



The Ecology Co-op

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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11th August 2025

Ref: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) – Standen Visitor Reception, East Grinstead.

To whom it may concern,

The Ecology Co-op has been commissioned to undertake a PEA of Standen Visitor Reception, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead RH19 4NE by The National Trust. This letter report presents a summary of a survey undertaken by Dan Bennett, MCIEEM on 23rd July 2025.

The site is located in a rural area approximately 2.7km south of central East Grinstead. The central grid reference for the site is TQ 3913 3558. The site is used as the Visitor Reception for Standen House and Gardens and comprises the Visitor Reception centre and the area to the rear of the building where the amenities are run to. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of the site, with the approximate boundary outlined.

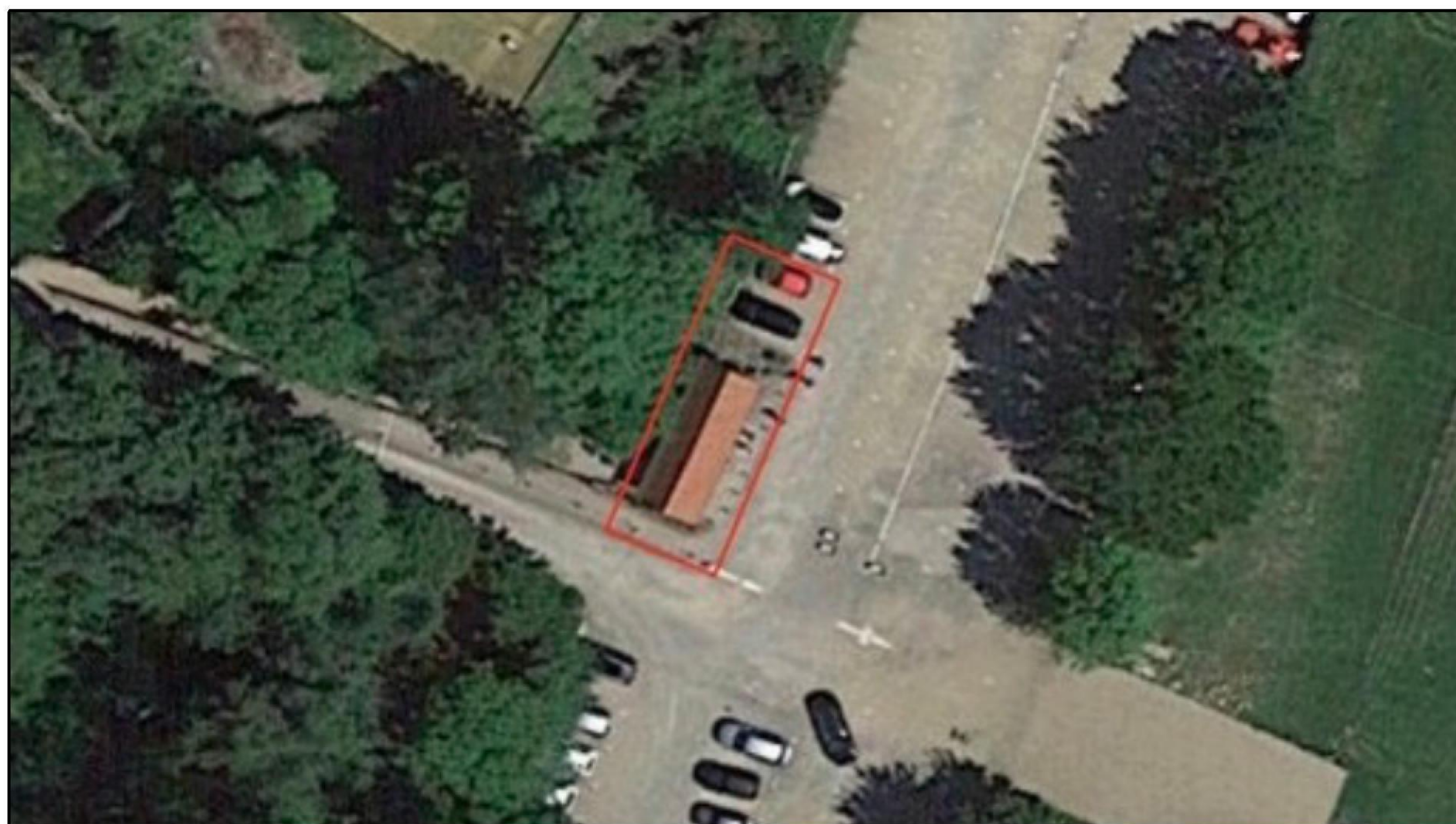


Figure 1 – An aerial view of the site with the approximate red-line boundary shown in red.

The proposed development comprises a small extension to the northern elevation of the existing Visitor Reception building. The scheme also includes the rerouting of utility services up the road to the west of the red line boundary, which will involve the excavation of a shallow trench that will be reinstated upon completion.

The area within the redline boundary is mostly made up of the existing Visitor Reception building and its surrounding paving with a small area of ornamental planting to the north and a very small patch of the dirt car park (Photograph 1). Within the redline boundary there is no suitable habitat for any protected species. The area where the utilities will be run mostly consists of the road and dirt path which runs from the car park to the Main House (Photograph 2). However, the trench will have to deviate off of this hard standing to reach the septic tank which is located at the edge of a small patch of trees which is fenced alongside the road. This section of land is heavily disturbed, featuring rubble, broken tiles, and minimal vegetative cover. It is also used informally for the storage of building materials and equipment, including kayaks (Photograph 3).

The site lies within the High Weald National Landscape. Two statutory designated sites are located within 2 km of the Standen Visitor Reception, as shown in Figure 2. The first is Weirwood Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 0.8 km south of the site. This is one of the largest expanses of open water in Sussex and provides important breeding habitat for a range of bird species. The second is Stone Hill Rocks SSSI, situated approximately 1.3 km to the south-west, which is designated for its geological features

There is an area of ancient and semi-natural woodland approximately 0.2km from the development site. Although Figure 3 depicts a large area of deciduous woodland to the west of the existing Visitor Reception, site visits and aerial imagery confirm that it is, in fact, a small woodland patch, with the remainder comprising ornamental gardens.

There are no granted European Protected Species (EPS) Licences within 1km of the application site.

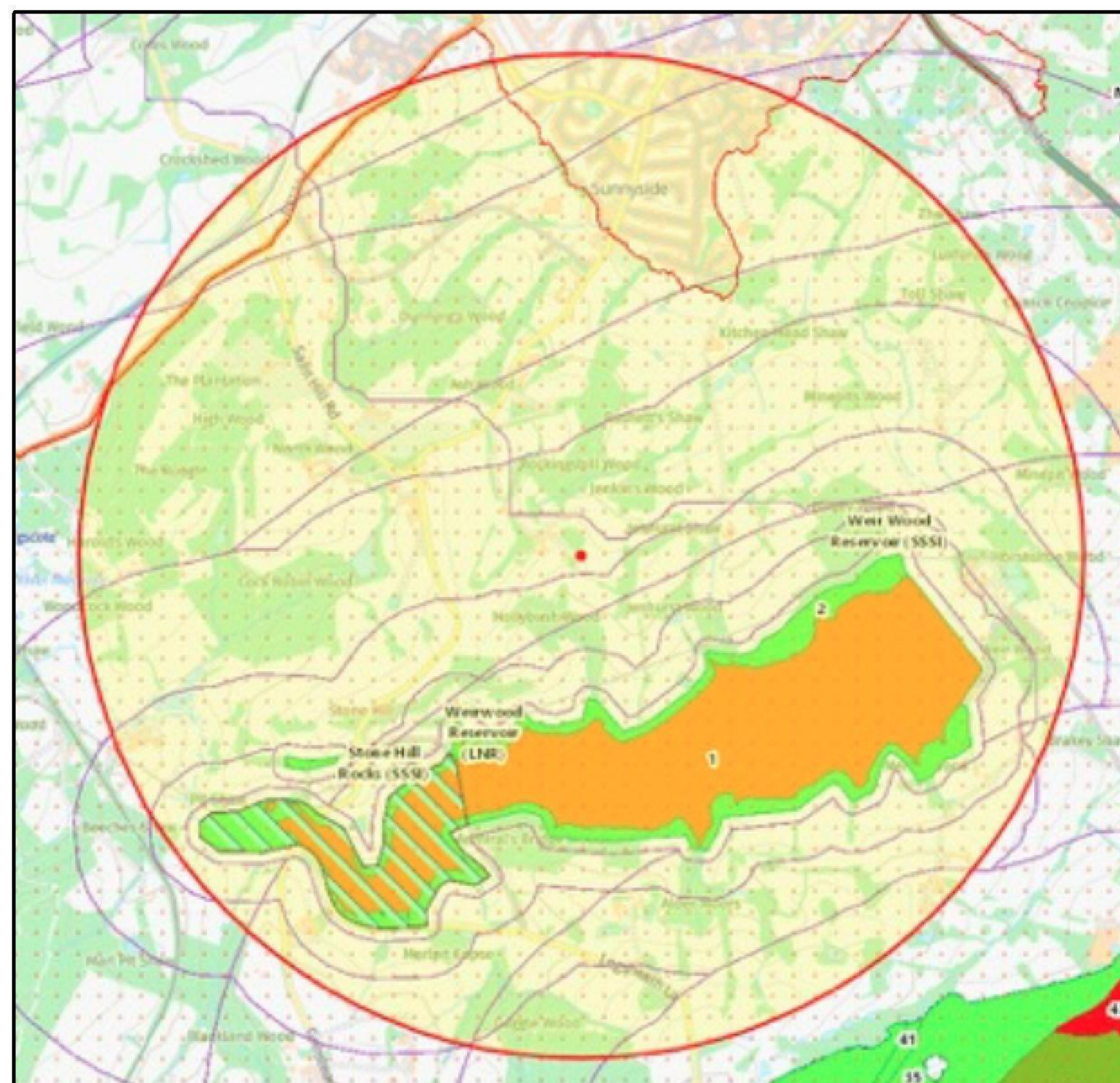


Figure 2. Designated sites within a radius of 2km of the application site. Images produced courtesy of Magic maps (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/>, contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0).



Figure 3. Ancient and semi-natural woodland/ancient, replanted woodland relative to the Standen Visitor Reception (Marked by the red point). Image produced courtesy of Magic maps (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/>, contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0).

According to the data collected during the site visit on the 23rd of July and on Magic Maps and there are 9 ponds within 250m of the proposed development site, see Figure 4. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was completed for ponds 1 to 4 (Photographs 4 to 7) during the site visit and the results of this can be seen in Appendix 2. Pond 1 was 230 m² in area, with a large yew tree *Taxus baccata* shading around 40% of the pond and common duckweed *Lemna minor* was seen covering the majority of the pond. Plant species including purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, flag iris *Iris pseudacorus* and pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* were also recorded. Pond 2 was completely dried out at the time of the site visit, the plant species recorded here included pendulous sedge, flag iris, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and floating sweet grass *Glyceria fluitans*. Pond 3 was lined with concrete and was at a low level and quite silted. Around 50% of the pond was covered with great reed mace *Typha latifolia* and the rest with common duckweed. Finally pond 4 was full but had poor water quality, it had a butyl pond liner and was completely shaded.

There is no immediate threat to great crested newts or other amphibians within the redline boundary due to a lack of suitable habitat. However, there is a possibility that great crested newts may pass through the woodland edge habitat to the west of the development where the utilities will be run to the septic tank. Therefore, a precautionary approach should be adopted when the trenches are excavated, this should include a hand search of the area affected, completed by a suitability qualified and licenced ecologist, prior to works commencing. Any suitable habitat found should be carefully deconstructed/moved out of the construction area.

In addition to great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* other mammals such as hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and badgers *Meles meles* may move through the area, so during the construction phase the following precautions should be taken to prevent negative impacts to wildlife as a result of development

works:

- all trenches must be covered at night or have a rough-sawn plank placed inside to enable any wildlife to escape should they fall in;
- any security lighting should be directed away from tree line boundaries, in particular diverted away from the tree stand;
- all chemicals and pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. No chemicals will be allowed to leak on to the site at any time and must be stored away from the tree stand;
- all materials must be stored on raised pallets or on hardstanding.

Given the shaded nature of this habitat, it is not considered likely to support any reptiles and as such no further surveys will be required.

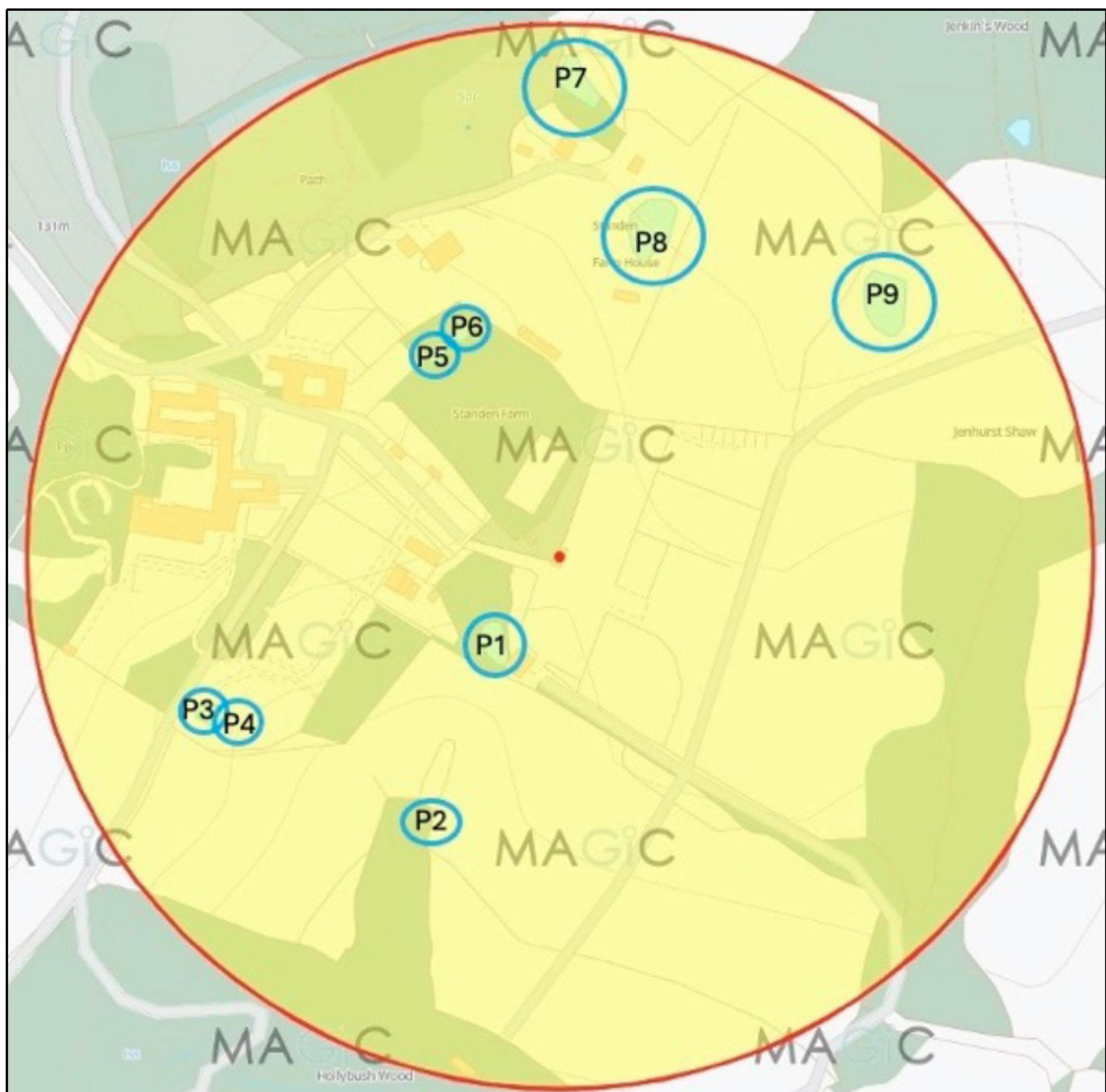


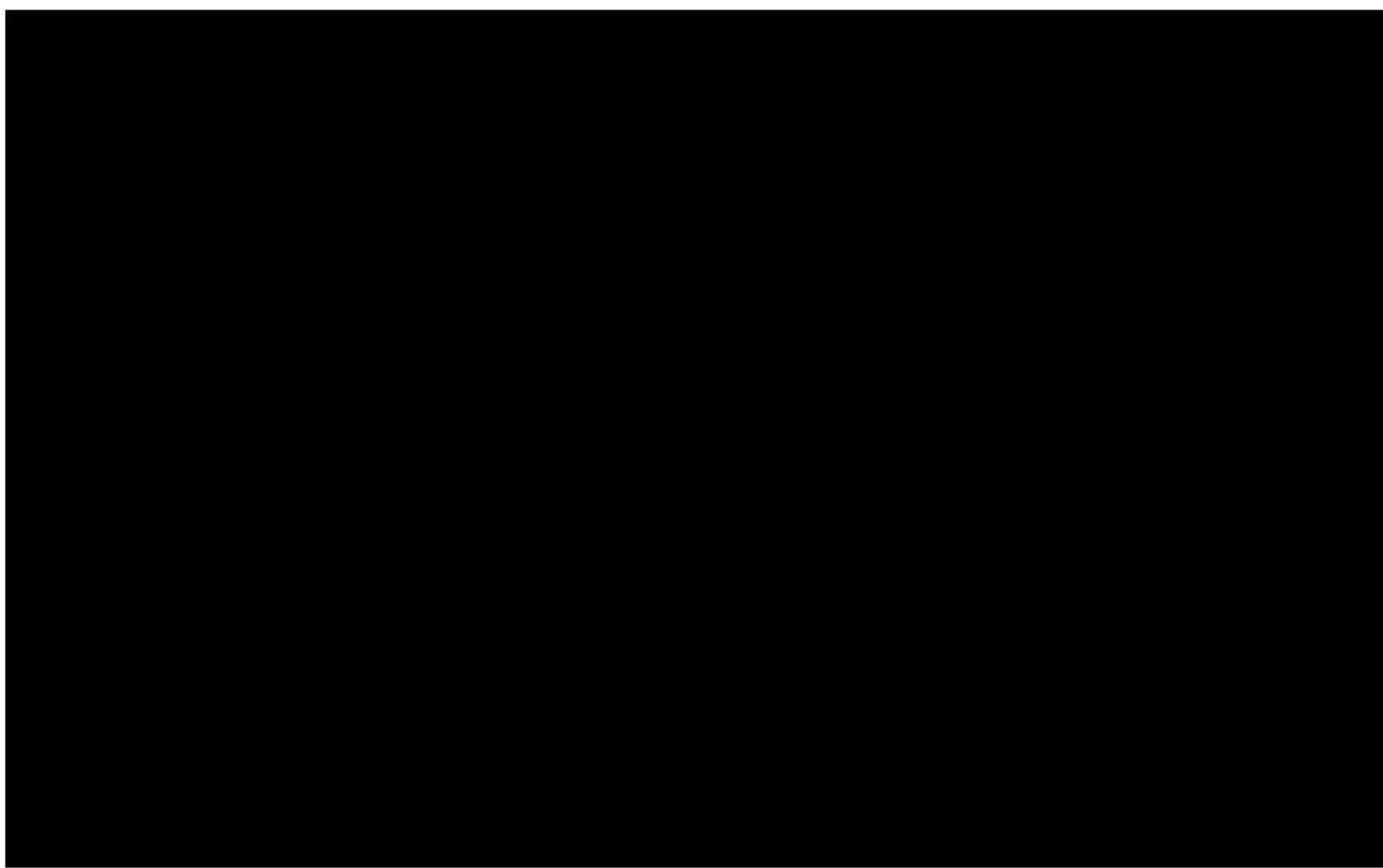
Figure 4. Ponds within 250m of the site. Image produced courtesy of Magic maps (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/>, contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0).

The Visitor Reception building is approximately five years old and contains a small, ply-lined loft void measuring around 3 m by 2 m, with a ridge height of approximately 1.5 m (Photograph 8), no evidence of bats was recorded. The rest of the ceiling inside the building was vaulted (Photograph 9). During the exterior inspection no suitable roosting features were observed, the roof tiles were tightly sealed with none missing or lifted (Photograph 10) and there were no significant gaps in the shiplap cladding on all elevations (Photograph 11). Photographs taken during the site visit are provided in Appendix 1. In accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, the building is assessed as having **negligible bat roosting potential**, and as such, no further surveys are required.

Given that the development will not result in measurable habitat loss or degradation, a Biodiversity Impact Calculation is unlikely to be required.

If you have any queries about the findings of this assessment, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



APPENDIX 1 – Photographs



Photograph 1. An overview of the Visitor Reception building looking south-west.



Photograph 2. The path and road that run from the car park towards the main house where the utilities will be run.



Photograph 3. The woodland edge habitat that the utilities will need to cut across to reach the septic tank.



Photograph 4. An overview of pond 1.



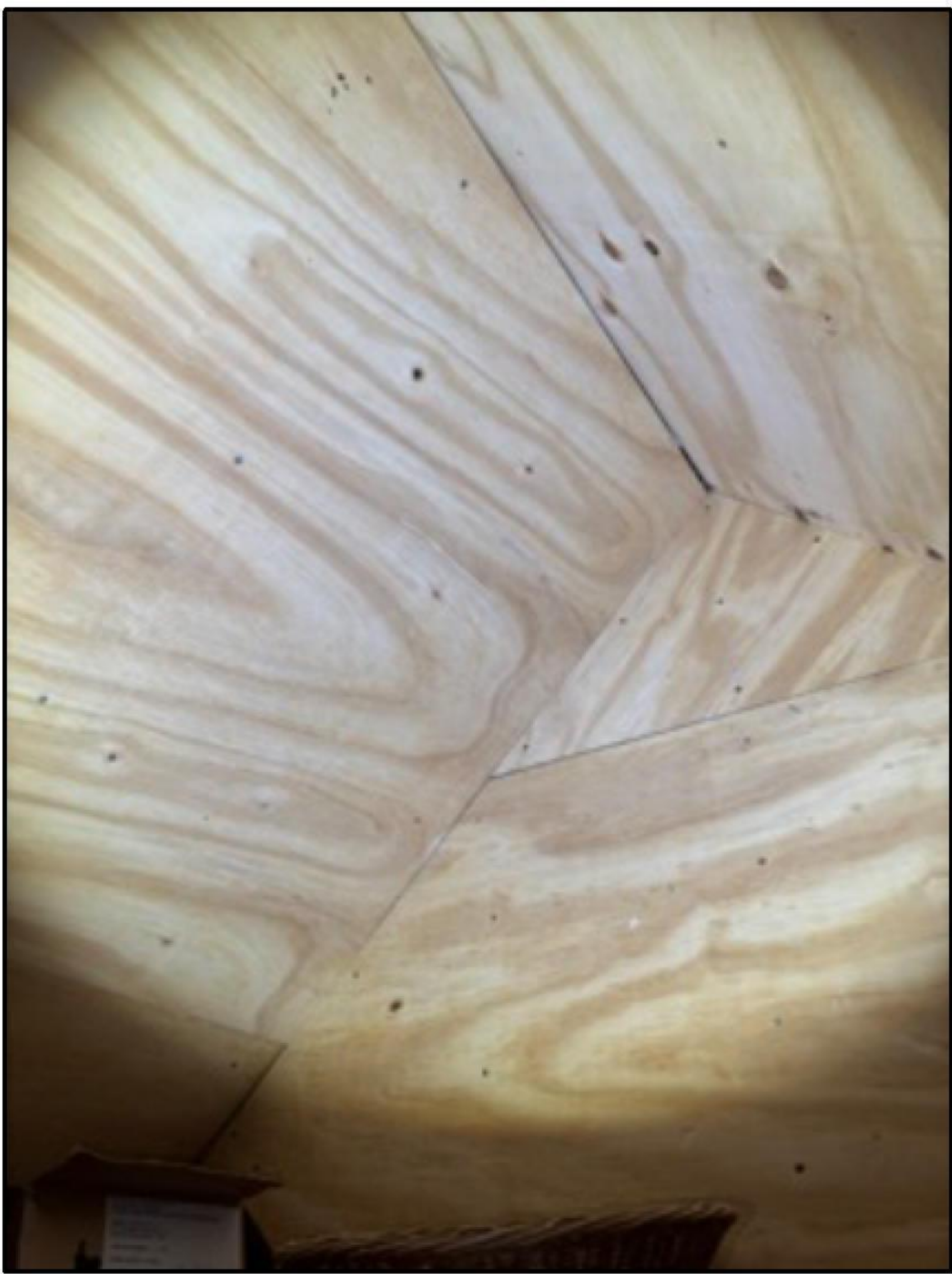
Photograph 5. An overview of pond 2.



Photograph 6. An overview of pond 3.



Photograph 7. An overview of pond 4.



Photograph 8. The ply boarded loft void in the Visitor Reception Building.



Photograph 9. The vaulted ceiling in the Visitor Reception building.



Photograph 10. The tightly sealed roof tiles on the rear (western elevation) of the Visitor Reception building



Photograph 11. An example of the tightly sealed cladding found on all elevations of the Visitor Reception building.

APPENDIX 2 – Great Crested Newt ‘Habitat Suitability Index’ Values

	Pond 1		Pond 2		Pond 3		Pond 4	
NGR	TQ39103554		TQ39073544		TQ38963550		TQ38963550	
SI attribute	SI value	Notes	SI value	Notes	SI value	Notes	SI value	Notes
Location	1.00	SE England (A)	1.00	SE England (A)	1	SE England (A)	1	SE England (A)
Pond area	0.05	230 m ²	0.40	230 m ²	0.025	72 m ²	0.05	30 m ²
Pond drying	0.50	Sometimes	0.9	Never	1	Sometimes	1	Rarely dries
Water quality	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.33	Poor
Shade cover	1.00	20%	1	50%	1	50%	0.2	100%
Water-fowl	1.00	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent
Fish presence	1.00	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent
No. ponds	1.00	25	1	28	1	25	1	25
Terrestrial habitat	1.00	Good	1	Good	1	Good	1	Good
Macrophytes	1.00	75%	0.3	2%	0.8	50%	0.3	0%
HSI value	0.66	‘Average’ suitability	0.77	‘Good’ suitability	0.61	‘Average’ suitability	0.50	‘Below average’ suitability