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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Hurstpierpoint College, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 9JS

Client:

Dan Higgins

Survey date:

28th March 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Mid Sussex District Council. The proposal is described as “the erection of four dwellings with associated amenity gardens”.

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

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion

The site survey was undertaken by Chantae Wells BSc (Hons) MSC, (Accredited Agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2018-33540-CLS-CLS) on 28/03/2025					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
28/03/2025	14	48	30	18	Light

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey. Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, photos in appendix 3 and proposal plan in appendix 4).	
Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<p>The site is located in Hurstpierpoint, East Sussex at National Grid Reference TQ 29166 17806 and has an area of approximately 0.09Ha, comprising grassland, scrub, scattered trees and hedgerows. The off-site BNG area is approximately 0.3Ha of frequently managed, modified grassland. The site is surrounded by arable fields, pockets of woodland and extensive networks of hedgerows. Hurstpierpoint college is approximately 250m south-west of the site. The site is situated within a rural context, with urban areas approximately 1km south-west and 1km north-east of the site.</p> <p><u>Developed land, sealed surface (u1b)</u></p> <p>There is a small area of timber decking within the site.</p>

	<p><u>Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)</u></p> <p>There is a small area of gravel driveway within the site.</p> <p><u>Bramble scrub (h3d)</u></p> <p>The majority of the site comprises bramble scrub with scattered trees (species including goat willow, sycamore, cherry laurel, European holly). The ground flora consists of primrose, cuckoopint, ragwort, nettles, ivy and bramble.</p> <p><u>Modified grassland (g4)</u></p> <p>The south-east of the site is comprised of grassland. Species include dominant rye grass and Yorkshire fog, with abundant cuckoopint, frequent ragwort and hogweed, and occasional sorrel, meadow buttercup and primrose. There are 6-8 species per m², under 5% bare ground, no invasive species, no bracken and no evidence of physical damage. The sward height is not varied, it is uniform and tall (>7cm).</p> <p><u>Ornamental hedgerow (h2b)</u></p> <p>The north and east boundary of the site is bordered by cherry laurel hedgerow.</p> <p><u>Native hedgerow (h2a)</u></p> <p>The south of the site is bordered by a native hedgerow which includes beech trees. The hedgerow is >1.5m height, >1.5m width, no gaps, no evidence of damage and no invasive species. There is undisturbed vegetation 1m on the north side, however the south side is comprised of tarmac road.</p>
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	<p><u>Off-site area for BNG</u></p> <p>The majority of this area is modified grassland, dominated by perennial rye grass and frequently managed to a uniform sward height <7cm. There is over 10% bare ground, no invasive species, no bracken. There are less than 6 species per m². Through the west of this area is an access track that is sparsely vegetated (<50% vegetation cover). There is a native hedgerow on the western boundary.</p> <p>Local notable habitats</p> <p>Within 2km of the site, there is Traditional orchard (closest of which is approximately 60m west) and Ancient woodland (closest of which is approximately 400m south).</p>
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No direct impacts to any habitats of biodiversity value are anticipated due to the small scale of the works and the distance of notable habitats from the site. Indirect impacts (such as pollution) may occur to nearby traditional orchard.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Best practice to minimise pollution to nearby traditional orchard.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<p>On-site designations</p> <p>The site is not subject to any designations.</p> <p>Statutory designated sites (within 2km)</p> <p>The South Downs National Park is approximately 2km south of the site. The site is not designated for protected species.</p> <p>The presence of non-statutory designation sites cannot be ascertained without biological records data.</p>
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No direct impacts are anticipated on statutory designated sites given the distance of the site from statutory designated sites.

	The presence of non-statutory sites cannot be ascertained without biological records data, however given the small scale of the works, direct impacts are not anticipated to occur outside of the site boundary.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Best practice to minimise the risk of pollution to the nearby non-statutory designated sites (which may be present within the local area) must be followed during construction.
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive or non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts anticipated.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The scrub within the site provides suitable habitat for common invertebrates.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts to notable assemblages of invertebrates anticipated.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSLs A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the licence or will relocate to other known roosts sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There are no granted EPSLs for bats within a 2km radius of site. The closest granted EPSL for bats is 2.37km west.

	<p>Foraging and Commuting habitat</p> <p>The habitats identified on site comprise modified grassland, scrub and hedgerows. These habitats are likely to provide some value to foraging and commuting bats, however due to their small extent, the structural and species diversity is limited. There is good quality foraging and commuting habitat within the local area, including grassland and pockets of woodland.</p> <p>Roosting habitat</p> <p>The two trees within the grassland did not have any suitable roosting features for bats. The trees within the scrub could not be fully assessed due to dense scrub and ivy growth on trees. Given that the trees are semi-mature and DBH are small, no suitable features for maternity roosts are anticipated.</p>
<p><i>Foreseen Impacts</i></p>	<p>The removal of vegetation will result in the loss of suitable foraging habitat for bats. Given the small extent of the habitat, and the good quality habitat within the wider landscape, this is likely to be inconsequential to local bat populations.</p> <p>The removal of trees may result in the loss of suitable bat roosting features.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations</i></p>	<p>The trees within the scrub will be soft felled by competent Arboricultural contractors under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist acting as an ecological clerk of works (ECoW). Soft felling will comprise the removal of each tree in sections, whereby each section is lowered safely to the ground. The ECoW will advise the best locations to cut and remove each tree section as to avoid direct impacts to PRFs. The tree sections will then be left in-situ over night as to allow any roosting bats potentially present to emerge unharmed prior to their removal from the site.</p> <p>Should any evidence be recorded that indicates current use of the trees by roosting bats, works must stop immediately and the ECoW consulted on how best to lawfully proceed. This may require further surveys to characterise any roosts present and a subsequent degradation licence from natural England, where necessary.</p>

Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The scrub, trees and hedgerow within the site are suitable for nesting birds. These are likely to be common bird species.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development may result in the destruction of birds' nests (if present).
<i>Recommendations</i>	<p>The site clearance works should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and scrub should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of vegetation clearance. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.</p> <p>Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged.</p>
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The scrub and grassland within the site provide suitable foraging habitat for reptiles. The hedgerows provide suitable commuting habitat for reptiles.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Individual reptiles may be injured or killed by heavy machinery during vegetation clearance works
<i>Recommendations</i>	Given the small area of the site, reptile population surveys are considered disproportionate. In order to reduce the risk to transient reptiles to an acceptably low level, a reptile mitigation and enhancement plan is recommended.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<p>There are three granted EPSLs for great crested newts within 2km of the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPSM2011-3094 (2011-2015) 1.3km north • 2015-9446-EPS-MIT (2015-2019) 860m south-west • 2019-40724-EPS-MIT (2019-2030) 1.6km south

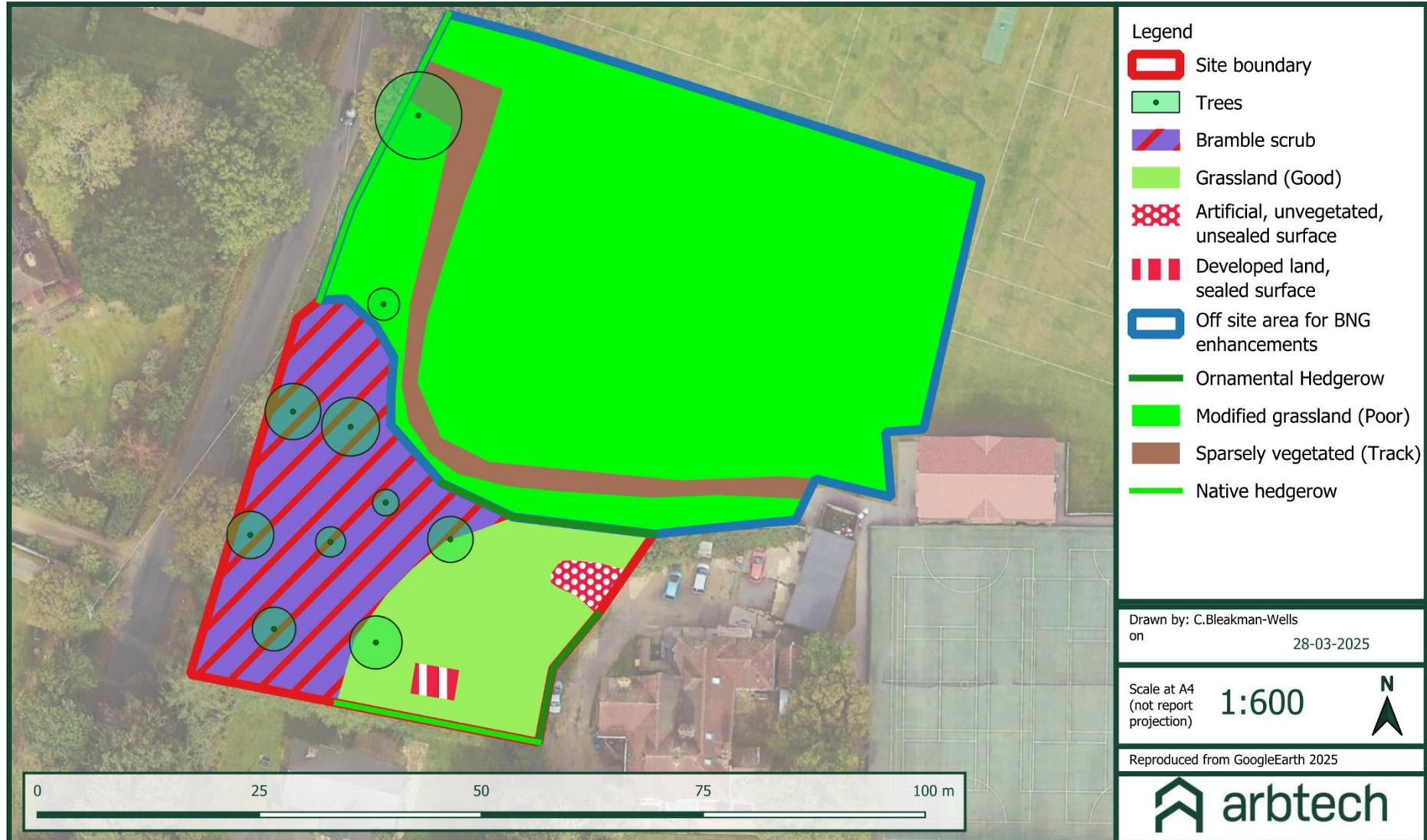
	<p>The scrub and grassland within the site provide suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians. There is no suitable aquatic habitat within the site. However, there are seven ponds within 500m of the site, the closest of which is 250m north-east of the site.</p>																								
<p><i>Foreseen Impacts</i></p>	<p>When georeferencing the proposed development plans over scaled mapping of the site, it is noted that the development area is likely to result in the loss or significant disturbance of approximately 0.09ha of grassland and scrub. If great crested newts are present within the pond ~250m north-east and those over 250m away from the site, this will constitute a loss of 0.09ha within 250m and 500m of a potential breeding pond. When completing the rapid risk assessment published by Natural England (Natural England 2015), the proposed development produces a Green risk score (see table below), which states: Offence Highly Unlikely. Impacts to amphibians as a result of the proposed development are deemed to be acceptably low.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="533 778 1776 1114"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="533 778 1081 887">Component</th> <th data-bbox="1081 778 1630 887">Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)</th> <th data-bbox="1630 778 1776 887">Notional offence probability score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 887 1081 919">Great crested newt breeding pond(s)</td> <td data-bbox="1081 887 1630 919">No effect</td> <td data-bbox="1630 887 1776 919">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 919 1081 951">Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)</td> <td data-bbox="1081 919 1630 951">No effect</td> <td data-bbox="1630 919 1776 951">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 951 1081 983">Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)</td> <td data-bbox="1081 951 1630 983">0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged</td> <td data-bbox="1630 951 1776 983">0.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 983 1081 1015">Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)</td> <td data-bbox="1081 983 1630 1015">0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged</td> <td data-bbox="1630 983 1776 1015">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 1015 1081 1046">Individual great crested newts</td> <td data-bbox="1081 1015 1630 1046">No effect</td> <td data-bbox="1630 1015 1776 1046">0</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 1046 1081 1078"></td> <td data-bbox="1081 1046 1630 1078">Maximum:</td> <td data-bbox="1630 1046 1776 1078">0.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="533 1078 1081 1110">Rapid risk assessment result:</td> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="1081 1078 1776 1110" style="background-color: #00FF00; text-align: center;">GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score	Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0	Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0	Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.01	Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0	Individual great crested newts	No effect	0		Maximum:	0.01	Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	
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<p><i>Recommendations</i></p>	<p>Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment states that an offence to great crested newts is highly unlikely. Risks to common amphibians can be reduced to an acceptably low level by following the outlined precautionary working methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolbox talk given to contractors to advise about the potential for amphibians within the site • ECoW to perform a finger-tip search of vegetation immediately prior to the start if works 																								

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staged approach to vegetation clearance: Scrub will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight, then cleared to <7cm and maintained at this level until the completion of the proposed development • In the unlikely event that great crested newts are observed within the site, all works must stop with immediate effect and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. • If any common amphibians are found on site, they should be left to disperse of their own accord. If in immediate danger and will not move of their own volition, they may be gently removed and placed in an area of vegetation.
<p>Badger</p>	
<p><i>Summary of Survey Findings</i></p>	<p>There were no badger setts or evidence of badgers within the site. There is no suitable habitat for badger sett creation within the site. The grassland within the site provides suitable foraging habitat for badgers.</p>
<p><i>Foreseen Impacts</i></p>	<p>Transient badgers may be injured by heavy machinery during construction.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations</i></p>	<p>Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to badgers, further badger surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

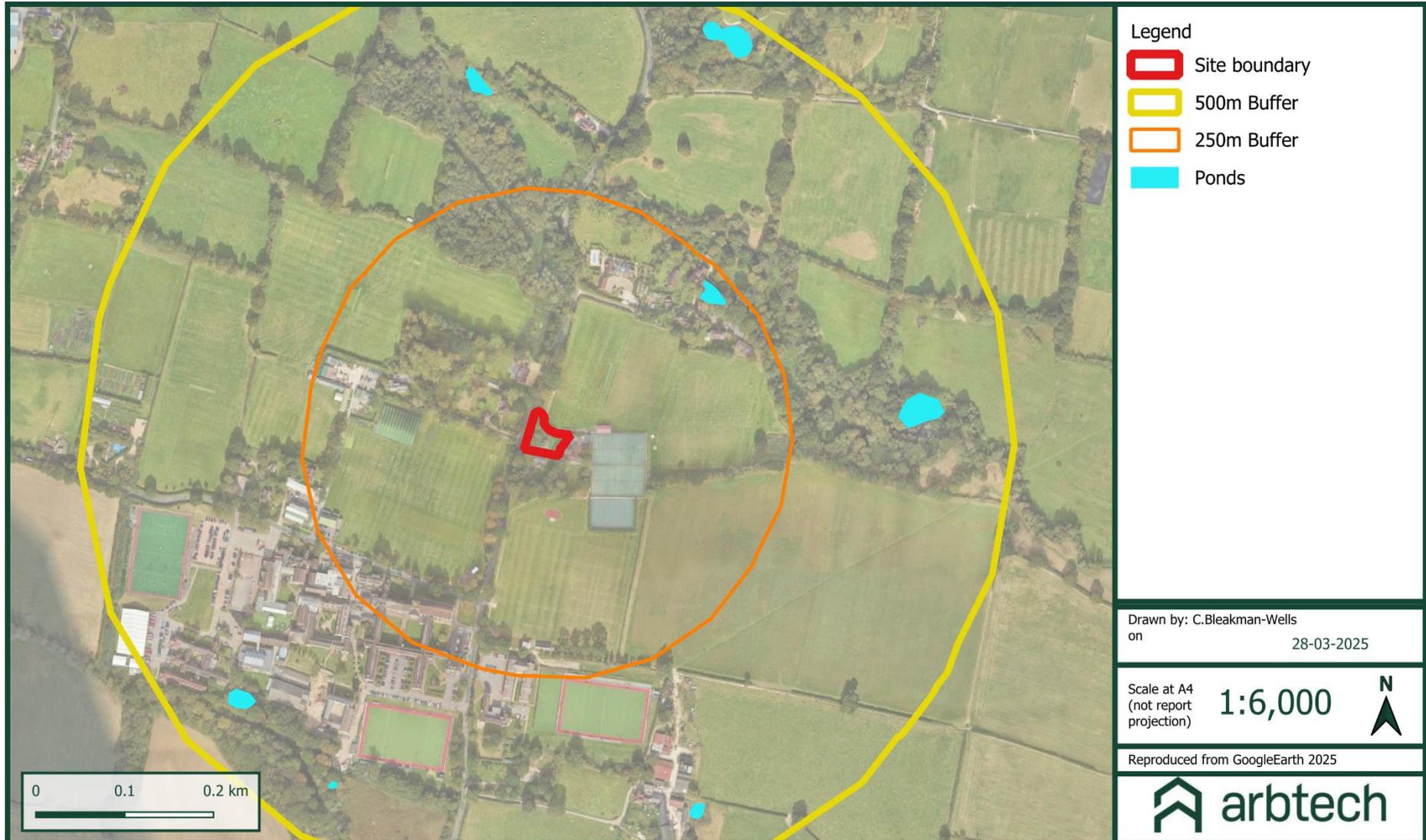
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no watercourses on or connected to the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts anticipated.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<p>There are no granted EPSLs for dormice within 2km of the site.</p> <p>The scrub and hedgerows provide limited suitable habitat for hazel dormice. For isolated habitats in the UK, research indicates that dormice require 20ha of woodland habitat to support a viable population (Bright et al. 1994). Although 20ha of woodland is not present on or directly adjacent to the site, the hedgerows present are connected to an extensive hedgerow network within the wider landscape which are connected to multiple woodland pockets, including over 20Ha of woodland ~170m to the north.</p>
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Approximately 100m ² of scrub will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitat is likely to be inconsequential to local dormouse populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of dormice, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<p>Due to the small area of habitat to be impacted, and the lack of granted EPSLs for hazel dormice withing 2km of the site, dormice population surveys are deemed disproportionate to the risks. In order to reduce risk to hazel dormice to an acceptably low level, the following precautionary working methods must be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the dormouse hibernation season (November to March) • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of dormice at the site. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken by an ECoW for dormice.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the unlikely event that a dormouse or evidence of dormouse is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The grassland within the site is suitable for foraging and commuting hedgehogs. The scrub is suitable for sheltering hedgehogs.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Hedgehogs may be injured or killed by heavy machinery during the construction works.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<p>A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

Appendix 1a: Habitat Plan



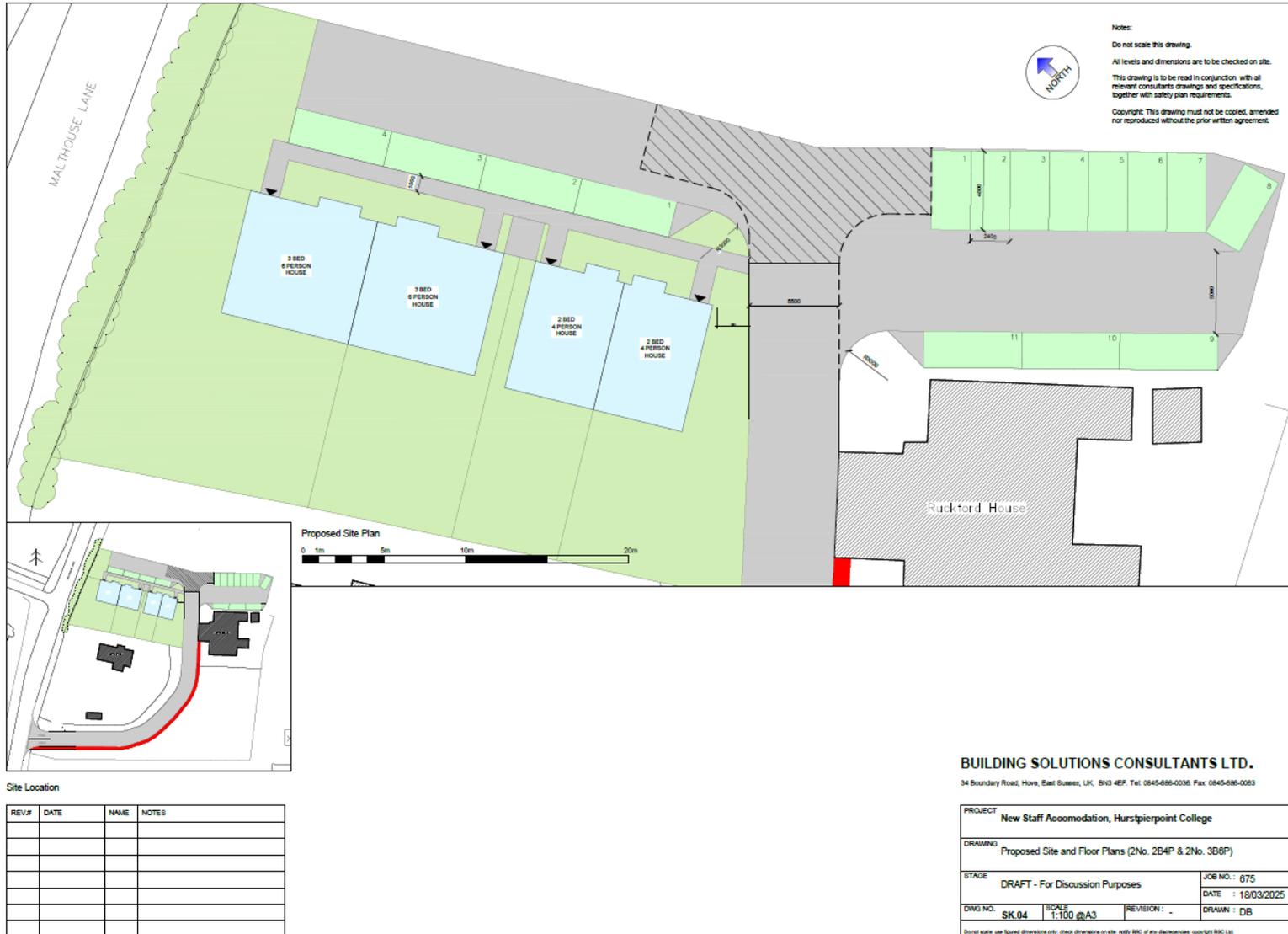
Appendix 1b: Pond Map



Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Proposed plan



Appendix 4: Photographs

Description	Photographs
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	
Artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surface	
Developed land, sealed surface	

Grassland



Native hedgerow



Ornamental hedgerow



Bramble scrub with scattered trees





Modified grassland (Poor condition)



Limitations and Copyright

Limitations

Biological record data has not been used to inform this report. However, given the small area of the site, the strict precautionary working methods suggested and the recommendation of further surveys, the addition of biological record data is not anticipated to significantly alter the recommendations within this report.

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Version control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Chantae Bleakman-Wells BSc (Hons), MSc - Consultant Ecologist	28/03/2025
Final	1.0	Chantae Bleakman-Wells BSc (Hons), MSc - Consultant Ecologist	02/04/2025