
Q Leisure, The Old Sand Pit, London Road, Albourne

Drawn by	Approved by	Rev	Date
AC	CO	01	21/11/25

4.3 Invasive Species

4.3.1 No invasive species were observed on-site.

4.4 Protected and Notable Fauna - Likely Presence Assessment

Reptiles

Desk Study

4.4.1 Records of 4 no. species of reptiles were returned. Low numbers of adder *Vipera berus*, slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and grass snake *natrix helvetica* were found within a 2.0 km search radius.

Site Assessment

4.4.2 Reptiles require a mosaic of habitats to persist in a landscape, including vegetative cover for refuge opportunities, open areas for basking and a diverse flora to support viable invertebrate prey throughout the year. The grassland on-site could provide refuge and invertebrate prey, however the lack of open basking area, refugia and the small quantum of grassland reduce the suitability. The habitats are therefore considered to be of **low / moderate** suitability for reptile species.

Amphibians

Desk Study

4.4.3 Records of 5 no. species of amphibian were found within a 2.0km site area. Moderate numbers of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus,* common frog *Rana temporaria* and low numbers of common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* were returned.

Site Assessment

4.4.4 There was a small amount of rough grassland on-site that could provide terrestrial habitat for GCN. In addition, there are multiple ponds within 250m. However the site is under high levels of disturbance from the general public and there are major barriers for dispersal between the majority of ponds in the wider landscape. The HSI result was average for the closest pond on-site. It is therefore considered this species has a **low / moderate** likelihood of occurring on-site.

Table No. 09 – Summary of HSI Results

Location	1	Zone A
Pond Area	0.6	300m2
Permanence	0.9	Never dries
Water Quality	0.67	Moderate
Shade	1	60% cover
Waterfowl	0.67	Minor
Fish	0.33	Minor
Pond Count	0.8	2
Terrestrial Habitat	0.33	Poor
Macrophytes	0.7	40% cover
HSI Score	**0.66**	**Average**

Bats

Desk Study

4.4.5 Records of 9 no. species of bat were returned. Large numbers of serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, natterers *Myotis nattereri*, daubentons *Myotis daubentonii* and brown long eared *Plecotus auritus* and low numbers of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus,* noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* were found within a 2.0 km search radius.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

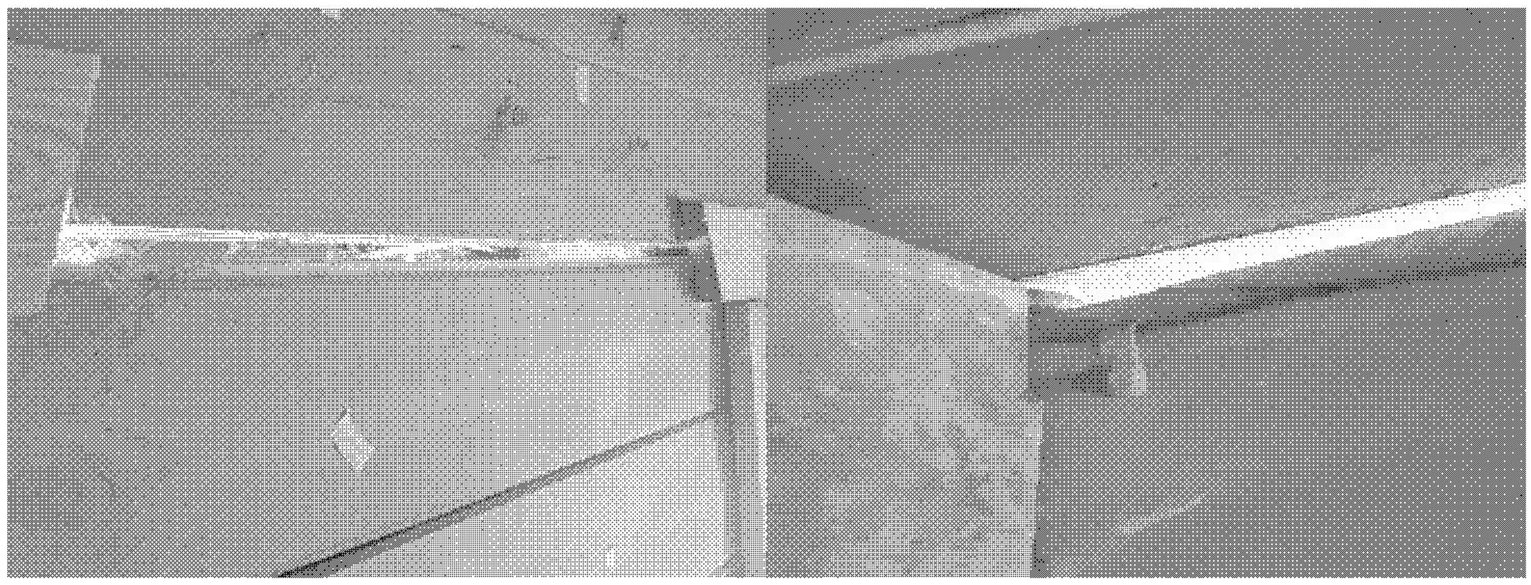
4.4.6 All buildings within the site were assessed internally and externally for bats. A summary of this assessment is provided in the table below. Building reference numbers are illustrated on *Figure No. 01 – Site Habitats Plan*.

Table No. 10 – Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Results - Buildings

B1	Wooden storage shed with flat roof. Lots of gaps between wooden planks that allow for ingress.	Not furnished or in use at the time of survey. Lots of animal droppings found inside, likely from rodents.	**Low**

B2	Small cabin style building made from wood planks and with pitched roof, no tiles just roofing felt. Exterior porch overhang on northern aspect. Some small gaps between planks allowing ingress.	Partially furnished with workbench, sink and lockers. In use for go-kart storage at the time of survey.	**Low**

Photograph No: 5 – Gaps between wooden slats within B01.



Photograph No: 6 – Gaps between wooden slats within B02.

Winter Roosting Potential

4.4.7 Given the results of the preliminary roost assessment and in consideration of the presence or classic / non-classic hibernation features, the suitability of the surrounding habitat for commuting and foraging, and the presence / absence of known roosts, it was determined that the site offered **low** winter roosting potential.

Foraging and Commuting Suitability

4.4.8 The site is dominated by hardstanding which is of no value to any species. The rough grassland would support an invertebrate population and therefore have some foraging value, however the area was small and insignificant compared to the adjacent higher quality habitat. The site overall is considered to be of **negligible** habitat suitability.

Dormice

Desk Study

4.4.9 Very low numbers of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* records were found within a 2.0km search radius.

Site Assessment

4.4.10 There were no hedgerows, woodland or treelines on site which could support dormouse. This site is therefore considered to be of **negligible** value to this species.

[redacted]

Birds

Desk Study

4.4.13 Records of numerous. bird species were returned from a 2.0km search radius. Including many Schedule I species and species listed on the BoCC Red List. For example, barn owl *Tyto alba* and greenfinch *Chloris chloris*.

Site Assessment

4.4.14 Generally, the site lacks traditional nesting habitat for passerine birds, i.e., hedgerows and tree lines, although the grassland could provide foraging habitat for a small number of species. The site is considered to have a **low** potential to support common bird species.

Invertebrates

Desk Study

4.4.15 Records of numerous species of invertebrate were found within a 2.0km site radius, including some protected under section 41 of the NERC Act. For example, cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaeae,* pale eggar moth *Trichiura crataegi* and wat-biter bush cricket *Decticus verrucivorus.*

Site Assessment

4.4.16 The majority of the site is hardstanding, which is of negligible value to invertebrates, although there was some rough grassland and this contained some flowering species such as common vetch and creeping buttercup. This site is therefore considered of **low** likelihood of supporting a notable assemblage of species.

5.0 ECOLOGICAL CONSTAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Internationally Designated Sites

5.1.1 No internationally designated statutory sites were identified within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development site.

5.2 Nationally and Locally Designated Sites

5.2.1 One nationally designated area was identified within a potential zone of influence of the site. However given the current habitats on site and development proposals this is unlikely to be directly impacted by proposals.

5.3 On Site Habitats

5.3.1 The following section provides an evaluation of the potential impacts of proposals on the habitats on site and outlines any recommendations required in order to ensure proposals accord with planning policy and legislation (see *Appendix* A), and to maximise opportunities to deliver net gains for biodiversity. Where identified, any potential impacts should be addressed in line with the mitigation hierarchy (BSI, 2013) (CIEEM, 2022) and where possible, mitigation should be embedded in the scheme design as this gives assurance of delivery.

Biodiversity Net Gain Statement

5.3.2 As of 12th of February 2024, Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). The scheme impacts over 25m^2 of grassland and as such shall be subject to the standard biodiversity gain planning condition.

Evaluation and Recommendations

5.3.3 Overall, the habitats on site were assessed as being of broad **low** ecological value. The existing areas of modified grassland and hardstanding are highly suitable for development, however given the clients 15-year lease of the site it shall not be possible to meet BNG obligations on site. Off-site units shall therefore need to be purchased from a local private habitat bank, such as Iford Estate, Wiston Estate or The Environment Bank.

5.4 Protected and Notable Species

5.4.1 Varying levels of legal protection are afforded to certain protected animals, certain species of conservation importance and broader biodiversity (see *Appendix A – Planning Policy and Legislation*). Therefore, in order to ensure proposals accord with statutory legislation further surveys for these taxa may be required to determine their presence and, if present, to devise an appropriate mitigation strategy. Any protected / notable species assessed as having negligible potential to exist on site during the possible presence assessment were scoped out of further assessment at this stage.

Reptiles

5.4.2 The protected species assessment identified that the site and adjacent habitats offered **low** potential to support reptiles. Although it is unlikely that reptiles are present on site, they are protected from reckless killing and injury (Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981) and so risk avoidance measures should be employed during site clearance. As a precautionary approach, the grassland should be cut in stages outwards from the existing astroturf pitch and in suitable weather conditions (March – October, +9°C, sunny, dry) to encourage any reptiles present to disperse into suitable areas of retained habitat.

Amphibians

5.4.3 The protected species assessment identified that the site and adjacent habitats offered **low** potential to support GCN. As GCN are protected from reckless killing and injury (Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981), RAMs outlined above in section 5.4.2 will be required to ensure their safety.

Bats

5.4.4 Both buildings on site have been assessed as offering **low** potential to support roosting bats therefore 1no. surveys of each building will be required to determine likely absence of roosting bats. These should be done from May to August, following best practise methods (Collins, 2023).

5.4.5 Proposals should be mindful of the potential for bats to occur in the area by ensuring that adjacent trees are protected from inappropriate nocturnal lighting which exceeds any current background levels. A suitable lighting contractor has been consulted and all lighting designs have been carefully considered to comply with best practice standards in regard to external lighting and bats (BCT & ILP, 2023).

Badgers & other small mammals

5.4.6 The protected species assessment identified that the site and adjacent habitats supported **low** potential for badgers and other small mammals and no evidence of badgers was identified on site of in the immediately surrounding area. Therefore, further targeted badger surveys will not be required. However, as a precaution, standard badger protection measures should be incorporated into the construction phase, e.g., including a pre-commencement check for badgers, trenches or excavations to be covered overnight or have a broad and shallow ramp installed to prevent badger becoming trapped, etc. These measures could be secured at the reserved matters stage, or through the council enforcing a CEMP / appropriate planning condition.

Birds

5.4.7 The protected species assessment identified that the site and adjacent habitats offered habitats of **low** value to wild birds. Any habitat suitable to support nesting birds scheduled for removal, i.e., buildings and any scrub within the grassland should be cleared outside of the main bird nesting season (March – August inclusive) or first be subject to a bird nesting check prior to removal, to be conducted by suitably qualified ecologist or arborist.

Invertebrates

5.4.8 The protected species assessment identified that the site and adjacent habitats offered **low** potential to support a notable invertebrate assemblage, therefore further surveys will not be required. General provisions for invertebrates such as insect boxes and the planting of pollinator friendly plant species should be included in the scheme to compensate for the small losses to grassland.

6.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

6.1 In addition to any requirement to deliver +10% Biodiversity Net Gain outlined by the Environment Act (2021), net gains for biodiversity are a requirement outlined in National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2024) and local planning policy guidance. Opportunities for ecological enhancements which should be incorporated into the scheme design are provided below:

- Installation of 1no. bird and 1no. bat box on the refurbished buildings.
- Use of species of a known wildlife value within the soft landscape scheme, such as those listed on RHS Plants for Pollinators. This could include the creation of ground-based planters or small flower beds to the margins of the buildings.
- Planting of individual trees within areas of hardstanding where possible to provide a resource for invertebrates and birds as well as shade for site users.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The site covers an area of 0.24ha and is located c. 15km to the north of Brighton. The site predominately consists of hardstanding with a small area of grassland. Surrounding is further grassland and scattered treelines / woodland.

7.2 The buildings on site offer low bat roost suitability and require further survey. The presence, or potential presence, of protected species is a material consideration in the planning process these surveys shall need to be undertaken before determination of the planning application. Habitats within and adjacent to the site were also found suitable to support reptiles, amphibians, badgers and invertebrates. Avoidance measures in relation to these species have been outlined herein.

7.3 Proposals have negligible potential to impact upon any statutory designations identified within a potential zone of influence of development. Therefore, no further assessment in regard to the *Habitat Regulations (2017)* or site-specific mitigation would be required.

7.4 Opportunities for ecological enhancement have not been provided as the client has a 15-year lease on the site. This means they could not fulfil the BNG 30-year management prescriptions for habitat creation / enhancement. The client will therefore need to obtain habitat units from an offsite provider to meet the +10% mandate in the *Environment Act (2021)*.

7.5 Subject to a sensitively designed scheme, which gives due consideration to the survey and mitigation requirements outlined herein, no major ecological constraints have been identified which would preclude the provision of a well-designed development.

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Table No. 11 – Species List for Habitat Parcels

Modified Grassland

Red fescue	*Festuca rubra*	D
Perennial ryegrass	*Lolium perenne*	D
Common vetch	*Vicia sativa*	R
Creeping buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*	O
Forget-me-not	*Myosotis spp.*	O
Thistle spp.	*Cirsium spp.*	O
Nettle	*Urtica dioica*	A
Bramble	*Rubus fruticosus*	LF
Bindweed	*Convolvulus spp.*	O

Appendix A – Planning Policy and Legislation

Legislation

Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this report includes:

- *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;*
- *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);*
- *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006; and*
- *The Environment Act 2021.*

This above legislation has been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report. Further details of legislation relating to the protection of particular ecological receptors are provided in the table below:

SACs (Special Area of Conservation), SPAs (Special Protection Areas) and Ramsars (Wetlands of International Importance)	Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 places a duty on the competent authority to maintain the favourable conservation status of designated SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites. Therefore, where it appears to the appropriate nature conservation body that a notice of a proposal relates to an operation which is, or forms, part of a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects), and (b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, it must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment, it may give consent for the operation only after having ascertained that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.
European protected species (bats, otters, dormice, water voles, great crested newts)	It is an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to deliberately kill or injure a European protected species, to destroy breeding/resting sites, or to deliberately disturb these species and affect their ability to survive, rear young, breed, or hibernate.
Nationally protected species (bats, water vole, otter)	It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 5 whilst it is in a place of shelter, or to obstruct access to a place for shelter.
Nationally protected species (reptiles)	It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to kill or injure common species of reptiles.
National conservation priority species (white-clawed crayfish, fish, common toad, reptiles, noctule, water vole, otter, hedgehog), i.e., UKBAPs	Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species and habitats that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity, and to take, and promote others to take, such steps to further the conservation of these habitats and species. These species and habitats will be considered by Planning Authorities in regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) to conserve and enhance the natural environment.
Badgers	It is an offence under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 to damage or destroy a badger sett; obstruct any entrance of a badger sett; and disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a badger sett.

Wild mammals (rabbits, foxes, water vole, otter, hedgehog, badger)	It is an offence under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 to inflict unnecessary suffering to any wild mammal with intent.
Nesting birds	It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to damage or destroy a bird's nest whilst it is in use, and to kill or injure a bird or destroy an egg.
Non-statutory designated sites (SNCI's, LWS, LNR's, etc.)	LNRs are designated under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which was amended by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The value for biodiversity of LNRs and LWSs are recognised, and the sites and surrounding buffers are protected by the Local Plan.
Biodiversity	Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 states that each public authority "must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity." This legislation makes it clear that planning authorities should consider impacts to biodiversity when determining planning applications. Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) states that the planning system and policies should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, and that, if significant harm to biodiversity would result from a development, then development should be avoided (through locating on alternative sites with less harmful impacts).
Irreplaceable habitats (ancient woodland, veteran trees, lowland meadows)	Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
Biodiversity Net Gain	+10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for new developments will be mandatory under the Environment Act (2021), although this deadline will be extended to April 2024 for small sites and there are exemptions for development below a 25m2 threshold, and for householder applications and self-builds. BNG means that proposals must result in more and/or better-quality natural habitats than there were before development. This also requires that any proposed habitats within the scheme would be necessary to manage for at least 30 years, which would be sought through the provision of S106 legal agreements or conservation covenants.

Local Planning Policy

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (2018) sets out the planning policies for development in the district in relation to biodiversity. Those of potential relevance to this assessment are highlighted in the table below:

Policy DP38: Biodiversity	Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development: • Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and • Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and • Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and • Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and • Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas. Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks. Valued soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, and development should not contribute to unacceptable levels of soil pollution. Geodiversity will be protected by ensuring development prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.