

HURST FARM, HURSTWOOD LANE, HAYWARDS HEATH

ECOLOGY TECHNICAL UPDATE – 27th MAY 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report provides the results of the update surveys within the parcel of land known as Hurst Farm, Hurstwood Lane, Haywards Heath (OS grid reference: TQ 34057 22423) hereafter referred to as the Approved Development Site.
- 1.2. The Approved Development Site received outline planning permission (Ref. DM/22/2272) for the erection of up to 375 new homes, a two-form entry primary school, burial ground, allotments, open space with associated infrastructure, landscaping and parking areas.
- 1.3. The Approved Development Site occupies an area of approximately 32 hectares (ha) and comprises neutral grassland, woodland, scrub, ponds, hedgerows, tree lines, and several scattered trees.
- 1.4. Previous surveys have been carried out across the Approved Development Site from 2014 onwards including habitat surveys, badger surveys, great crested newt surveys (HSI and eDNA), bat surveys (preliminary bat roost assessment, tree roost assessment, static detector survey and transect surveys), hazel dormouse surveys, reptile surveys, and breeding bird surveys. Full details of these surveys are presented within the Ecology Technical Appendices produced by Ecological Planning and Research¹.
- 1.5. An update walkover survey was carried out on 29th May 2025 by Benjamin Prego, Senior Ecologist at ACD Environmental Ltd. Benjamin has several years' experience in the ecology sector carrying out a wide range of surveys, including UK Habitat Classification Surveys and Phase 2 Surveys for protected surveys, and producing high-level reports and mitigation strategies. Benjamin is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds a Natural England Class Licence for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*.

¹ Ecological Planning and Research Ltd (April 2017). Hurst Farm, Hurstwood Lane, Haywards Heath. Technical Appendix Ecological Context.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. A summary of ecological field surveys is provided in **Table 1**, and a summary of historic ecological surveys is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 1: Field surveys

Survey	Surveyor/s	Survey date/s	Study Area	Relevant guidelines
Updated Site Walkover	ACD Environmental	May 2025	Red line boundary	UKHab Ltd (2023) ²
Badger Walkover Survey	ACD Environmental	May 2025	Red line boundary	Harris <i>et al</i> (1989) Scottish Badgers (2018)
Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey	ACD Environmental	24 th June 2025	Red line boundary	eDNA survey guidelines
Bat Ground-level Tree Survey	ACD Environmental	10 th September 2025	Red line boundary	Collins (2023) ³
Hazel Dormouse Presence/absence Survey	ACD Environmental	July – October 2025	Red line boundary	Wells, Chanin & Gubert (2025)

² UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <http://www.ukhab.org>)

³ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Table 2: Historic field surveys

Survey	Surveyor/s	Survey date/s	Study Area	Relevant guidelines
Habitat Appraisal	ECOSA	November 2012	Red line boundary	JNCC (2010)
Bat Activity Transect Surveys	ECOSA	2014	Red line boundary	Bat Conservation Trust (2007)
Great Crested Newt Pond Presence/absence Surveys	ECOSA	2014	Ponds within 250m of red line boundary	English Nature (2001)
Reptile Refugia Surveys	ECOSA	May – October 2014	Red line boundary	Froglife (1999)
Hazel Dormouse Presence/absence Survey	ECOSA	June – November 2014	Red line boundary	English Nature (2006)
Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey	Ecological Planning & Research	Spring/Summer 2016	Red line boundary	JNCC (2010)

Bat Building Preliminary Roost Assessment	Ecological Planning & Research	30 th October 2015	Red line boundary	BCT (2016)
Bat Ground-level Tree Survey	Ecological Planning & Research	Spring 2016 & 2017	Red line boundary	BCT (2016)
Bat Activity Surveys	Ecological Planning & Research	May – September 2016	Red line boundary	BCT (2016)
Great Crested Newt Pond Population Size Class Assessment	Ecological Planning & Research	April – June 2016	Ponds within 250m of red line boundary	English Nature (2001)
Reptile Refugia Surveys	Ecological Planning & Research	May – June 2016	Red line boundary	Froglife (1999)
Breeding Bird Survey	Ecological Planning & Research	April – June 2016	Red line boundary	Common Birds Census (CBC) Methodology

Badger field signs survey

- 2.2. A badger field signs survey was carried out by ACD Environmental Ltd. Badger field signs surveys comprised walking the perimeter and interior boundaries of the Site, searching for evidence of badgers, in accordance with Harris et al⁴ (1989) and Scottish Natural Heritage⁵ (2018).

⁴ Harris, S., Cresswell, P., and Jefferies, D. (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society.

⁵ Scottish Badgers (2018). *Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines*. Version 1.

2.3. Where badger setts were found, they were described using the following criteria:

- Number of well-used holes - one or more of the features: well-worn entrance; freshly excavated soil; bedding material.
- Number of partially-used holes - leaves or twigs in entrance and/or mosses and other plants growing in or around entrance).
- Number of disused holes - partially or completely blocked, with considerable amount of excavation required for reoccupation.

2.4. Where feasible, badger setts were classified into the following:

- Main sett - continuously used, breeding and over-wintering sett for a social group of badgers. Only one main sett will exist in each social groups territory, and will be relatively centrally located within the group's range.
- Annexe sett - annexe of the main sett, linked by well-used paths to the main sett (but not connected underground). Not continuously used.
- Subsidiary sett - distant from the main sett. Several entrances, but with no well-used paths connecting to the main sett, and only used seasonally.
- Outlier sett - distant from the main sett. Small, with only one of two entrances only. Used for short periods sporadically, with no obvious, well-used paths connecting to other setts.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

2.5. A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)⁶ was undertaken on the trees within the Approved Development Site to search for bats/evidence of bats (e.g. bat droppings and feeding remains) and assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. The purpose of which is to search for bats/evidence of bats and assess the likelihood of bats being present and the need for further survey and/or mitigation.

⁶ Collins J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

2.6. The features of bats were searched for on the trees with reference to the three broad categories of Potential Roost Features (PRFs) and sub-categories of PRFs from the Bat Tree Habitat Key⁷. These are as follows:

2.7. Disease and decay PRFs:

- Woodpecker and squirrel holes;
- Knot holes;
- Pruning-cuts;
- Tear outs;
- Compression forks;
- Wounds;
- Cankers; and
- Butt rots.

2.8. Association PRFs:

- Fluting; and
- Ivy.

2.9. Damage PRFs:

- Hazard beams;
- Frost cracks;
- Subsidence/shearing and helical splits;
- Lightning strikes;

⁷ Bat Tree Habitat Key 2018. *Bat Roosts in Trees – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-care and Ecology professionals*. Exeter: Pelagic Publishing.

- Desiccation fissures;
- Transverse snaps;
- Welds; and
- Lifting bark.

Limitations

2.10. There were no limitations during any of the surveys.

3. RESULTS

Habitats

3.1. A broad overview of the habitats found onsite is provided below.

Other neutral grassland

3.2. The majority of the Approved Development Site comprised fields of other neutral grassland. These have historically been grazed by sheep, however, the grassland was not being grazed at the time of the updated walkover survey and pockets of long, tussocky vegetation were forming. The grassland areas are currently managed for public use in the form of mown pathways around the edges of each field. As such, these areas receive high levels of footfall from recreational use. Areas of wetter grassland with abundant rush *Juncus sp.* were present within the western parcel of the site adjacent to the pockets of woodland with ponds, and within the eastern-most field in the eastern parcel.

	
Photograph 1: Section of neutral grassland onsite.	Photograph 2: Pocket of longer sward vegetation along boundary of grassland.

Woodland

- 3.3. There are several sections of woodland within the Approved Development Site including two parcels of ancient, semi-natural woodland. These parcels are situated adjacent to the east of Hurstwood Lane and in the north-eastern corner of the site respectively. The woodland areas within the Approved Development Site consisted predominantly of broad-leaved, deciduous species including oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, beech *Fagus sylvatica* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. A section of plantation woodland was identified at the eastern end of the site along the south-western boundary of the far-eastern parcel.

	
Photograph 3: Pocket of ancient woodland adjacent to Hurstwood Lane.	Photograph 4: Pocket of ancient woodland in the north-eastern corner of the site below Greenhill Park.

Dense scrub

- 3.4. Several areas of dense scrub were identified within the Approved Development Site consisting predominantly of bramble. These areas were found primarily along the boundaries of grassland and woodland areas.

Bracken

- 3.5. Pockets of bracken were identified in the northern section of the western parcel of the Approved Development Site. These areas were found along the boundary of the woodland adjacent to the west of Hurstwood Lane.

	
Photograph 3: Patch of dense bramble scrub adjacent to grassland area.	Photograph 4: Area of bracken adjacent to woodland.

Scattered trees

- 3.6. Several scattered trees are present on-site including numerous large mature oak trees and sycamore trees.

Hedgerows and lines of trees

- 3.7. The Approved Development Site is bounded in several areas by a network of linear features including native hedgerows and tree lines. These are predominantly found along the southern and south-eastern boundaries of the western parcel adjacent to Hurstwood Lane, and along the southern boundary of the western-most field in the eastern parcel of the site.

Waterbodies

- 3.8. There are two waterbodies within the Approved Development Site which are located within small pockets of woodland in the western parcel of the site. Additionally, there are several ponds within the surrounding area including one located within the area of ancient woodland in the north-eastern corner of the site, one to the north of the western parcel adjacent to Rocky Lane, and one within the built-up area adjacent to the north of the western parcel.

	
Photograph 5: Section of tree line adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the western parcel.	Photograph 6: One of the waterbodies onsite.

Fauna

Badgers

- 3.9. During the walkover survey in May 2025, three mammal holes were identified within the woodland adjacent to the north of the intersection between Hurstwood Lane and Hurstwood Grange. Due to their size and shape these holes were considered to have been created by badgers. In addition, there was fresh spoil outside the entrance to one of the holes indicating that the holes were likely to have been used recently. Only three holes were identified during the survey which would suggest that they likely belong to an outlier sett which is used infrequently by small numbers of badgers.
- 3.10. It is understood that there will be a suitable buffer established around the identified holes where there will be no construction activities. A 15m buffer of works should be implemented during the construction phase to ensure the sett is not disturbed. The woodland area will be retained post-development and the immediately adjacent area to the north-west of this woodland is currently due to become an amenity area post-development. As such, it is considered that the sett will not be disturbed by any construction or post-development activities and therefore no licence or further monitoring is required. It is however recommended that an update badger walkover survey should be carried out within the Approved Development Site at least three months prior to the commencement of construction activities to ensure that no new badger holes are present.

3.11. Additionally, the neutral grassland, woodland and boundary hedgerow and tree line habitats onsite were considered to provide optimal habitat for badgers to commute and forage. Several worn mammal paths were identified within the grassland and woodland habitats indicating that the wider site is used for foraging/commuting purposes.

3.12. As such, it is recommended that best practice guidelines are followed throughout the proposed development to ensure no individuals are harmed during construction. This includes ensuring that any excavations or trenches associated with construction are either covered overnight or supplemented with a means of escape for any mammals that may fall into the excavation while foraging and ensuring that any open pipes or conduits are blocked off each night to prevent mammals from entering them.

Bats

Roosting bats

3.13. There are no buildings within the boundaries of the Approved Development Site.

3.14. An updated ground-level tree assessment of all trees within the Approved Development Site that will be removed during the proposed development was undertaken in September 2025. A number of trees to be removed were identified with suitable roosting features. These include three mature ash trees (T91, T92 & T93) located at the northern end of the wooded area surrounding one of the waterbodies in the western parcel of the site. These trees were all found to have significant dead wood with rot holes and as such were considered to have 'high' potential to support roosting bats. Previous emergence surveys on these trees in 2016 did not identify any bat roosts.

3.15. Other notable trees with bat roosting features included a goat willow (G114) with holes in the stem, a Monterey pine (T149) with loose bark and split limbs, and a sycamore (T155) with loose bark. These trees were all assessed as having 'low' potential to support roosting bats.

3.16. It is recommended that immediately prior to the felling of these trees, they must be aerially inspected by a bat licenced ecologist to ensure that they are not in use by roosting bats. These trees will also be soft-felled in sections under the supervision of the ecologist and any sections with cavities will be thoroughly inspected on the ground and left in-situ for 24 hours to allow any animals inside to escape. If any bats are found during the inspection or soft-felling process, works will cease immediately and will not re-commence until an EPS licence has been secured from Natural England.

Commuting and foraging bats

- 3.17. The Approved Development Site provides suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats in the form of woodland, native hedgerows and tree lines. This network of linear features also acts as a green corridor, providing connectivity for commuting bats to and from high-quality habitats in the wider area.
- 3.18. Previous activity surveys carried out in 2016 found generally low bat activity across the site. The areas of highest activity included the woodland and tree lines adjacent to Hurstwood Lane, and the area of Anscombe Woodland offsite that extends northwards to the tunnel under Rocky Lane. Species recorded included common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pigmaeus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, myotis *Myotis sp.*, and serotine *Cnephaeus serotinus*. Therefore, the Approved Development Site was assessed to be of **Local Importance** to bats.
- 3.19. It is understood that the woodland and boundary hedgerow and tree line habitats are largely due to be retained during the proposed development, and where trees will be removed to provide access to the site from Hurstwood Lane, it is considered that the overall canopy cover will be largely maintained. As such, it is considered that there will be no significant fragmentation of suitable habitat for commuting bats as a result of the proposed development. Therefore, no further surveys are considered to be necessary.
- 3.20. Any new lighting to be implemented during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development could significantly disturb bats including disturbing feeding habits or interrupting commuting routes. Therefore, a sensitive lighting strategy will be implemented during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development to ensure that commuting bats are not impacted by the works. This will include directing any light away from boundary habitats to maintain them as 'dark corridors', using LED lighting with a warm light source of 2700K or lower, and using hoods, covers and shields to ensure that all light is directed downwards.

Birds

- 3.21. Previous breeding bird surveys carried out in 2016 identified several red and amber listed species using the site. Notable species identified onsite included dunnoek, house sparrow, linnet, stock dove, starling, song thrush, and yellowhammer. Breeding territories of several species were recorded, however, these were mostly identified to fall outside of the site boundary. Additionally, the suitable bird nesting habitat onsite including woodland, hedgerows and tree lines will largely be retained. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development will not cause significant harm to the conservation status of the breeding bird assemblage within the Approved Development Site.

3.22. If any areas of suitable bird nesting habitat are to be removed or affected during the proposed development, then it is recommended that this should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) or after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If an active nest is found, then all works must cease, and a 5m buffer of works be implemented until all the young have fledged the nest.

Great crested newts

3.23. There are two ponds present within the boundary of the Approved Development Site (Ponds 3 & 4, **Appendix 1**). Additionally, there are several ponds within the surrounding area. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment of all of these ponds was undertaken in 2016 and an updated HSI assessment of ponds 1-6 was carried out in June 2025, excluding Pond 2 which was inaccessible. The results of the HSI assessments can be found in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Summary of HSI Assessment Results

Pond Reference	HSI Score (2016)	Updated HSI Score (2025)	Pond Suitability for Great Crested Newts
1	0.53	0.71	Good
2	0.46	-	Poor
3	0.64	0.73	Good
4	0.42	0.58	Below Average
5	0.51	0.68	Average
6	0.46	0.69	Average
7	0.31	-	Poor
8	0.76	-	Good
9	0.41	-	Poor
10	0.51	-	Below Average
11	0.68	-	Average
12	0.58	-	Below Average
13	0.49	-	Poor
14	0.76	-	Good
15	0.67	-	Average

3.24. Ponds 3, 8, 10, 11, 14 and 15 underwent further surveys in 2016 to determine presence/absence of GCN. During these surveys no GCN were found to be present in any of the ponds.

- 3.25. An eDNA survey of ponds 3 and 6 was carried out in June 2025. Ponds 1, 4 and 5 were dry at the time of the survey and therefore could not be surveyed. Ponds 3 and 6 both returned negative results for GCN. As such, it is considered unlikely that there are breeding GCN onsite.
- 3.26. The habitats within the Approved Development Site including neutral grassland, scrub, woodland, hedgerows and tree lines are suitable to support GCN in their terrestrial phase. Additionally, areas of the site fall within Red and Amber Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for great crested newts according to NatureSpace.
- 3.27. The ponds situated within the site boundary are considered to unlikely to support GCN and will be retained during the proposed development, therefore, no further surveys for great crested newts are considered necessary. However, given that the site falls within both Red and Amber IRZs for GCN according to NatureSpace and that there will be impacts to suitable terrestrial habitat on-site, it is recommended that the site should be registered under NatureSpace's District Level Licencing scheme. All works on-site will follow the recommendations outlined within a Precautionary Working Method Statement to ensure that great crested newts are not harmed during the proposed development.

Reptiles

- 3.28. Previous surveys carried out within the Approved Development Site in 2016 identified an exceptional population of slow worms with a peak count of 22, and a low population of common lizards with a peak count of two. Additionally, a single grass snake was also observed on two occasions. Reptiles were found mostly within the central field of the western parcel of the site, in the north-western corner of the eastern parcel, adjacent to the ancient woodland, and in the eastern-most field of the eastern parcel.
- 3.29. The grassland and scrub habitats within the Approved Development Site are still considered suitable for reptiles due to the presence of longer sward vegetation for foraging and refuge. As such, it is considered that there is a continued reptile presence onsite and no further surveys are required.
- 3.30. In order to avoid harm to reptiles during clearance of suitable habitat, a reptile mitigation strategy will be developed and implemented onsite. Prior to the commencement of works onsite, a full reptile translocation effort will be undertaken including installing reptile exclusion fencing around the target areas onsite, followed by a minimum of 30 days of trapping with caught reptiles to be released in the designated receptor area in the eastern parcel of the site (**Appendix 2**). This will be followed by a destructive search of all suitable reptile habitats onsite under the supervision of a qualified ecologist.

Hazel dormice

- 3.31. The network of woodland, hedgerows and lines of trees within the Approved Development Site provide suitable habitat for hazel dormice. Additionally, there are numerous records of dormice in the surrounding area including a record located approximately 250m to the south-west of the site from 2018. Previous surveys carried out in 2016 did not identify any dormice on-site.
- 3.32. Updated surveys were carried out between July – October 2025 which did not identify any dormice onsite (**Appendix 3**). Therefore, it is considered that dormice are likely absent from the Approved Development Site. However, it is recommended that any clearance of woodland, hedgerow or tree line habitat to facilitate access to the site along Hurstwood Lane is carried out sensitively in a two-phased approach to ensure that there is no potential harm to individuals using these areas.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. At the time of the walkover survey in May 2025, the habitats within the Approved Development Site, including neutral grassland, woodland, scrub, hedgerows and tree lines, scattered trees and waterbodies, were not considered to have changed significantly since the previous surveys.
- 4.2. Evidence of badgers was identified in the eastern parcel of the site. A 15m buffer of works will be maintained around this suspected badger sett throughout the construction and operational phase of the proposed development. An updated badger walkover survey will be carried out at least three months prior to the start of works onsite. Precautionary methods of clearance regarding badgers and other mammals will be followed during the development.
- 4.3. Several trees due to be removed support roosting bat potential. These will be inspected aerially by a licenced ecologist prior to their removal by soft-felling in sections. A sensitive lighting scheme will be implemented onsite to avoid impacts to commuting/foraging bats.
- 4.4. The site will be registered under the NatureSpace DLL scheme and works should be carried out under a PWMS to avoid harm to GCN and other amphibians.
- 4.5. A reptile mitigation strategy will be implemented onsite including a full translocation effort prior to any clearance works.
- 4.6. Dormice are considered likely absent from the site, however, any clearance of woodland, hedgerow and tree line vegetation should be carried out following a sensitive two-phased approach.

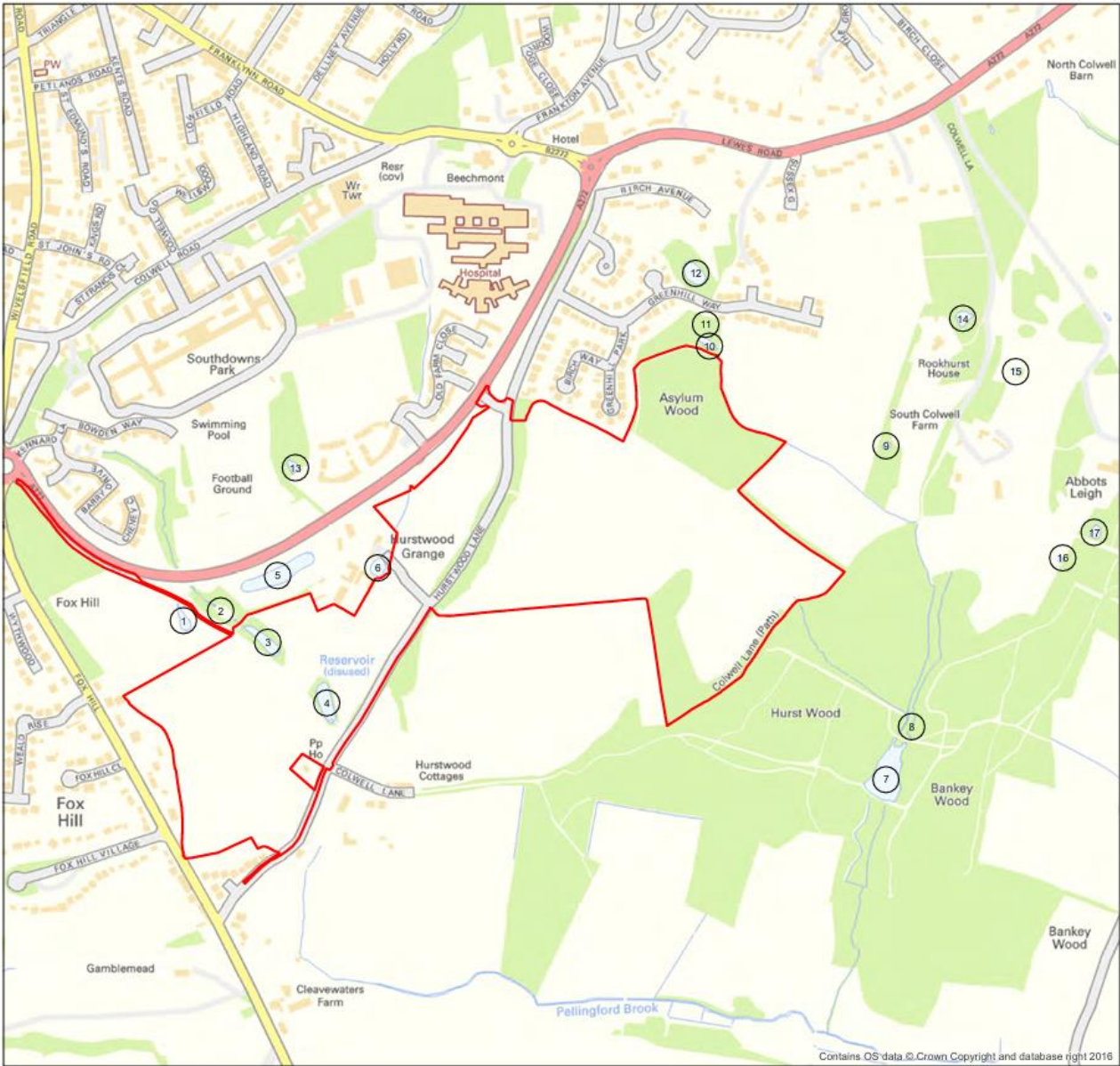
Benjamin Prego

Senior Ecologist

ACD Environmental

27th May 2026

APPENDIX 1: POND LOCATION PLAN



MAP 2 Location of Ponds Identified in the Zone of Influence

KEY

- Site boundary
- Pond (with ID)

SCALE: 1:6,000 at A3

0 50 100 150 200 Metres



Ecological Planning & Research

CLIENT: Enplan

PROJECT: Hurst Farm, Haywards Heath

DATE: March 2017

P15/55

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APPENDIX 2: REPTILE MITIGATION PLAN



APPENDIX 3: DORMOUSE SURVEY RESULTS

