



Landscape, Arboriculture and Ecology

Surveys – Plans – Assessments - Mitigation – Solutions – Methodology

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Otter Assessment

29th September 2026

Land Rear of The Bulrushes

Coombe Hill Road

East Grinstead

West Sussex

RH19 4LZ

Arborweald Environmental Planning Consultancy

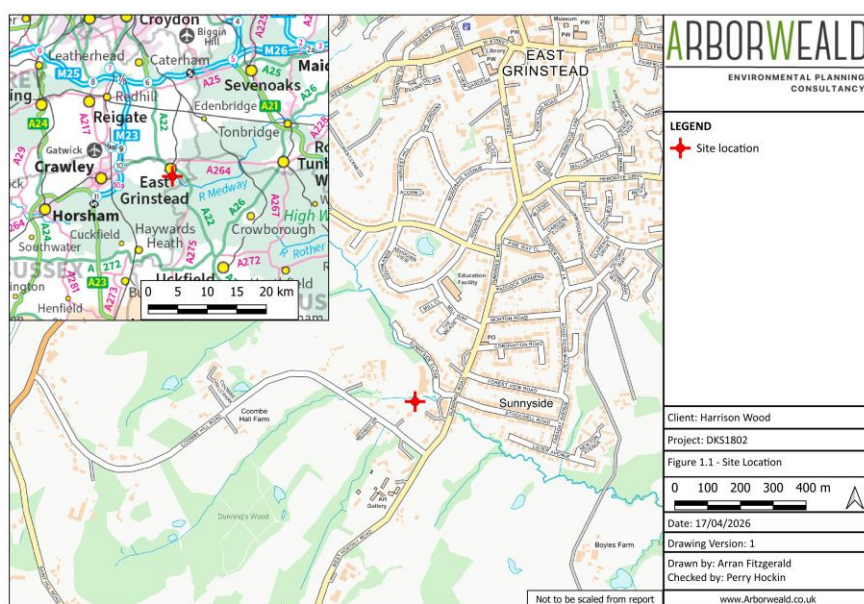
Woodland Enterprise Centre

Hastings Road

Flimwell

East Sussex

TN5 7PR



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Otter assessment

Arborweald Environmental Planning Consultancy (AEPC) were requested to provide an assessment of the potential for Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* to be present at Land Rear of The Bulrushes, Coombe Hill Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4LZ (TQ 39145 36884), following a query from the Local Planning Authority regarding the stream which forms the northern boundary of the site.

This letter should be read in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (DKS1802.1 – PEA, 26/05/2026), however at the time it was the opinion of the surveyor that it was unsuitable for *Lutra Lutra* and prepared for more likely protected species. The proposed is the construction of a new two-storey dwelling with associated garage, access, parking and landscaping. The site survey was carried out on 14th April 2026 and included a search for field signs of protected species along the stream corridor. No evidence of otter (spraints, footprints, feeding remains, slides, couches or holts) was recorded.

Stream condition

The stream is a narrow watercourse approximately 1.5m wide, with a moderately incised channel and steep earth banks, bordered by a thin strip of tall herb vegetation and scattered trees. Downstream, it passes through a culvert beneath the road network before discharging into a small weir-controlled waterbody within a car park.

The stream is not considered to be in good ecological condition. It lies on the urban edge of East Grinstead and is likely to receive diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off from surrounding farmland, as well as urban surface-water run-off from adjacent roads, car parking and hardstanding. These pressures are likely to reduce water quality and limit the fish and amphibian prey available to otters. The corridor is also subject to regular disturbance from the adjacent Public Right of Way and surrounding residential development. The stream is therefore not considered to represent suitable otter habitat, and in the surveyors, opinion is not capable of sustaining a population.

Desk study

A search on NBN Atlas 2000m buffered (accessed 29/09/2026) returned no recent records of otter. The most recent records identified were sightings in 2013 at Weir Wood Reservoir, approximately 1.8km south of the site. No records were returned for the stream itself or for the urban area of East Grinstead and connectivity is obstructed.

Otter populations in Sussex remain limited following their widespread decline in the twentieth century, and the species is still only recorded infrequently in the county (Sussex Wildlife Trust, 2018). Where otters are present, this is largely confined to specific larger river systems in West Sussex, such as the River Arun and River Rother catchments, where natural recolonization has been supported by reintroductions. Otters are not known to be established in the upper Medway catchment or within the urban area of East Grinstead.

Conclusion

The proposed development is located away from the stream, and no works to the channel, banks or bankside trees are proposed. An undeveloped buffer of a minimum of 10m will be retained along the northern stream corridor and enhanced through reduced mowing, retention of rough marginal vegetation, native damp-margin planting and the creation of log piles and deadwood habitat. The riparian corridor currently offers little ecological value, so these measures will improve the stream corridor for wildlife compared with its existing condition.

Recommendations

The site currently offers limited ecological value, having been recently cleared, with a narrow and degraded stream corridor and defunct, gappy hedgerows. The enhancement measures set out in Section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (DKS1802.1) will be incorporated into the development. These include the retention of an undeveloped buffer of a minimum of 10m along the northern stream corridor, sensitive management of the riparian margin through reduced mowing and retention of rough marginal vegetation. They also include the creation of log piles and deadwood habitat, bolster planting of retained hedgerows with native species such as hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, and the installation of species-specific features such as a bee brick. Together, these measures will result in a clear improvement in the ecological value of the stream corridor and the wider site compared with its current condition.

Declaration: The information which I have prepared and provided for this report is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct; I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional bona fide opinions.

Printed: Arran Fitzgerald BSc (Hons.), MSc - Assistant Ecologist

Signed: 

References

Arborweald (2026). DKS1802.1 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Land Rear of The Bulrushes, Coombe Hill Road, East Grinstead.

NBN Atlas (2026). Lutra lutra records. <https://records.nbnatlas.org> [accessed 29/09/2026].

Sussex Wildlife Trust (2018). Otter spotted in central Sussex. <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/otter-spotted-in-central-sussex>