

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

**Balcombe Cricket Club, Haywards Heath Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, RH17 6PE.
A report for Balcombe Cricket Club, June 2006.**



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This report has been written to provide an objective assessment of the ecological constraints and opportunities that were considered to be present at the site at the time the survey/s were conducted and, should be used solely for the purpose for which it was designed. The copyright must be considered to rest with Bioregional Forestry Ltd, whilst use of the report is for the commissioning party and their client only, unless with the express and written consent of Bioregional Forestry Ltd. The surveys and assessment have been drafted to be in accordance with the British Standard for Biodiversity BS42020:2013, Biodiversity - Code for planning and development and the Code of Professional Conduct published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental management. N.B It must be noted that investigations of this sort provide only a snapshot in time of the ecological conditions of a site, are limited in extent and cannot capture the full picture of the biodiversity interests at the given location.

IMPORTANT: This report contains sensitive data in relation to the location of potentially active badger setts. It cannot lawfully be made public unless appropriately redacted.

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1. Summary of Assessment

Bioregional Forestry were commissioned by Balcombe Cricket Club to provide ecological advice and support regarding an application for the proposed development at Balcombe Cricket Club, Haywards Heath Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, RH17 6PE. The following points summarise the main results of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment.

- 1.1. Current proposals comprise the relocation and construction of new practice nets involving the loss of a small area of woodland adjacent to the current nets and pitch.
- 1.2. This report provides an assessment of the habitats present within the area proposed for development, along with an assessment of the likelihood of protected species being present to inform a subsequent planning application. It also provides a biodiversity net gain assessment of the baseline habitats, proposed habitats and feasibility of achieving net gain.
- 1.3. One internationally designated site was located within 10km of the site boundary and six nationally designated sites within 5km of the site boundary. One local statutory designated and five non-statutory local protected sites were located within 2km. Due to the small scale and limited scope of the development it is considered unlikely that the development will have an impact on these sites.
- 1.4. Records from the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) returned a total of 18,891 individual records (1980 onwards) for a 2km buffer zone around the site red line boundary. Of these records, 71 included bats and 3439 included notable birds.
- 1.5. A UK Habitats Classification survey and protected species assessment were carried out on the 3rd of June 2026 by an experienced ecologist from Bioregional Forestry.
- 1.6. The habitats within the red line boundary totalled 0.022 ha and were comprised of developed land with sealed surface (u1b) and lowland deciduous woodland (g3a).
- 1.7. Current proposals will result in the loss of 0.013 ha of lowland deciduous woodland and the creation of 0.012 ha of modified grassland. The parcel of woodland immediately surrounding the Site was found to be in *moderate* condition. It is not designated as Priority woodland but is likely to meet that criterion.
- 1.8. Woodland adjacent to the site is designated as ancient (replanted). The Site is within the recommended 15m buffer, however no direct or indirect impacts to the habitat are likely as a result of the current proposals.
- 1.9. A Ground Level Tree Assessment of the onsite trees found no bat roosting features (PRFs). A tree adjacent to the site (T8) was recorded as hosting at least one PRF.
- 1.10. The habitats within and surrounding the Site are of moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. No impacts to roosting bats are likely.
- 1.11. The habitats within the site provide high suitability habitat for breeding birds.

- 1.12.** The habitats within and adjacent to the site provide moderate suitability habitat for badgers and low suitability habitat for great crested newt, hazel dormouse, reptiles and hedgehog.
- 1.13.** No badger setts were recorded within the development site. One (likely active) sett and one (likely inactive) were recorded within woodland adjacent to the site. The nearest entrance was 32 m from the Site. Impacts to badger are likely to be limited to loss of a small area of potential foraging habitat, however this will be offset by the reinstatement of modified grassland habitat within the existing net practice area.
- 1.14.** It is recommended that a precautionary approach to site clearance and construction is followed, rather than conducting further surveys, as detailed in Appendix A.
- 1.15.** The habitats onsite are considered to be of *local* value only.
- 1.16.** There are opportunities for enhancement within the site which can be captured within the design proposals, including native tree planting and construction of log and brash piles within the surrounding woodland.
- 1.17.** The Biodiversity net Gain Assessment quantified that within the current scheme there is a deficit of 0.16 area habitat units to meet the mandatory minimum 10% net gain target. Due to the likely financial and legal costs and complications of securing this marginal number of units, the client has ruled out achieving biodiversity net gain onsite and has opted for offsite biodiversity units.

2. Background

Overview of the commission and the proposals

- 2.1.** Bioregional Forestry were commissioned by Balcombe Cricket Club to provide ecological advice and support regarding an application for the proposed development at Balcombe Cricket Club, Haywards Heath Road, Balcombe, Haywards Heath, RH17 6PE.
- 2.2.** Current proposals comprise the construction of new practice nets involving the loss of a small area of woodland adjacent to the current nets and pitch.
- 2.3.** To provide an additional stage in assessment, this report has been completed and comprises the following elements:
 - A data search provided by the Sussex Biodiversity Information Centre (SxBRC)].
 - Results of a survey of the onsite habitats following the UK Habitats Classification.
 - An assessment of the likely presence of legally protected species, including a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for potential bat roosts.
 - An evaluation of the relative nature conservation value of the site.
 - An assessment of the biodiversity net gain value of the site and recommendations for how to achieve biodiversity net gain.
 - An initial assessment of likely impacts and opportunities.
 - Recommendations for any further surveys or assessments that may be necessary.

Objectives of this appraisal

- 2.4.** To use the process outlined above to determine: the status and value of the habitats within the site, any likely constraints to the proposals, an initial assessment of impacts to any identified ecological receptors, and measures to off-set those impacts and provide enhancements in line with national and local planning policies.
- 2.5.** The primary objectives of this appraisal are to ensure that all impacts are correctly identified, to determine if any further surveys may be required, and to outline appropriate measures for mitigation, compensation and enhancement. This includes an assessment of the baseline value of the habitats onsite in BNG terms, losses that will be occurred through the development scheme, and potential for meeting the BNG commitment. A completed Statutory Metric and Condition Assessments are submitted alongside this report.

Site context

- 2.6.** The site comprised of a limited area of sports ground (artificial surface with nets) and an area of adjacent woodland.

- 2.7.** The site is in a rural location 0.26 km northeast of the village of Balcombe, near Haywards Heath, East Sussex. It is approximately 0.022ha in area (220 sq. metres), with a central Ordinance Survey Grid Reference: TQ3131 3072.
- 2.8.** The site is bordered to the north, east and south by woodland and to the south and southwest by the cricket grounds, with majority modified grassland. Habitats in the wider landscape comprise farmland including improved and semi-improved grazing pasture, interconnected by mature hedgerows and scattered trees, as well as semi-urban and residential habitat to the south-west. Two large lakes are located to the northeast and southwest of the site. See Figure 1 for site location showing habitats in the wider landscape.

Legislation and policy

- 2.9.** The following pieces of legislation and National policy are relevant to this appraisal and have been used to inform this appraisal:
- The Environment Act 2021
 - Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992
 - The National Planning Policy Framework 2024
 - Biodiversity and geological conservation: circular 06/2005
- 2.10.** The following local policies of particular relevance have been extracted from the Mid-Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (Mid-Sussex District Council 2018):
- Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - Policy DP38: Biodiversity
- 2.11.** Extracts of the key relevant sections of this policy are provided below whilst the full policies themselves are available online following this link: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3406/mid-sussex-district-plan.pdf>.
- 2.12.** Policy DP37: “Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:
- incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and
 - prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and
 - where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and
 - has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and
 - takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and
 - does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets” (p.91).

2.13. Policy DP38: “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” (p.93).

Biodiversity Net Gain Liability

2.14. The proposed development does not fall into any of the following categories which would be exempt from biodiversity net gain:

- Householder applications
- Self-build and custom-build applications

2.15. The proposed development will impact more than 25 square metres of vegetated habitat (below which the de minimis exemption would apply) and therefore will be liable to meet the BNG objective.

3. Methodology

Personnel

- 3.1.** The habitat survey, site appraisal and assessments were carried out by Tim Martindale, a qualified ecological surveyor and associate member of CIEEM, with more than 8 years of experience in countryside management, forestry, and ecology. He holds a Certificate in Ecological Surveying (SCQF Level 7) from SRUC and a PhD in Anthropology from Goldsmiths, University of London. He has been involved in a diverse range of habitat management and ecological surveying projects, including countryside ranger for the National Trust working on World Heritage sites, forester engaged in woodland management and creation, and woodland surveyor for Forest Research. Prior to this he carried out and published social research with an environment and sustainability focus.
- 3.2.** The report was reviewed by Nick Shanks (MSc Environmental Analysis and Assessment), a Woodland Consultant with thirty years of experience in forestry and countryside management and surveying, providing expert advice and managing projects for a diverse range of clients in the public and private sectors.

Contextual Information and Data Records

- 3.3.** Contextual information on the site was in part gathered from freely available on-line resources including a 10km search for internationally important protected sites and 5km for nationally designated sites and records for any European Protected Species mitigation licences for great crested newts, hazel dormice or bats. This was carried out using the Magic application, hosted by Defra.
- 3.4.** On-line aerial imagery was used to make an assessment of the sites position within the wider landscape including connectivity and potential corridors for protected species dispersal.
- 3.5.** A 2km standard data search for all protected/notable species records and non-statutory protected sites was commissioned from the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC).

UK Habitats Classification Survey

- 3.6.** The surveyor visited the site on 03/06/26. The purpose of the survey was to complete a baseline habitat survey of the site using the UK Habitats Classification system. Habitats were assigned to at least either Level 3 or 4 where applicable, the minimum mapping unit used was 25m² for all area habitats and 5m for all linear habitats. All Secondary Codes were utilised where the relevant conditions pertained. The survey does not aim to provide a complete botanical inventory but to identify key habitat indicator species.
- 3.7.** A Statutory Condition Assessment (July 2025, v1.0.02) was carried out on the relevant habitats onsite, with reference to the England Woodland Biodiversity Group (EWBG) Woodland Condition Survey Method.

Protected Species Risk Assessment

- 3.8.** This report provides an assessment of the likely presence of any legally protected or notable species based on the habitats present and the known affiliations of species with those habitats and their distribution across the UK. The assessment draws on the findings of the site visit, the contextual information and any data records returned from the Local Environmental Records Centre during the desk study.
- 3.9.** A Ground Level Tree Assessment for potential bat roosts was carried out according to the standard methodology set out in Collins (2024). Binoculars were used to assess the trees for features suitable to support roosting. Such features could include:
- Woodpecker holes
 - Pruning wounds
 - Dense ivy cover
 - Lifted bark
- 3.10.** Suitability was rated as per Collins (2024): NONE = Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any. FAR = Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree. PRF = A tree with at least one PRF present.

Evaluation

- 3.11.** An assessment is provided as to the likely importance of the site judged by the habitats that are present and the species that have been confirmed or are likely to be present. This value is expressed at a geographic scale following criteria set out by CIEEM (2017) in their impact assessment guidance.

Constraints

- 3.12.** The UK habitat survey was carried out in June and therefore any plants with an earlier or later flowering phenology may have been underreported or missed. Despite the time of year, it was possible to identify species using a vegetative key, determine the habitat types and overall conditions.
- 3.13.** There were no further constraints to the surveys.

4. Results

Contextual information and biological records

- 4.1.** The site is located within the High Weald National Landscape Area (previously AONB), designated for its landscape mosaic of ancient woodland and pasture. One internationally designated site was located within 10km of the site boundary and six nationally designated sites within 5km of the site boundary. One local statutory designated and five non-statutory local protected sites were located within 2km.
- 4.2.** See Tables 1 and 2 for a summary of the designated sites within 10, 5 and 2 km radius of the site. See Figure 2 for a map showing the Designated Sites and Priority Habitats within a 2km radius of the site.

Table 1 - Internationally important and protected sites within a 10km and nationally important and protected sites within a 5km radius of the development site.

Type	Site	Reason for citation	Distance and orientation (km)
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Ashdown Forest	Annex 1 habitats: North Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> , supporting bog-mosses (<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.), bog asphodel (<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>), deergrass (<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>), marsh gentian (<i>Gentiana pneumonanthe</i>), and marsh clubmoss (<i>Lycopodiella inundata</i> . European dry heaths supporting heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), bell heather (<i>Erica cinerea</i>), and dwarf gorse (<i>Ulex minor</i>). The site also supports important lichen assemblages and the most inland population of hairy greenweed (<i>Genista Pilosa</i>).	8.4km east
Special Protection Area	Ashdown Forest	Rare ground-nesting birds, including the European nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), Dartford warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>), and Eurasian hobby (<i>Falco subbuteo</i>)	8.4km east
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wakehurst and Chiddingly Woods	Wakehurst and Chiddingly Woods contain extensive exposures of sandrock, a nationally rare habitat, which are of biological and geological importance. This site has the richest sandrock community in the country, supporting a unique flora. It is the	1.6km northeast

		locality of an uncommon crane fly, and also has a diverse breeding community of woodland birds.	
SSSI	Philpot's and Hook's Quarries	This quarry exposes the upper parts (4m) of the Ardingly Sandstone Member of the upper Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation and the lower member of the Grinstead Clay Formation (8.2m) capped by the base of the Cuckfield Stone Member (upper Hastings Beds Group)	3.4km northeast
SSSI	Cow Wood and Harry's Wood	This ancient woodland has several steep sided stream valleys (ghylls) which contain plants with an 'Atlantic' distribution. The woodland supports a rich community of breeding birds	3.6km west
SSSI	Worth Forest	This area of ancient Wealden ghyll woodland contains an example of a base-poor springline alder wood, this being a nationally uncommon woodland type. The site also supports a rich community of lichens.	2.5km northwest

Table 2 - Statutory and non-statutory locally protected sites within a 2km radius of the development site centroid.

Type	Site	Reason for citation	Distance and orientation (km)
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Ardingly Reservoir LNR	Wetland, reedbed, deciduous woodland, hazel coppice and haymeadow. Great crested grebe and kingfishers nest on site. Biodiversity Action Plan species include barn owl, osprey, various bat species, dormice and glow worms. The Ardingly sandstone outcrops support a rare community of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens.	0.5km southeast
Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Sedgy & Scotts Gills	These gill woodlands are situated on the edge of Monks Forest, now mostly plantation. Oak and Ash occur along the slopes with areas of Birch and Oak, typical on the gentler slopes above. Throughout, there are bands of flushed ground where Alder is found. The stream banks support abundant mosses and liverworts and are bordered by species-rich ground flora.	Information not available.

LWS	Balcombe Lake & associated woodlands	This site is complex. It consists of a number of woodland blocks situated alongside wooded stream valleys. These form part of a large woodland complex, The Warren, much of which is now conifer plantation. Also, there is a large area of open water, Balcombe Lake. The woodlands are particularly species-rich and the lake and its associated habitats are of particular ornithological interest.	Information not available.
LWS	Balcombe Estate Rocks	The Balcombe estate rocks occur in three separate sites to the east and southwest of Balcombe village. They are important for the ferns and lower plants that grow on them, some of which are very rare. The woodland around the rocks is of varied character but at one site the wood contains a good range of ancient woodland indicator plants.	Information not available.
LWS	Ardingly Reservoir & Loder Valley Nature Reserve	Ardingly Reservoir and the Loder Valley Nature Reserve are of importance to breeding and passage wetland birds. On the reservoir margins there are areas of herb-rich grassland and scrub. Within the Loder Valley are species-rich grassland, ancient and plantation woodland which contain several notable species.	0.5km SE
LWS	Rowhill & Station Pastures	The pastures lie on either side of Rocks Lane to the west of Balcombe station, separated by a stream valley. Both contain a range of typical grassland plant species and appear to be largely unimproved.	Information not available

4.3. The data search from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) returned a total of 18,891 individual records (since 1980) across 355 species for a 2km buffer zone around the site red line boundary. Of these records, 71 included bats and 3439 included notable birds. Table 3 below summarises the results of the data search requested from the SxBRC.

Table 3: Local Environmental Records Data Summary (Protected/notable species)

Status	Relevant species/group	Number of records	Comments
Habs Regs Annex 2. WCA Schedule 5	Bats Bat Chiroptera Barbestelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i> Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> Myotis bats <i>Myotis sp</i> Alcothoe bat <i>Myotis alcothoe</i> Daubentons bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> Whiskered/Brandt's <i>Myotis mystacinus/brandtii</i> Leisler's bat <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	71 1 2 3 4 1 2 1 1	Nearest record 0.31km west.

	Noctule bat <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus</i> Nathusius's Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i> Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> Long-eared bats <i>Plecotus sp.</i> Brown long-eared bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	5 3 2 16 15 1 14	
Protection of Badgers Act 1992 WCA Schedule 6	Badger <i>Meles meles</i>	0	No records received due to confidential nature.
WCA Schedule 1 BOCC	Birds House sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> House martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	3591	No protected bird species recorded on site but are present within the wider landscape.
Habs Regs Annex 2	Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	10	Nearest record 1.8km southeast.
Habs Regs Annex 2. WCA Schedule 5	Hazel dormouse <i>Musccardinus avellanarius</i>	9	Nearest record 0.5km west.
WCA Schedule 5	Reptiles Common lizard Slow-worm Adder Grass snake	17 1 4 3 9	Nearest common lizard record 1.2km northwest. Nearest slow-worm record 0.6km south. Nearest adder record 1.1km southwest. Nearest grass snake record 0.5km northeast.
WCA Schedule 9	Invasive non-native plants Various species (34)	1016	No invasive species recorded on site but present in wider landscape.
Bern-A3	European hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	7	Nearest record 0.4 km south.

Priority habitats

4.4. There were five different types of Priority (Section 41) habitats within 2km as reported by SxBRC, including:

- Traditional orchard
- Lowland meadow
- Deciduous woodland
- Ancient woodland
- Ghyll woodland

4.5. See Figure 2 for a map of the Priority Habitats within 2km radius of the Site.

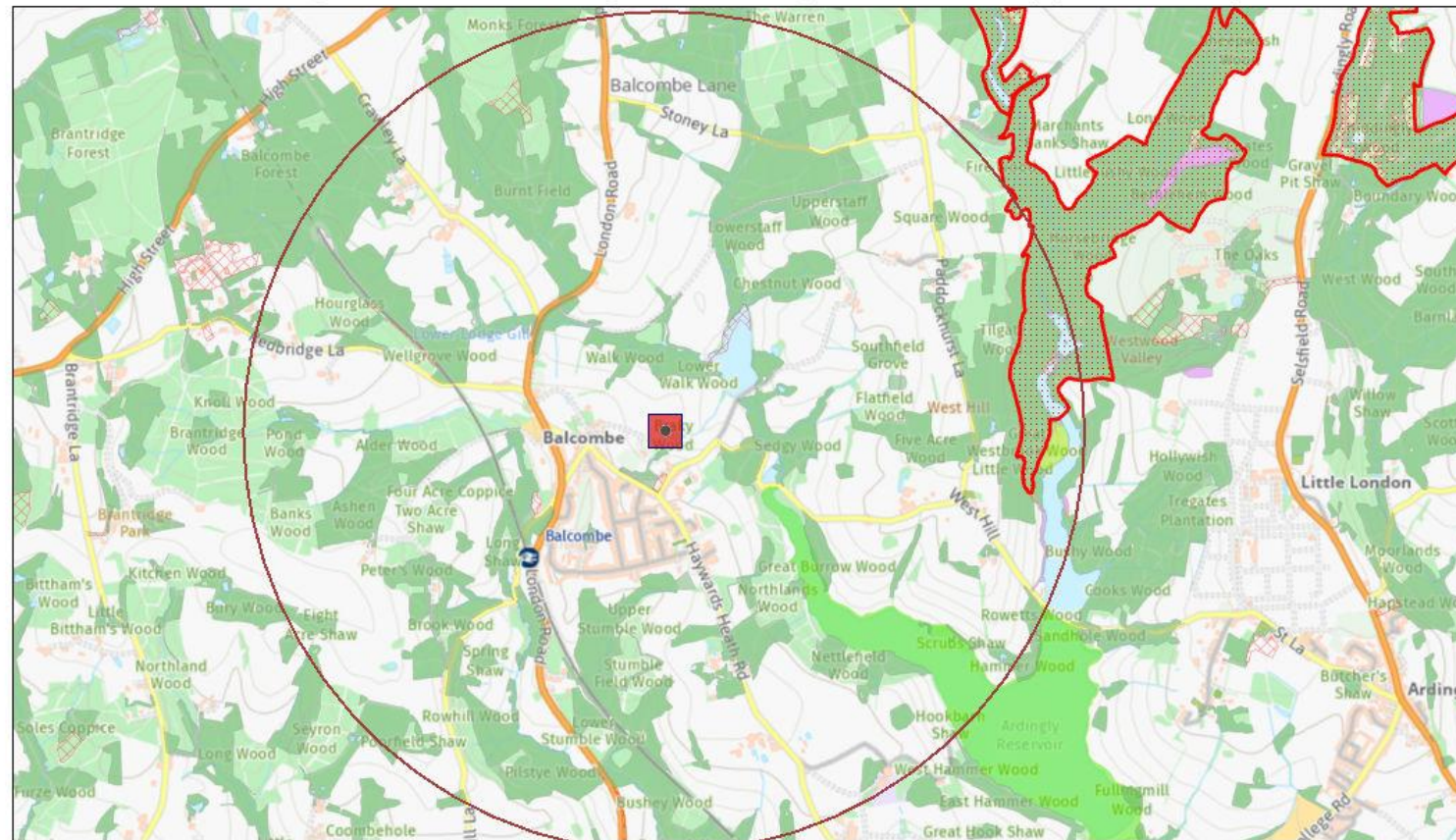
- 4.6.** There were several parcels of priority lowland, deciduous woodland habitat within 0.5km of the site boundary, as shown in Figure 3. The closet is 0.07 km to the south of the site, which is the southern of portion of Braky Wood.
- 4.7.** The small parcel of woodland which the site will directly impact is not designated priority woodland and neither is the majority of woodland immediately to the east and southeast (Braky Wood).
- 4.8.** Braky wood is however designated as ancient (replanted). It is in the majority comprised of Norway spruce, with some native broadleaf species around the edges, including adjacent to the development site. Species on this boundary included hornbeam, beech, oak, and holly.

Figure 1



Figure 2

Priority Habitats and Designated Sites (2km site radius)(TQ 316 307)



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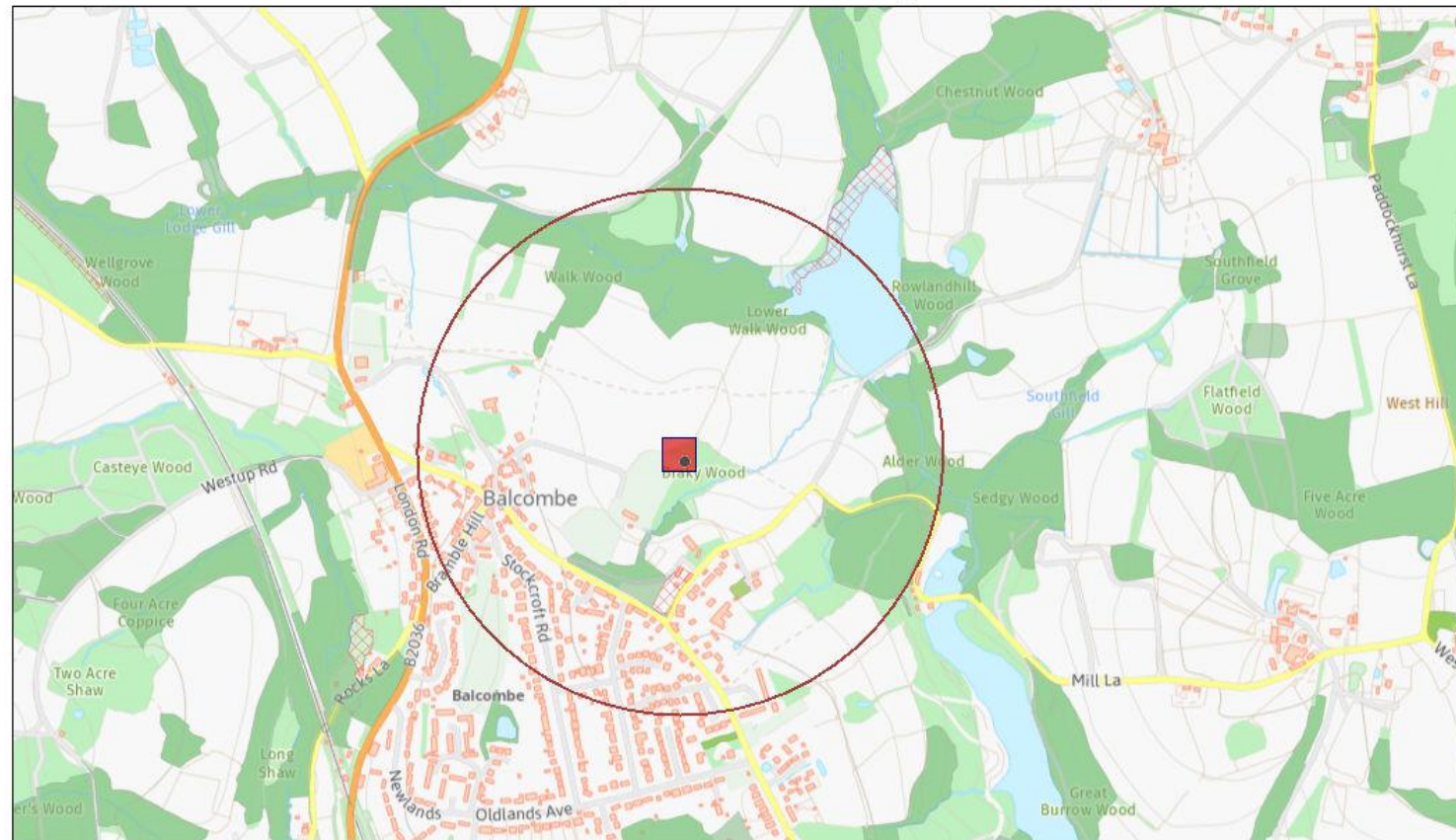
- | | |
|--|---|
| Local Nature Reserves | Good quality semi improved grassland |
| Sites of Special Scientific Interest | Lowland meadows |
| Priority Habitats | No main habitat but additional habitats present |
| Deciduous woodland | Traditional orchard |

1:25,000
0 0.2 0.4 0.8 mi
0 0.33 0.65 1.3 km
Natural England Real Map. Derived from 1:50,000 scale BGS Digital Data under Licence 2008/072. British Geological Survey. © NERC National Geospatial Data for England and Wales. © Crown Copyright and database rights (2021). © Natural England copyright (2021), reproduced with the permission of Natural England.

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Figure 3

Priority Habitats (<0.5km site radius)(TQ 314 307)



05/06/2026, 09:37:07

Priority Habitats

Deciduous woodland Traditional orchard

No main habitat but additional habitats present

1:10,000
0 0.07 0.15 0.3 mi
0 0.13 0.25 0.5 km

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Figure 4

Priority habitats and Ancient Woodland Map (Site)(TQ 313 306)



Figure 6 - Ponds within 500m radius of site boundary

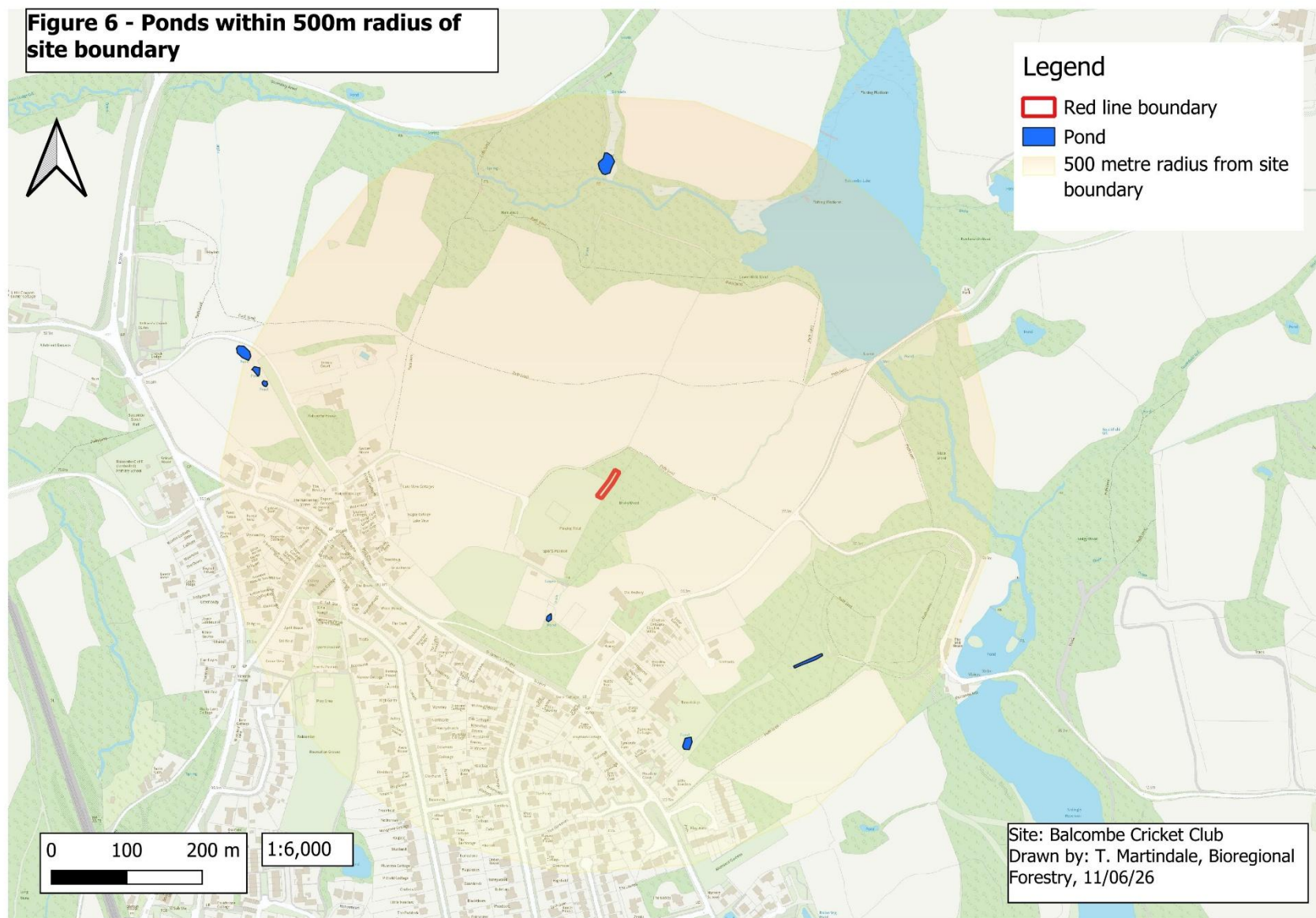


Figure 7: Baseline habitats plan

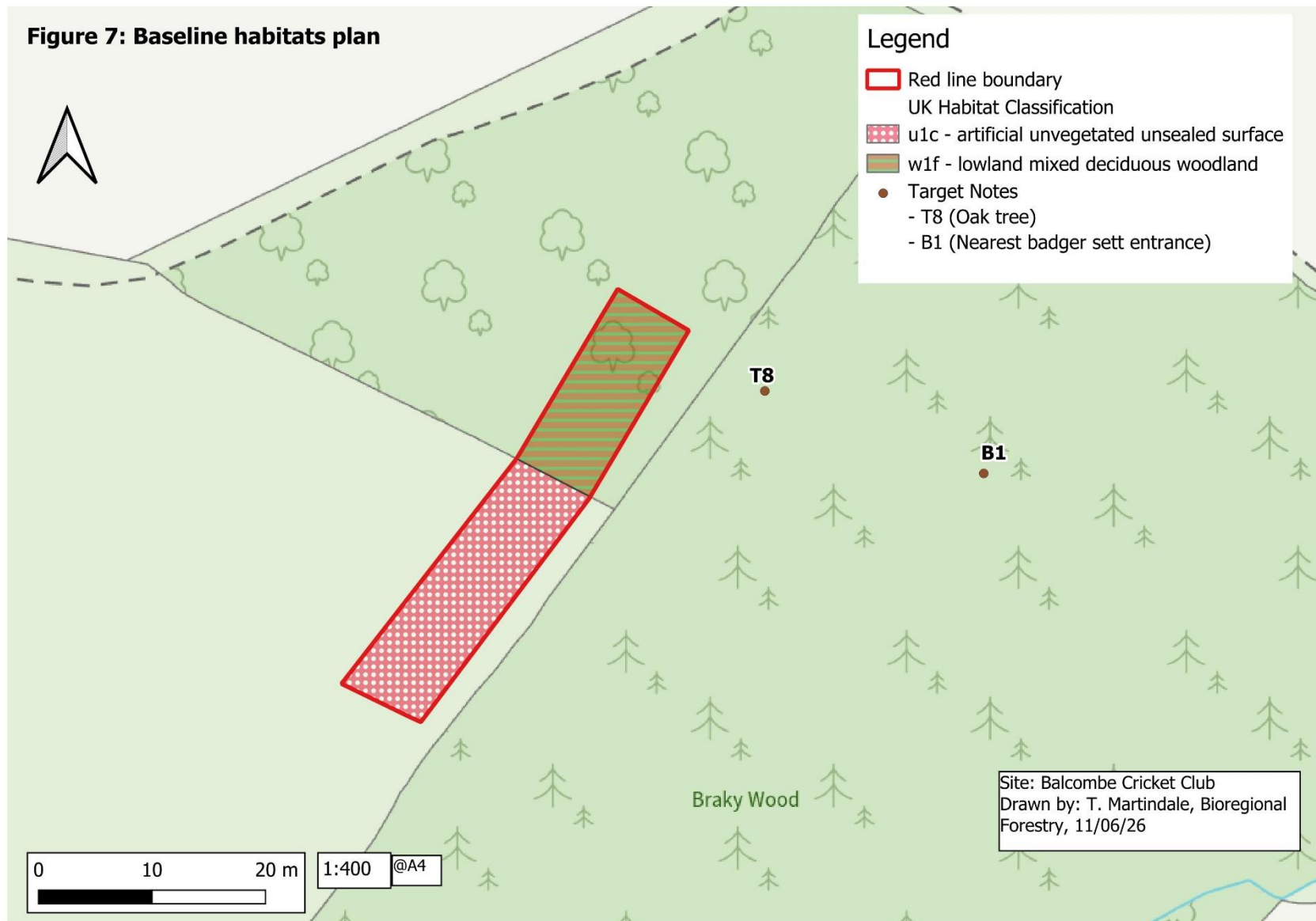
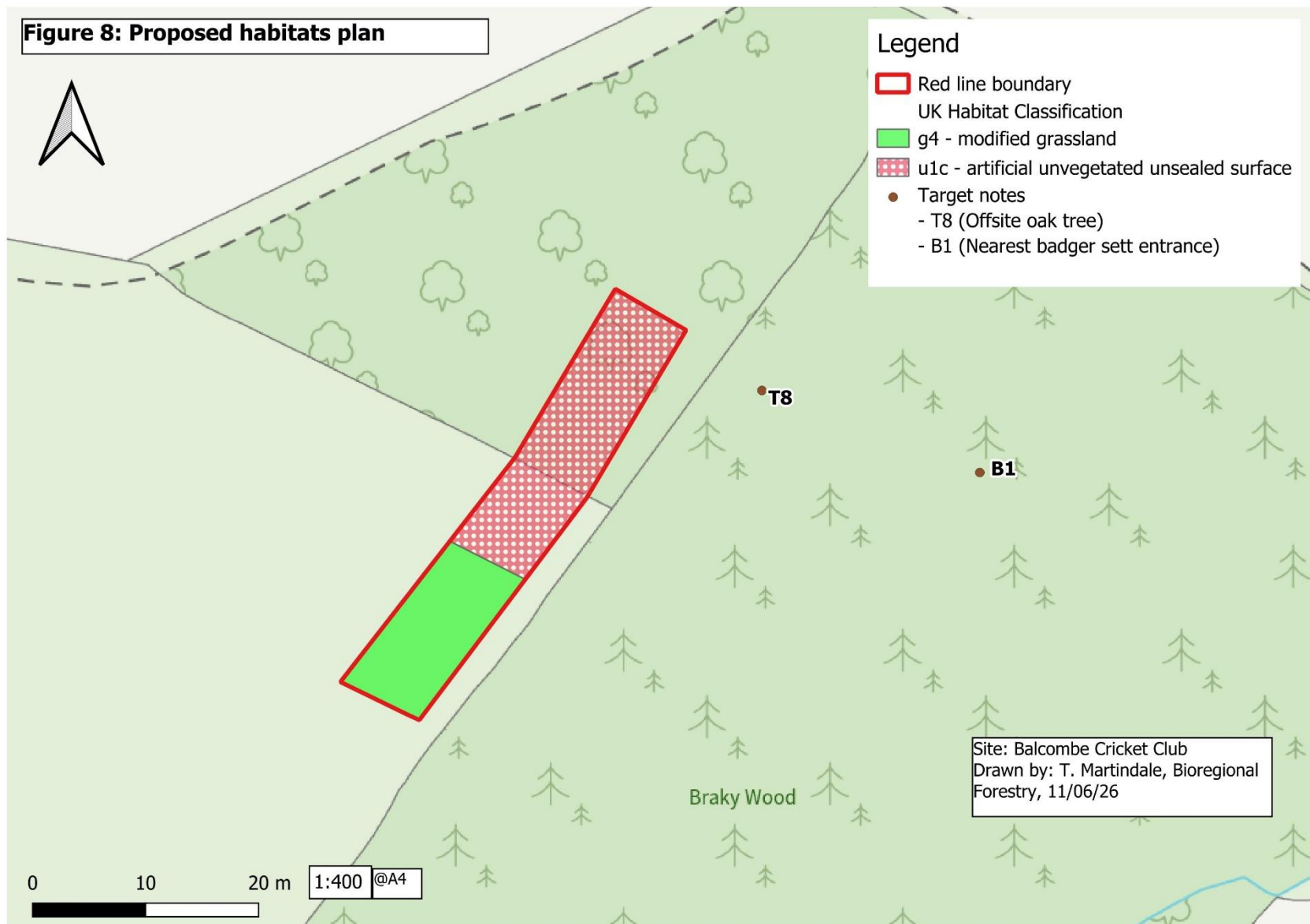


Figure 8: Proposed habitats plan



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Habitats

Onsite habitats

- 4.9.** The habitats onsite were comprised of developed land with sealed surface (u1b) and lowland deciduous woodland (g3a). See Figure 7 for the baseline habitats map and Figure 8 for the proposed habitats.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c) – 0.01 ha

- 4.10.** This was an area of unvegetated ground within the current practice nets with an artificial surface.

Lowland deciduous woodland (g3a) – 0.012 ha

- 4.11.** This was an area within woodland adjacent to the current practice nets and cricket pitch, that included native broadleaf species including holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, wild cherry *Prunus avium* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. Oak *Quercus robur* was noted within the woodland parcel outside the red line but occurring only rarely. There was a high proportion of open space, with little shrub layer. The open space was dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. The full plant list is provided below in Table 4.

Table 4: Plant list recorded for sample quadrat within lowland deciduous woodland

Common name	Binominal
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Common oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Common ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Broad-leaf enchanter's nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Common/early dog violet	<i>Viola riviniana</i> / <i>Viola reichenbachiana</i>

- 4.12.** Information from the client suggests that the land was historically grazed, and the woodland has the characteristics of secondary woodland.
- 4.13.** The NVC community was assessed as likely W10 (Pedunculate Oak – Bracken – Bramble Woodland).

- 4.14. A Statutory Condition Assessment was carried out and the condition was found to be moderate (see the Statutory Condition Assessment that accompanies this report).

Ground level tree assessment

- 4.15. A ground level tree assessment for potential bat roost features (PRFS) was carried out on the group of mature trees within the development area that will be affected that comprised of wild cherry (ivy-covered), multi-stem holly stools, and a mature ash which showed signs of ash-dieback.
- 4.16. All trees within the red line were assessed as 'NONE' (no PRFS in tree or highly unlikely to be any).
- 4.17. Offsite trees immediately adjacent to the development site and within the likely zone of influence of the development were also included in the GLTA. The large mature oak (T8 in Figure 7) was assessed as 'PRF' (having at least one PRF present). There was at least one visible cavity in the main stem and also significant deadwood in the crown that was likely to also host PRFS although visibility from the ground to confirm these was limited.
- 4.18. The assessment was also limited by the extent of ivy within the mature wild cherry.

Legally Protected Species – Likelihood of Occurrence

- 4.19. The table below provides summary assessment of the relative likelihood of any legally protected species being present within the site.

Table 5: The likelihood of occurrence of any legally protected species within the development site

Status	Species	Likelihood	Narrative
Habs Regs Annex 2 WCA Schedule 5	Bats	Negligible for roosting bats. Foraging and commuting likely present.	There was no evidence of roosting bats recorded within the development site. One offsite tree (T8) adjacent to the site was recorded as hosting at least one PRF. There is habitat suitable for foraging and commuting bats within and surrounding the Site.
Protection of Badgers Act 1992 WCA Schedule 6	Badger	Moderate	No records of badger were returned from the data search due to sensitive nature of the records. No badger setts were recorded within the development site. Badger setts were recorded within the adjacent woodland to the east of the Site (see Figure 7 and Photograph 7). The nearest sett entrance was approximately 38 m from the Site. Approximately 13 potential sett entrances were recorded, however only 2 showed signs of active use (fresh spoil, smooth runs etc). No latrines or other signs were found. This suggests the sett is not currently a main sett (although may have been historically) and is more likely to be an annex or even outlier sett.

			There was no evidence that the Site intersects any known foraging or commuting routes between the sett and any other setts recorded in the survey. One outlier sett was recorded in the south of Braky Wood but appeared to be inactive. It is possible that badgers may use habitat within the Site for foraging and commuting, however there was much more extensive and more heavily-used potential badger paths between Braky Wood and the more favourable grassland habitats within the cricket grounds and the farmland pasture to the north and east.
WCA Schedule 1 BOCC	Breeding birds	High	There is high suitability habitat for breeding birds within and adjacent to the development site in the form of woodland comprising mature trees and shrubs. A number of protected and priority species have been recorded within the wider landscape.
Habs Regs Annex 2	Great crested newt	Low	There are 10 records of GCN within 2km of the Site. There is one pond within 250km of the site, 0.09km to the southeast and six ponds within 0.5km (see pond map, Figure 6). There is connectivity between these ponds to the Site via woodland, grassland and hedgerow habitat. However, the suitability of the habitat within the site is low, with little to no tree or ground hollows, log piles, or dead wood on the ground, that might provide shelter and/or hibernation opportunities. There is an abundance of more suitable habitat in the wider landscape that GCN would more likely migrate to and use for foraging, commuting and shelter/hibernation. Furthermore, the limited zone of impact from the development is unlikely to disrupt any foraging, commuting or migration routes between potential GCN ponds and more suitable terrestrial habitat. Consultation of the Natural England risk assessment tool for GCN indicated that given the type, scale and location of the development, an offence is “highly unlikely” should the development proceed.
Habs Regs Annex 2. WCA Schedule 5	Hazel dormouse	Low	There are nine records of hazel dormouse within 2km of the Site. There is low suitability habitat for hazel dormice within and adjacent to the site in the form of deciduous woodland and mainly conifer woodland. There is also connectivity between the Site and good quality habitat in the wider landscape. However, the suitability of the habitat within the site is low due to having poor vertical structure with a lack of a lower and shrub understorey and important food plants such as honeysuckle. Furthermore, there is a lack of tree and ground hollows, coppice stools, and dead wood or log piles that may provide shelter and/or hibernation opportunities. The

			bramble shrub layer is relatively low in height and lacks density. There is an abundance of more suitable habitat in the wider landscape that hazel dormice would more likely migrate to and use for foraging, commuting and shelter/hibernation. Furthermore, the limited zone of impact from the development is unlikely to disrupt any foraging, commuting or migration routes.
WCA Schedule 5	Reptiles	Low	The habitats within the site are not highly favourable for reptiles. There is a lack of rocks, log piles, or deadwood etc that may provide opportunities for shelter or hibernation, and a lack of open grassy glades and rides or bare ground, that may provide basking and foraging opportunities. However their presence cannot be discounted.
Bern-A3	European hedgehog	Low	There is low suitability habitat within the site in the form of woodland, which may provide foraging and commuting habitat. There is a lack of suitable habitat (hollows, rough grassland and scrub, log piles or dead wood), that may provide shelter and or hibernation opportunities.
WCA Schedule 9	Invasive non-native plants	Absent	No Inns were recorded during the site survey.

Evaluation

- 4.20.** The site comprised of a limited area of sports ground (artificial surface with nets) and an area of adjacent woodland.
- 4.21.** The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations; however, the woodland which will be directly impacted has the characteristics of Priority Lowland Deciduous Woodland, and the woodland adjacent to the Site to the east is designated as ancient (replanted).
- 4.22.** There is a low likelihood that the habitats onsite are host to foraging and/or commuting hazel dormice, great crested newt and reptiles. There is a moderate likelihood the habitats onsite are host to commuting and/or foraging badgers. There is a low likelihood that the habitats onsite are host to foraging and or commuting hedgehogs.
- 4.23.** The habitats onsite and the surrounding landscape are of moderate value for bats with scattered blocks of woodland, hedgerows, scattered trees, scrub and grassland margins which provide ample foraging and commuting opportunities along the long linear features.
- 4.24.** One tree adjacent to the Site (T8) was identified as hosting at least one potential bat roosting feature (PRF).
- 4.25.** When the habitats throughout the site, its position within the wider landscape and the likely presence of protected species are assessed in combination, the site is considered to be of value at local level only.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.26.** The results of the baseline habitats survey and Metric assessment are summarised in Table 6 below, showing the baseline habitats by type, distinctiveness and condition and BNG units (total, retained and lost) under the current proposals.
- 4.27.** No hedgerow habitats and no watercourse habitats were present within the Site. No irreplaceable habitats were present.

Table 6: Baseline and proposed habitats summary

Habitat Type	Condition	Distinctiveness	Sum of area at baseline (ha)	Sum of area in proposed (ha)	Change (ha)	Total Habitat Units	Units lost
Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)	N/A	V.Low	0.019	0.019	0	0	0
Lowland, deciduous woodland (w1f)	Moderate	High	0.013	0	-0.013	0.18	0.18
Modified grassland (g4)	Moderate	Low	0	0.012	+0.012	0.04	0

- 4.28.** The Metric headline results of the assessment are shown in Table 7 below. The target of 10% minimum BNG was used. The Baseline and Post-Development Units and Units Required are summarised accordingly. Detailed calculations are provided in the attached Statutory Biodiversity Metric document.
- 4.29.** The Metric final results show that within the current proposed scheme Trading Rules have not been met and **0.16 area habitat units** are required to achieve the mandatory minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%. These are required from the same high distinctiveness broad habitat type. The proposed created modified grassland can count towards achieving 10% net gain above the point of no net loss, but it cannot count towards compensating for the loss of the high distinctiveness woodland. As modified grassland would not be considered in this case as a *significant* enhancement it does not need to be secured.
- 4.30.** No linear and no watercourse habitats were present onsite.

Table 7 - Statutory Biodiversity Metric results summary

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	-0.14	
		Hedgerow units	0.00	
		Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	-76.80%	
		Hedgerow units	0.00%	
		Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?			No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.18	0.20	0.16
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

5. Impacts and Opportunities

Impacts

- 5.1.** Protected sites – One internationally designated site was located within 10km of the site boundary and six nationally designated sites within 5km of the site boundary. One local statutory designated and five non-statutory local protected sites were located within 2km. Due to the small scale and limited scope of the development it is considered unlikely that there will be any negative impacts on these sites.
- 5.2.** Habitats – The current proposals will directly impact a relatively small area of lowland deciduous woodland. This area has a high proportion of open space, and the main impacts will be limited to a group of trees consisting of a mature ash (showing signs of ash dieback and recommended for removal by the Arboricultural Report), mature wild cherry and multiple stems of holly as well as an immature hazel stool and immature ash trees beyond (north) of this group. This area of woodland is not designated as Priority but is likely to qualify as Priority habitat by virtue of being lowland deciduous woodland.
- 5.3.** The proposed development is within the 15m buffer recommended for ancient woodland. However, the proposals are unlikely to have any indirect impacts on the adjacent (ancient, replanted) woodland. The practice nets will only be used in daylight hours and there will be no artificial lighting. The change of location is unlikely to result in a significant increase in noise or disturbance, above that which occurs already, given that the existing nets are within this buffer zone.
- 5.4.** Materials and machinery for construction will be transported to site via the sports ground and not through the woodland habitat. Materials will be stored offsite within the cricket club grounds.
- 5.5.** The artificial surface for the practice nets ground will consist of a porous membrane and the nets will be fixed with ground anchors. These features are unlikely to have any material effect on the surrounding habitats post-construction, for example potential for increased water-shedding.
- 5.6.** Protected species - Potential negative impacts of the proposals on any legally protected species should be considered for foraging and commuting bats, breeding birds, great crested newts, reptiles, badgers and hazel dormice.
- *Badgers* – Badger setts have been recorded in the adjacent woodland, Braky Wood (one of which was likely to be partially active) and badgers are likely to be present in the local landscape. The nearest entrance was 38 metres from the site which is outside the 20 metres within which use of lighter machinery would require a license. Increased disturbance from noise and recreational use is unlikely given the presence of the existing practice nets and the current heavy recreational use of Braky Wood for dog-walking and biking (see [Photograph 8](#)). No artificial lighting is proposed. It is possible that badgers use the habitat within the site for foraging and commuting. However, there was little to no evidence of well-worn or heavily used paths bisecting the Site. The broadleaf habitat within the Site is of secondary importance to badgers, and there was much more extensive evidence of more frequently used paths between Braky Wood and nearby habitats of primary importance, such as the modified grassland within the cricket ground

and the grazing pasture to the north and east. There are numerous gaps in the boundary between Braky Wood and the cricket ground for badgers which will be unaffected by the development (see Photograph 8). Impacts are therefore likely to be limited to a minor loss of potential secondary foraging habitat, however this will be offset by the reinstatement of 0.013 ha of the existing cricket net area to modified grassland.

- *Bats* – The Site itself is unlikely to host roosting bats. One adjacent tree offsite was recorded as hosting at least one PRF, however the proposal is unlikely to have any direct or indirect impacts if an active roost is present. The Site and surrounding habitats are of moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. However, the limited scope and scale of the proposals are unlikely to have any significant impact to either flight-lines or foraging habitat. No artificial lighting will be deployed.
- *Breeding birds* – The woodland habitat within the site boundary held potential to support breeding birds. Proposals will result in the loss of nesting opportunities within the trees and shrubs onsite and could potentially cause direct injury during the construction phase through vegetation removal.
- *Dormice* – There is a low likelihood that the woodland habitat within and adjacent to the site provides (sub-optimal) habitat for foraging, commuting and/or resting/hibernating dormice. The loss of habitat is not likely to be significant given the abundance of more suitable habitat in the wider landscape and the risk of harm can be mitigated through adherence to a Precautionary Working Method Statement (see Appendix C).
- *Great Crested Newt* – There is a low likelihood that the woodland habitat within and adjacent to the site provides (sub-optimal) habitat for foraging, commuting and/or resting/hibernating great crested newt. The loss of habitat is not likely to be significant given the abundance of more suitable habitat in the wider landscape and the risk of harm can be mitigated through adherence to a Precautionary Working Method Statement (see Appendix C).
- *Reptiles* – There is a low likelihood that the woodland habitat within and adjacent to the site provides (sub-optimal) habitat for foraging and/or resting/hibernating reptiles. The loss of habitat is not likely to be significant given the abundance of more suitable habitat in the wider landscape and the risk of harm can be mitigated through adherence to a Precautionary Working Method Statement (see Appendix C).

Opportunities

- 5.7.** There are opportunities to provide enhancements to the site through planting of native tree species within the woodland block surrounding the site as there is sufficient open space to allow for some additional planting which will contribute to compensating for the loss of trees/habitat. Overall, compensatory planting will result in an enhancement of the woodland as natural regeneration by young trees is currently limited.
- 5.8.** There are also opportunities to compensate for the predicted loss of habitats through some basic measures, these could include:

- Creating foraging and hibernation opportunities for invertebrates, hazel dormouse, great crested newts, reptiles and hedgehog through the creation of log and brash piles within the surrounding woodland block, utilising the material from the felled trees.

6. Recommendations

Further surveys

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to badgers, hazel dormice, reptiles and great crested newt, further protected species surveys are considered to be disproportionate. No further surveys are required.

Mitigation likely to be required for the proposed works

- 6.1. **Trees** – Offsite trees immediately adjacent to the site will need to be protected from impact both during and post-construction as per the recommendations set out in the BS58317 Arboricultural Survey and Report.
- 6.2. **Protected species** – To mitigate against the potential for harm to breeding birds, hazel dormice, great crested newts, reptiles and hedgehog, adherence to a Precautionary Working Method Statement is recommended, details of which can be found in Appendix C. The proposed works should ideally be undertaken between November and March (inclusive), outside the bird nesting season and when great crested newts, hazel dormice and reptiles are likely to be hibernating and there is least chance of disturbance and/or harm. Works should be undertaken with care and in a phased manner as detailed in the PWMS. If works cannot be avoided between April and October, then a suitably qualified ecologist should be employed to check the site for bird nests and/or hibernating species not more than 48 hours before work commences.

Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility

- 6.3. There are opportunities to achieve biodiversity net gain onsite. However, the client has ruled out realistically being able to secure these (e.g. through a Section 106) due to the likely costs and legal complications.
- 6.4. Purchase of offsite biodiversity units will therefore be required, either directly from a habitat bank or through a broker.
- 6.5. A Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to be submitted to the LPA, including a Biodiversity Gain Site Register reference and Statutory Metric complete with the offsite units and reference. This can be submitted after planning consent has been granted but the client may wish to submit it with the planning application to avoid delays.

Biodiversity Enhancements

- 6.6. Beyond biodiversity net gain, there are opportunities for enhancement of the application site which is still required of developments under local and national planning policy. These include:
 - Creating foraging and hibernation opportunities for invertebrates, hazel dormouse, great crested newts, reptiles and hedgehog through the creation of log and brash piles within the surrounding woodland block, utilising the material from the felled trees.
 - Planting of native tree species within the open space within the existing woodland block surrounding the site. Some open space should be retained (at least 10% of the total area).

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Appendix A: Photographs

Label	Photograph
1 – Existing practice nets with secondary woodland to north.	
2 – Open woodland space in proposed development site area with immature ash and low shrub understorey.	
3 – Secondary woodland north of Site (view from footpath to northwest).	

4 - Braky Wood (Ancient, replanted)- with majority Norway spruce plantation and sparse majority bracken shrub layer.



5 – View to grazing pasture north of Braky Wood.



6 – Heavily used public footpath northwest of the Site.



7 – Badger sett entrance (likely active) within Braky Wood.



8 – Fence with gaps on NE to SW boundary between cricket ground and Braky Wood.



9 – Evidence of recreational bike ramps and jumps within Braky Wood.



Appendix B: Protected Species Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS)

Proposed works

The proposals include construction of new cricket practice nets involving vegetation removal, resurfacing and anchoring and erection of new nets and creation of modified grassland. The construction and conversion process will comprise the following activities:

- Vegetation removal
- Ground enabling works
- Construction of new practice nets
- Landscaping / resurfacing

Objectives of the Precautionary Work Method Statement

The primary objective of this PWMS is to facilitate the construction activities whilst avoiding the residual risk of impacting existing habitats within and adjacent to the red line boundary and any protected/notable species that they may potentially be host to including reptiles, great crested newt, hazel dormouse, amphibians, hedgehog and breeding birds.

Detail on working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives

The measures listed below provide the mitigation solution to allow the works to progress whilst meeting the stated objective of avoiding the residual risk of impacting on retained habitats and protected species.

1. The proposed works will be undertaken between November and March inclusive (outside the nesting bird season and when GCN, reptiles and dormice will be dormant) to minimise disruption.
2. Once trees have been felled, clearance of tall vegetation will be undertaken using a strimmer or brush cutter with all cuttings raked and removed the same day. Cutting will only be undertaken in a phased way which may either include:
 - a) Cutting vegetation to a height of no less than 30mm, clearing no more than one third of the site in any one day or
 - b) Cutting vegetation over three consecutive days to a height of no less than 150mm at the first cut, 75mm at the second cut and 30mm at the third cut.
3. Following removal of tall vegetation, using the methods outlined in point 2, remaining vegetation will be maintained at a short sward height through regular mowing or strimming until works commence. This will ensure that the site is not suitable for great crested newts or reptiles.
4. Ground clearance of any remaining low vegetation (if required) and any ground works will only be undertaken following the works in point 2 above.
5. Woody material arising from the tree felling should be stacked in log and brash piles outside the red line boundary for habitat enhancement. These should not

be later disturbed but if they must be moved for any reason then they should be dismantled by hand.

6. All retained habitats including boundary trees should be protected during the entire course of the works through installation of habitat protection (e.g. heras) fencing. Protection fencing around retained trees should follow the mitigation advice set out in the BS5837 Arboricultural Report.
7. Machinery and materials should be stored on either hardstanding or raised off the ground on pallets where possible. Movement around the site should be kept to a minimum to reduce soil compaction.
8. Any trenches left overnight will be covered or provided with ramps to prevent animals falling into the trenches and being trapped. Excavations left overnight should be checked prior to filling. Any open pipes left overnight will be covered. Excavations should also be managed to avoid creating any temporary waterbodies.
9. Any building materials should be stored outside the red line within the cricket grounds as set out within the planning proposal.
10. The site owner/site manager will ensure that anyone (including sub-contractors) undertaking construction and landscaping (both creation and management), is made aware of the potential for the site to support protected species, where to expect them, their protected status and the procedure to follow in the unlikely event that protected species are discovered during works. Where applicable, this advice will be given through site inductions, toolbox talks (such as CIRIA toolbox talks) or similar. A copy of this Precautionary Method of Working will be always kept on site and available for inspection.
11. Should any protected species (i.e. bats, great crested newt, reptiles, dormice, hedgehogs and badger) be discovered during construction or other works on site, which are likely to be affected by the development, works will cease immediately. The owner/ site manager will then seek the advice of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist and works will only proceed in accordance with the advice they provide. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) provides further guidance and advice on finding a suitably qualified ecologist.