



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT (PEA) REPORT

Stairbridge Lane Widening, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 5PB
Commissioned on behalf of London Town Property Holdings Ltd

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Executive summary

Introduction	This report provides a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) detailing the status of known or potential ecological constraints to the proposed widening works at Stairbridge Lane, adjacent to Bolney Business Park, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5PB. This report will identify the site's potential to support protected species and habitats, and recommend any appropriate species specific and mitigation requirements to ensure compliance with relevant national and European statutory requirements for ecological protection. It is understood the proposed plans include the widening of the lane, with loss of verge areas, two oak trees, two field maple trees, and tree crowning works.
Survey Methodology	Desk Study Biological records were obtained from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for a 2km radius from the proposed site. The records obtained contain relevant records and information held by the local biological recorders for the area. An extensive search of web-based information for the area was also undertaken identifying records of protected and other notable species of flora, fauna together with statutory/non-statutory wildlife sites. Web-based resource Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside was consulted to identify designated nature conservation sites within or immediately adjacent to the site surveyed. The Mid-Sussex District Plan was consulted to inform on biodiversity guidelines, specifically policies: • DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows • DP38: Biodiversity • DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment UKHab Habitat Mapping The initial habitat, flora and protected species survey of the potential development site was undertaken on 23rd April, with a follow-up walkover on 14th June 2026.
Conclusions / Recommendations	Designated Areas The site is situated approximately 1.9km to the south of the High Weald AONB, there is one non-statutory designated conservation site and one designated road verge, and several scattered areas of ancient and deciduous woodland within 2km of the site, and nine ponds within 500m. The designated sites and woodlands will not be impacted by the planned works due to separation by distance and roads, but protective measures will be required for ponds within close proximity to the site during development works. Habitats and Botanical Species of Interest The site itself is dominated by hard standing in the form of the road, bordered with grass verge leading to a native species hedge on the west and deciduous trees and scrub on the east. The habitats within the site are common and should not be considered to be of conservation importance, and no further botanical surveys are required. Great Crested Newt Whilst dominated by hard standing road, the site itself has been assessed with negligible potential for breeding GCN and other amphibians but moderate potential for foraging and commuting GCN and other amphibians in the boundary scrub, hedge and grassland areas. Given the small area of impacted suitable habitat, no further surveys are recommended. However, given the proximity of ponds to the works area, and habitat types impacted a GCN District Level Licence is recommended. Reptiles he site is dominated by the road, with limited suitable habitat for common reptiles on the grass verge boundaries. In addition, a reptile survey undertaken on the adjacent site to the east found likely absence of common lizards with none identified during the survey. Therefore, the site itself currently has a low potential for common reptiles foraging within the boundary vegetation, and no further surveys are required but precautionary measures are recommended for the vegetation clearance works. Birds The trees, hedge section and scrub on the east site boundary contain potential for nesting birds, although no active nests were observed during the survey. As all nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), any works likely to impact on nesting birds such as the tree crowning and felling, and any hedge cutting or scrub removal should be conducted outside

	the core breeding period for birds of March-August inclusive (although it should be noted that species such as pigeon can breed all year round). Should this timeframe be unobtainable, a thorough search for the presence of breeding birds should be conducted by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to the start of works. Should evidence of breeding birds be recorded, works within 5m of the nest or which have potential to destroy the nest should stop until the eggs have hatched and chicks fledged, or the nest is deemed by a suitably experienced ecologist to have been abandoned. Badger and Hedgehog No signs of badger were identified during either walkover undertaken on the site, and therefore no further surveys are recommended. As a precautionary measure any holes or trenches on the site should be either covered over night to prevent badger or other animals falling in and getting stuck, or alternatively ramps should be placed in the trench to enable animals to escape in the unlikely event they access the site. Bats It was recommended that the four trees assessed with moderate potential for roosting bats, an aerial tree survey be undertaken by a Class 2 bat licenced ecologist to confirm the bat roost potential of these trees. This survey has already been undertaken. The results of this survey have informed any requirement for further emergence surveys for these trees, and precautionary methods required for the felling or crowning. For the remainder of the impacted trees on site, it is recommended that the works be undertaken under precautionary method under supervision by a suitably experienced ecologist. If bats or evidence of bats are found during these works, works on the tree must stop immediately and further surveys will be required to inform a Natural England licence. Bats and lighting During development works light spill onto the boundary vegetation is to be avoided, to avoid adversely impacting foraging bats in area. The latest lighting guidance from the bat conservation trust which can be found at this link below: https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/ Hazel Dormice The site has been assessed with suitability and low-moderate potential for dormice within the boundary trees, hedges and scrub, with connectivity to adjacent habitat to the east where a Natural England Mitigation licence is required to complete development works. Given the small scale of the suitable habitat, no further surveys are recommended for this species. However, given the habitat impacted by the planned works, and the adjacent site to the east requiring a Natural England Mitigation Licence for dormice, a Natural England Mitigation Licence is also recommended for this site. Other species Beyond those noted above, there are no obvious of immediate issues regarding protected species on the site. Should at any point during the development a protected or notable species be identified within the site, then all works should stop and the appointed ecologist consulted on the appropriate manner in which to proceed. This report is valid for 18 months, after which time a new survey will be required.
Biodiversity Protective Measures Enhancements /	- Any lighting should follow the guidelines in section 5 to prevent impact to foraging bats and other nocturnal creatures. - It is recommended that any mature trees should be retained where possible. Tree protection measures should be implemented according to BS 5837:2012 'trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'. - To protect the ponds to the southwest, it is recommended that dust control methods be implemented to prevent dust from the development from entering this area.

1. Project Overview

Client:	London Town Property Holdings Ltd, FEI House, 141 Cricklewood Broadway NW2 3HY
Site Address:	Land at Stairbridge Lane, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 5PB
Attending Ecologist:	Julie Merrett (Natural England Class GCN, Dormouse and European Beaver licences, accredited agent under bat licence 2015-12576-CLS-CLS)
Survey Date:	23 rd April 2026/ 14th June 2026
Site Proposals:	Widening of Stairbridge Lane, with loss of verge, two oak trees, and tree crowning.
Associated Planning Reference Number:	Unknown
Source of Relevant Documents:	
Desk Study:	Sussex Biological Records Centre (SxBRC)
Site Plans:	Google Reeves Transport Planning (red line boundary)

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This report provides a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) detailing the status of known or potential ecological constraints to the proposed widening works at Stairbridge Lane, adjacent to Bolney Business Park, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5PB. This report will identify the site's potential to support protected species and habitats, and recommend any appropriate species specific and mitigation requirements to ensure compliance with relevant national and European statutory requirements for ecological protection.
- 2.2 It is understood the proposed plans include the widening of the lane, with loss of verge areas, two oak trees, two field maple trees, and tree crowning works.

Site Location

- 2.3 The site is located at OS Grid reference TQ27312047.

The site and habitats present are shown on Figure 1 within the Figures section.

Legislation and Policies

- 2.4 The main legislation that applies to ecological issues within England and Wales are:
- The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 transposes European Union Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive) into national law. These regulations provide for the designation and protection of 'European Sites', the protection of 'European Protected Species' and the adaptation of planning controls for the protection of such sites and species. Under the regulations, public bodies have a duty in exercising their functions to have regard to the EC Habitats Directive.
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) provides detail on a range of protection and offences relating to wild birds, other animals, and plants. The level of protection depends on which Schedule of the Act the species is listed on. Licences are available for specific purposes to permit actions that would otherwise constitute an offence in relation to species.
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 imposes obligation on all public bodies, including local authorities, to consider whether their activities can contribute to the protection of wildlife. The duty is created by section 40(1) of the Act, which states that: "Every public authority must, in exercising its function, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."
 - Hedgerow Regulations Act 1997 serves to; enforce under the Environment Act 1995, restrict the removal of hedgerows, or parts of hedgerows which are over 20m in length. In this case, removal includes digging up and replanting elsewhere, as well as removing from the land completely or destroying in the course of other actions. This includes developments or activities which destroy the roots, causing the vegetation to die.
 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992 exists to protect badgers (*Meles meles*) from cruelty. Under the act it is a criminal offense to wilfully kill, injure, take possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or attempt to do so, or to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.
- 2.5 The recommendations of this report are in line with the key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and Government Circular 06/05

- 2.6 Local planning policies relating to ecology are invariably based on the conservation of species protected under the above legislation, including species and habitats of principal importance listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; and the protection of designated sites. All of these features are considered within the scope of this preliminary ecological appraisal and therefore any recommendations made herein are likely to be in line with this policy.

Further information on wildlife legislation and planning policy has been included in Appendix A.

Survey Objectives

- 2.7 The purpose of this survey is to produce a PEA report providing an assessment of the habitats and potential for protected species on the site, informing appropriate recommendations for further surveys and mitigation where required.
- 2.8 The objectives of the survey were as follows:
- Classify the main habitats present within the site.
 - Evaluate the ecological importance of these habitats.
 - Assess buildings and trees for their potential to support roosting bats.
 - Assess waterbodies within 250m for their suitability to support Great Crested Newts.
 - Evaluate the potential for other protected species to occur within the site.
 - Provide appropriate recommendations for further surveys and mitigation where required.

Survey Limitations

- 2.9 This survey records the flora and fauna evident on the day of the site visit. It does not record any flora or fauna that may appear at other times of the year, and as such, were not evident at the time of visit.

3. Survey Methodology

Desk Study

- 3.1 Biological records were obtained from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) for a 2km radius from the proposed site. The records obtained contain relevant records and information held by the local biological recorders for the area. An extensive search of web-based information for the area was also undertaken identifying records of protected and other notable species of flora, fauna together with statutory/non-statutory wildlife sites.
- 3.2 Web-based resource Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside was consulted to identify designated nature conservation sites within or immediately adjacent to the site surveyed.
- 3.3 The Mid Sussex District Plan was consulted to inform on biodiversity guidelines, specifically policies:
 - DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - DP38: Biodiversity
 - DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

UKHab Habitat Mapping

- 3.4 The initial habitat, flora and protected species survey of the potential development site was undertaken on 23rd April, with a follow-up walkover on 14th June 2026.
- 3.5 The vegetation and habitat types within the site were noted during the surveys in accordance with the categories specified in the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0.
- 3.6 Julie Merrett has completed botanical training with The Field Studies Council, UK Hab Classification training with Wildwood and CIEEM (for use with BNG), and undertaken botanical surveys, and as such is qualified to use this methodology accurately.
- 3.7 A UKHab Habitat map of the habitats and areas of interest is provided in Figure 1.

Protected Species

- 3.8 The site and its immediate surroundings were considered in terms of habitats, protected species present and the potential for presence of species of principal conservation importance. The results were used to grade the site as having Negligible, Low, Moderate, or High suitability for each species.
- 3.9 Habitats were searched for:
 - field signs of protected species in the form of latrines, feeding remains, active shelter/breeding sites.
 - animal activity/behaviour if observed.
 - botanically diverse habitats.
 - invasive introduced plants and animals.
 - habitats with the potential to support protected species.
 - habitat connectivity to surrounding habitats.
- 3.10 A preliminary ground level roost assessment was carried out to identify, from ground level in daylight using close-focusing binoculars, any potential roost features within trees or structures with suitability to support roosting bats. The trees on site were assessed for cavities or holes.
- 3.11 The site was searched for evidence of badger *Meles meles* such as the presence of setts, foraging evidence, access runs, tracks and prints.

- 3.12 The site was assessed for nesting and foraging potential for birds. Factors considered include suitable cover and feeding habitat, the presence of used and disused nests and birds displaying courtship or nesting characteristics.
- 3.13 The site was assessed for potential reptile habitat, also taking into consideration connectivity with adjacent habitat.
- 3.14 During the walkover survey of the site and wider area, any potential was also noted for all habitats of other protected species including great crested newts (GCN), hazel dormice and invertebrates.

4. Survey Results

Site Overview

- 4.1 The site comprises the southern section of Stairbridge Lane north to the access to Bolney Grange Business Park, with verges on both the east and west sides and adjacent native species hedge to the west, and individual trees and scrub section adjacent to the east. The wider landscape is a mosaic of farmland with hedges, with the town of Burgess Hill to the east, and Bolney Grange Business Park to the east. The pictures below show views of the site from the south end to the access to Bolney Grange Business Park to the northwest.

	
Plate 1: South end of the site, with view to the north.	Plate 2: Next section of road towards the north.
	
Plate 3: Third section of road towards the north	Plate 4: Fourth section of road towards the north.
	
Plate 5: Fifth section of road towards the north.	Plate 6: North section of the road joining to the access to Bolney Grange Business Park.

Designated Nature Conservation sites

- 4.2 The site is situated approximately 1.9km to the south of the High Weald AONB. There are no other statutory designated conservation sites such as SSSI's within 2km of the planned works.
- 4.3 There is one non-statutory designated conservation local wildlife site (LWS) and one Designated Road Verge (DRV) within 2km of the proposed development site. These are:
- Pond Lye LWS which is approximately 1.5km to the northeast of the site
 - Mill Lane DRV which is approximately 1.4km to the southeast of the site.
- 4.4 There are numerous scattered areas of both ancient woodland and priority habitat deciduous woodland within 2km of the planned works site, the closest being ancient woodland approximately 250m to the south of the site and separated from the site by farmland and the A2300. There are twenty-two ponds within 500m of the works area, nine of which are not separated by a barrier such as a major road. The closest pond to the site is 30m to the southeast.
- 4.5 The designated sites and ancient woodland will not be impacted by the planned works due to proximity and separation by major roads. Protective measures will be required for ponds within close proximity to the site during development works.
- 4.6 See the Figures section for the maps showing all the statutory and non-statutory sites in relation to the proposed works.

UKHab Habitat Survey

- 4.7 See Figure 1 in the Figures section for the location of habitats on the site.

Habitat overview

- 4.8 The site comprises a public road running south to north, with verges on the east and west, native species hedges adjacent to the west and east, and scattered trees and scrub on or adjacent the east boundary.
- 4.9 Walkover surveys were undertaken on 23rd April and 14th June 2026, and species noted during both surveys are included in the habitat descriptions below.
- 4.10 UKHab habitats identified on site are listed below using the UKHab Habitat Classification v2.0 (2023). See Figure 1 for the location of habitats on site.
- 4.11 g3c - Other neutral grassland

The species on the verge on the west side of the road was dominated by cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, but also included Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, lords and ladies *Arum maculatum*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, lady's smock *Cardamine pratensis*, broad leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, lesser celandine *Ficaria verna*, with occasional lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, bluebells *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, white dead nettle *Lamium album* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. The east verge was thinner, and the species included false brome, white dead nettle, dog's mercury, dandelion, occasional bluebells, cleavers *Galium aparine*, wood speedwell *Veronica montana* and ivy *Hedera helix*.

- 4.12 g4 – Modified grassland

The grass area at the northeast of the site was regularly mown, and the species included perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog, dandelion, bristly oxtongue, common nettle and Spanish bluebells *Hyacinthoides hispanica*.

4.13 h3 dense scrub

The dense scrub at the northeast of the site is dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. This leads to mixed scrub towards the trees, containing hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, field maple *Acer campestre* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*.

4.14 h2 – Native species hedge

There is a hedge running adjacent to the west boundary which consists of field maple, blackthorn, hawthorn and dogwood. The hedge adjacent to the southeast of the site contains hawthorn.

4.15 w1g6 – Line of trees

There is a line of trees on the east boundary of the site, containing semi-mature common oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and field maple.

4.16 g4 32 – Individual trees

The individual trees on the site are predominantly semi-mature and mature common oak, with few semi-mature field maple to the north.

4.17 u1b – Developed land, sealed surface

The site is dominated by the road which is to be widened by the planned development works.

Protected Species

Flora

- 4.18 The site itself is dominated by hard standing in the form of the road, bordered with other neutral grassland leading to a native species hedge on the west and deciduous trees and scrub on the east. Occasional hybrid bluebell were identified on the site, but protected or notable species such as native bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* or sanicle *Sanicula europaea* which have been recorded within 2km of the site.

- 4.19 No species of note were observed during either site visit, and the site itself was assessed with **low potential** to support protected or notable flora.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.22 Thirty-eight records of Great Crested Newt (GCN) have been identified within 2km of the site, with the latest records in 2024. There have been two granted EPS licence within 2km of the site, which are:

- 2017-27892-EPS-MIT – which is 650m to the southwest of the site;
- 2016-25605-EPS-MIT-3 – which is 1.37km to the east of the site.

In addition to GCN, there are also numerous records of palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, and common frog *Rana temporaria* within 2km of the site.

- 4.23 There are no ponds on the site itself, but seven within 250m of the site, and without major obstructions to connectivity (see Figures section for pond locations). Of these only the pond 250m to the southeast of the site was accessible (Plate 7) was accessible. This pond had been previously assessed with a good potential for GCN, and a moderate population of GCN was confirmed in 2019 (Hone Ecology, 2022a), with a District Level Licence recommended for the adjacent site.



Plate 7: Pond approximately 250m to the southeast of the site.

- 4.24 Whilst the site is dominated by hard standing road, there are potential foraging opportunities within the limited boundary scrub, hedge and grassland areas, and commuting potential to other ponds in the area. The site should be considered to have a negligible potential to support breeding GCN and other amphibians, but a moderate potential to support foraging and commuting amphibians.
- 4.25 Common amphibian species are afforded limited legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). GCN's are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) (See Appendix A). GCN are a European Protected Species (EPS).

Reptiles

- 4.26 Common lizard *Zootica vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* have been recorded within 2km of the site. The site is dominated by the road, with limited suitable habitat for common reptiles on the grass verge boundaries. In addition, a reptile survey undertaken on the adjacent site to the east (Hone Ecology, 2022b) found likely absence of common lizards with none identified during the survey.
- 4.27 Therefore, the site itself currently has a **low potential** for common reptiles foraging within the boundary vegetation.
- 4.28 Common reptiles are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (See Appendix A).

Birds

- 4.29 The data search returned numerous records of birds within 2km of the site. Movable birds including schedule 9 birds were; Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Swift *Apus apus*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Lesser spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor*. The adjacent hedgerows, and line of trees, individual trees and small area of scrub on the site east and west boundaries provide potential for nesting birds, although no active nests were observed during either walkover. Therefore, the site itself should be regarded as having a **moderate potential** to support breeding/nesting birds.
- 4.30 All species of birds whilst actively nesting are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1 (See Appendix A).

Badger

- 4.31 Badger records are no longer provided within the data search and there is limited potential habitat for foraging by this species within the boundary scrub and under hedgerows. No signs of badger were identified during either walkover in the form of paths, sett entrances or latrines.

Given the low suitability for potential habitat on site and no signs of activity, the site should be considered to have a **low potential** to support foraging badgers.

- 4.32 Badgers are afforded legal protection under the Badgers Act 1992 and Schedule 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (See Appendix A).

Bats

- 4.33 There are numerous records of bats within 2km of the site, including Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Brown long-eared, *Plecotus auratus*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* and Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*, Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, and Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*. There has been one granted EPS licence within 2km of the site for a Brown long-eared bat roughly 1.8km to the southwest.
- 4.34 The site contains multiple trees on the east boundary of the site which were assessed for bat roost potential from ground level. It is understood that four of the trees at the northeast section of the site are to be felled whilst those to the southeast are to be crowned. Of the trees to be crowned, PRF-I's were identified on common oaks T3B1 (TN1; Plates 8-11) in the form of sears on branches and dense ivy on the trunk, and T13B12 (TN2 Plates 12-3) in the form of broken branches. The four trees to be felled were also assessed, with two semi-mature field maple (T16C12 and T17C12) being assessed with **no potential** for roosting bats, but the two mature common oaks trees (T14B12 and T15B12; TN3 and TN4) being assessed with potential for roosting bats due to their age and form. Dense ivy was observed on the other trees on the east boundary of the site.

Plate 8: Oak T3B1 to be crowned (TN1)	Plate 9: PRF-I on T3B1 in form of sear on branch (TN1).
Plate 10: Multiple PRF-I sears in branch on T3B1 (TN1)	Plate 11: Dense ivy cover on trunk of T3B1 (TN1).



Plate 12: Oak T13B12 to be crowned (TN2).



Plate 13: PRF-I in the form of broken branch on T13B12 (TN2).



Plate 14: Two mature oak T14B12 and T15B12 to be felled (TN3 and TN4).

- 4.35 The four trees T3B1, T13B12, T14B12 and T15B12 were assessed with **moderate potential** for roosting bats. The two field maple T16C12 and T17C12 were assessed with **no potential** for roosting bats, and the remaining trees with ivy cover were assessed with **low potential** for roosting bats.
- 4.36 All species of bat are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) (See Appendix A). All species of bat are European Protected Species (EPS).

Hazel Dormouse

- 4.37 One record of hazel dormice were recorded within 2km of the site, and a survey undertaken in 2025 (Hone Ecology, 2025) also confirmed the presence of dormice approximately 555m to the northeast of the site. The road and grassland verges with dominate the site are suboptimal for this arboreal species, however the tree line and scrub area on the east boundary provides suitable habitat and connects to more extensive suitable habitat to the east (Hone Ecology, 2026), where a Natural England Mitigation Licence has been recommended for the planned development. There is also a hedge adjacent to the west boundary of the site which could be suitable for nesting, foraging and commuting dormice. Due to the small area of suitable habitat on site itself, but connectivity to adjacent suitable habitat, the site was assessed with **low-moderate** potential for hazel dormice.
- 4.38 Hazel dormice are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the [Conservation \(Natural Habitats, &c.\) Regulations 1994](#) (as amended) (See Appendix A). The dormouse is a European Protected Species (EPS).

Hedgehog

- 4.39 There are records of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* within 2km of the site with the latest record being in 2020. The road which dominates the site is sub-optimal for this species, and the verge and scrub boundaries provide limited foraging opportunity although do connect to other suitable habitats for foraging hedgehog. Therefore, it should be considered that the site has a **low potential** to support Hedgehog within the boundaries.

- 4.40 Hedgehog are afforded legal protection under schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981(as amended).

Other Protected Species

- 4.41 Records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and otter *Lutra lutra* were identified. The habitats on the site itself are unsuitable for such species.

Invasive Species

- 4.42 No signs of invasive plants such as Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* or Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* were observed on the site during the survey.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Designated Areas

- 5.1 The site is situated approximately 1.9km to the south of the High Weald AONB. There are no other statutory designated conservation sites such as SSSI's within 2km of the planned works, but one non-statutory LWS which is Pond Lye approximately 1.5km to the northeast, and one DRV which is Mill Lane approximately 1.4km to the southeast of the site.
- 5.2 There are numerous scattered areas of both ancient and deciduous woodland within 2km of the planned works site, the closest area being ancient woodland approximately 250m to the south of the site and separated by farmland and the A2300. There are also nine ponds within 500m which are not separated by a barrier, the closest of which is approximately 30m to the southeast.
- 5.3 The designated sites and ancient woodland will not be impacted by the planned works due to proximity and separation by major roads. Protective measures will be required for ponds within close proximity to the site during development works.

Habitats and Botanical Species of Interest

- 5.4 The site itself is dominated by hard standing in the form of the road, bordered with grass verge leading to a native species hedge on the west and deciduous trees and scrub on the east. The habitats within the site are common and should not be considered to be of conservation importance, and no further botanical surveys are required.

Protected Species

Great Crested Newt

- 5.5 There are no ponds on the site itself, seven within 250m with the closest being approximately 30m to the southwest. GCN have been confirmed in the area, including a pond within 250m to the southeast with adjacent connected habitat. Whilst dominated by hard standing road, the site itself has been assessed with **negligible potential** for breeding GCN and other amphibians but **moderate potential** for foraging and commuting GCN and other amphibians in the boundary scrub, hedge and grassland areas.
- 5.6 Given the small area of impacted suitable habitat, no further surveys are recommended. However, given the proximity of ponds to the works area, and habitat types impacted a GCN District Level Licence is recommended.

Reptiles

- 5.7 The site is dominated by the road, with limited suitable habitat for common reptiles on the grass verge boundaries. In addition, a reptile survey undertaken on the adjacent site to the east found likely absence of common lizards with none identified during the survey. Therefore, the site itself currently has a **low potential** for common reptiles foraging within the boundary vegetation, and no further surveys are required but precautionary measures are recommended.
- 5.8 As a precautionary measure prior to the start of the road widening works, any potential refugia, hibernacula and vegetation (excluding trees and hedges) should be cleared to deter amphibians from entering the works area. For the vegetation clearance works for the site it is recommended that any potential hibernacula such as rubble, log piles, brash piles and ruderal or scrub growth on the site be cleared under supervision by a GCN licenced ecologist on warm days during amphibian and reptile active season of March-September. Clearance works should be undertaken under supervision in a two-phase approach:
- Phase 1: Removal of any rubble, debris and log/brash piles by hand, and removed from the site under ecological supervision, followed by the first stage of strimming of

grass, and any ruderal and bramble vegetation to a height of 10cm (using hand tools only), strimming systematically and slowly towards the north end of the site on both sides of the road. This is to enable any amphibians or reptiles which may be present to move away from the works area.

- Phase 2: Forty-eight hours after the first stage cut, the GCN licenced ecologist should undertake a finger-tip search of the areas of vegetation to be cleared, and the vegetation strimmed to ground level, using the same method as for Phase 2.

- 5.9 Any rubble or works materials should be left on hard-standing to avoid attracting reptiles or amphibians which may use it for refuge. In the unlikely event that any reptiles or GCN are observed during the works, then works should cease in that area immediately and an ecologist contacted for advice.

Birds

- 5.10 The trees, hedge section and scrub on the east site boundary contain potential for nesting birds, although no active nests were observed during the survey. As all nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), any works likely to impact on nesting birds such as the tree crowning and felling, and any hedge cutting or scrub removal should be conducted outside the core breeding period for birds of March-August inclusive (although it should be noted that species such as pigeon can breed all year round).
- 5.11 Should this timeframe be unobtainable, a thorough search for the presence of breeding birds should be conducted by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to the start of works. Should evidence of breeding birds be recorded, works within 5m of the nest or which have potential to destroy the nest should stop until the eggs have hatched and chicks fledged, or the nest is deemed by a suitably experienced ecologist to have been abandoned.

Badger and hedgehog

- 5.12 No signs of badger were identified during either walkover undertaken on the site, and therefore no further surveys are recommended.
- 5.13 As a precautionary measure any holes or trenches on the site should be either covered over night to prevent badger or other animals falling in and getting stuck, or alternatively ramps should be placed in the trench to enable animals to escape in the unlikely event they access the site.

Bats

- 5.14 It was recommended that the four trees assessed with **moderate potential** for roosting bats, an aerial tree survey be undertaken by a Class 2 bat licenced ecologist to confirm the bat roost potential of these trees. **This survey has already been undertaken.** The results of this survey have informed any requirement for further emergence surveys for these trees, and precautionary methods required for the felling or crowning.
- 5.15 For the remainder of the impacted trees on site, it is recommended that the works be undertaken under precautionary method under supervision by a suitably experienced ecologist. If bats or evidence of bats are found during these works, works on the tree must stop immediately and further surveys will be required to inform a Natural England licence.

Bats and lighting

- 5.16 During development works light spill onto the boundary vegetation is to be avoided, to avoid adversely impacting foraging bats in area. The latest lighting guidance from the bat conservation trust which can be found at this link below:
<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Hazel Dormice

- 5.17 The site has been assessed with suitability and **low-moderate potential** for dormice within the boundary trees, hedges and scrub, with connectivity to adjacent habitat to the east where a Natural England European Protected Species licence is required to complete development works. Given the small scale of the suitable habitat, no further surveys are recommended for this species.
- 5.18 However, given the habitat impacted by the planned works, and the adjacent site to the east requiring a Natural England Mitigation Licence for dormice, a Natural England Mitigation Licence is also recommended for this site.

Other species

- 5.19 Beyond those noted above, there are no obvious of immediate issues regarding protected species on the site.
- 5.20 Should at any point during the development a protected or notable species be identified within the site, then all works should stop, and the appointed ecologist consulted on the appropriate manner in which to proceed.

6. Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement Opportunities

- 6.1 Ecological enhancements should where possible be incorporated into the proposed development to contribute towards the objectives of planning legislation identified within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 6.2 In accordance with the above plans: “Plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests” and together with the Natural England & Rural Communities Act 2005, places a statutory duty to promote biodiversity and minimise impacts of a development upon ecology.
- 6.3 Furthermore, in accordance with the principles of NPPF, developments should contribute towards the degree of connectivity between natural habitats and avoid the effects of habitat fragmentation and isolation. These networks of habitats provide valuable routes or stepping-stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species within the wider environment. Existing networks, where possible, should be strengthened by, or integrated within, new developments.
- 6.4 The development plans for the site are the widening of the existing road, resulting in the loss of verges, four trees and scrub, with no scope for enhancements on site. Biodiversity enhancements will therefore be included off-site within the Biodiversity Net-Gain requirements. However, following measures are recommended to protect the biodiversity of the site and surrounding areas. These include:
- Any lighting on the site should follow the guidelines in section 5 to prevent impact to foraging bats and other nocturnal creatures during the development works.
 - It is recommended that any mature trees should be retained where possible. Tree protection measures should be implemented according to BS 5837:2012 ‘trees in relation to design, demolition and construction’.
 - To protect the ponds to the southwest, it is recommended that dust control methods be implemented to prevent dust from the development from entering this area.

7. Summary

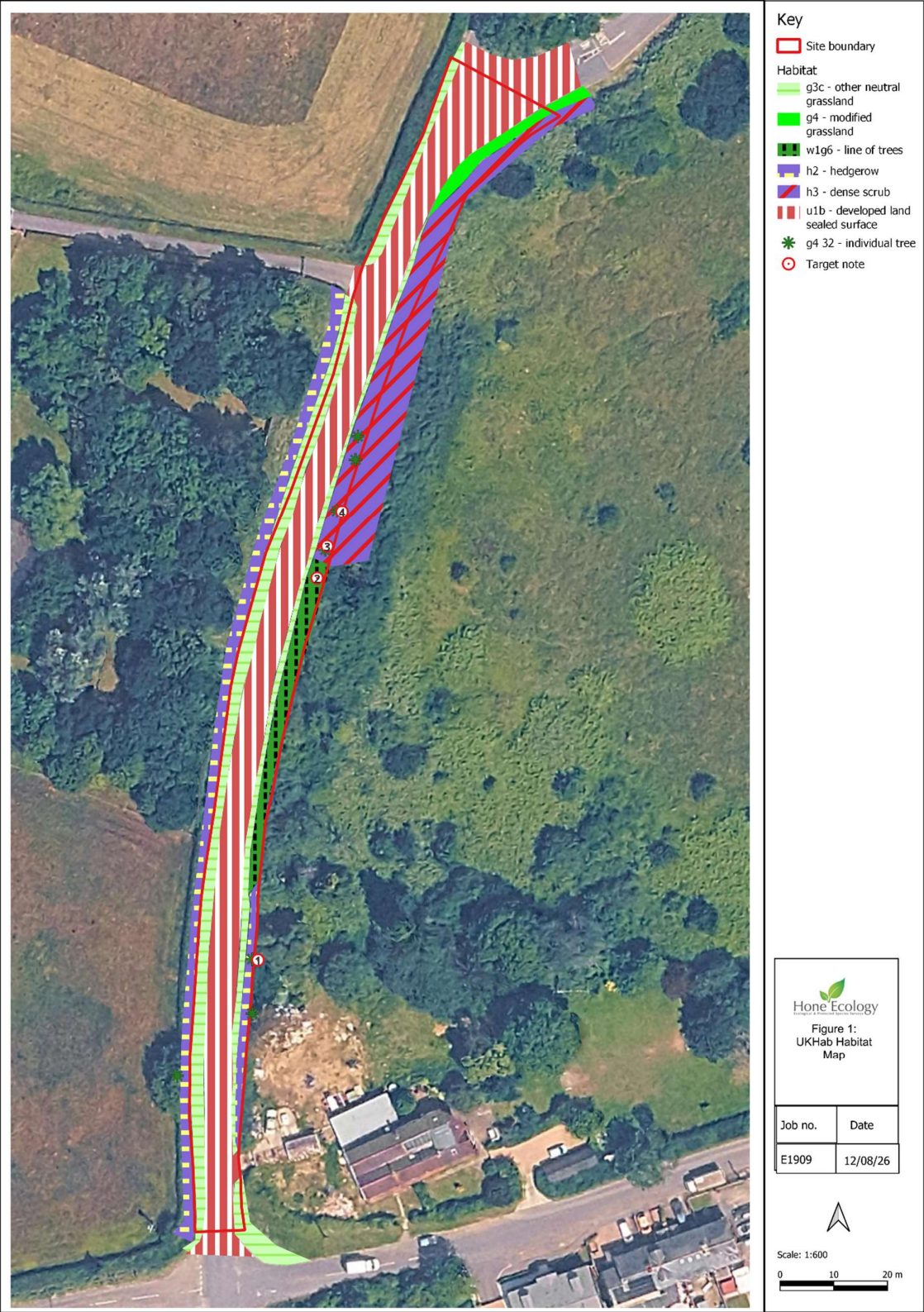
- 7.1 In response to the proposed development at Stairbridge Lane Widening, Bolney, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 5PB, the site has been subject to a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA). The site's potential to support protected species and habitats has been assessed and appropriate recommendations provided.
- 7.2 The site is situated approximately 1.9km to the south of the High Weald AONB, there is one non-statutory LWS and one DRV, and several scattered areas of ancient and deciduous woodland within 2km of the site, and nine ponds within 500m. The designated sites and woodlands will not be impacted by the planned works, but protective measures will be required for ponds within close proximity to the site during development works.
- 7.3 There is suitable foraging habitat on the site boundaries but given the small area of impacted suitable habitat, no further surveys are recommended. However, given the number of ponds in the area and suitable habitat impacted, a GCN District Level Licence is recommended.
- 7.4 There is low potential for common reptiles on the site boundaries and a precautionary method under supervision for the vegetation has been recommended.
- 7.5 There is potential for nesting birds on the site boundaries. Recommendations in regard to timings and methods of best practice for breeding birds have been provided.
- 7.6 Aerial tree surveys for bats have been recommended and undertaken for four impacted trees on site. Pre-works check and supervision is recommended for the felling and crowning of impacted trees.
- 7.7 Best practice guidance has been given to prevent badgers and hedgehogs becoming trapped in diggings during the development.
- 7.8 No further surveys have been recommended for dormice, but given the scrub and trees impacted a Natural England European Protected Species licence is recommended.
- 7.9 The likelihood of other protected and notable species to occur within the site is considered negligible and no further surveys for other protected species are required.
- 7.10 Should at any point during the development a protected or notable species be identified within the site then all works should stop, and the appointed ecologist consulted on the appropriate manner in which to proceed.
- 7.11 Recommendations to protect local biodiversity for wildlife have been provided, but biodiversity enhancements will be included off-site under BNG requirements.

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Figures

Figure 1: UKHab habitat map for site, with target notes for PRFs on trees shown (Base map: Google).



- | | |
|-----|--|
| TN1 | 3 x PRF-Is within oak to be crowned (T3B1). |
| TN2 | 1 x PRF-I on oak to be crowned in form of broken branch (T13B12). |
| TN3 | Dense ivy potentially concealing roost features on mature oak to be felled (T14B12). |
| TN4 | Dense ivy and broken limbs on mature oak to be felled (T15B12). |

Figure 1: List of target notes on Figure 1.

Figure 2: Statutory designated sites within 2km of the planned works (SxBRC)

Map 1: Statutory site designations

Stairbridge Lane, Bolney, Haywards Heath + 2km radius
SxBRC/26/376 - 27/07/2026

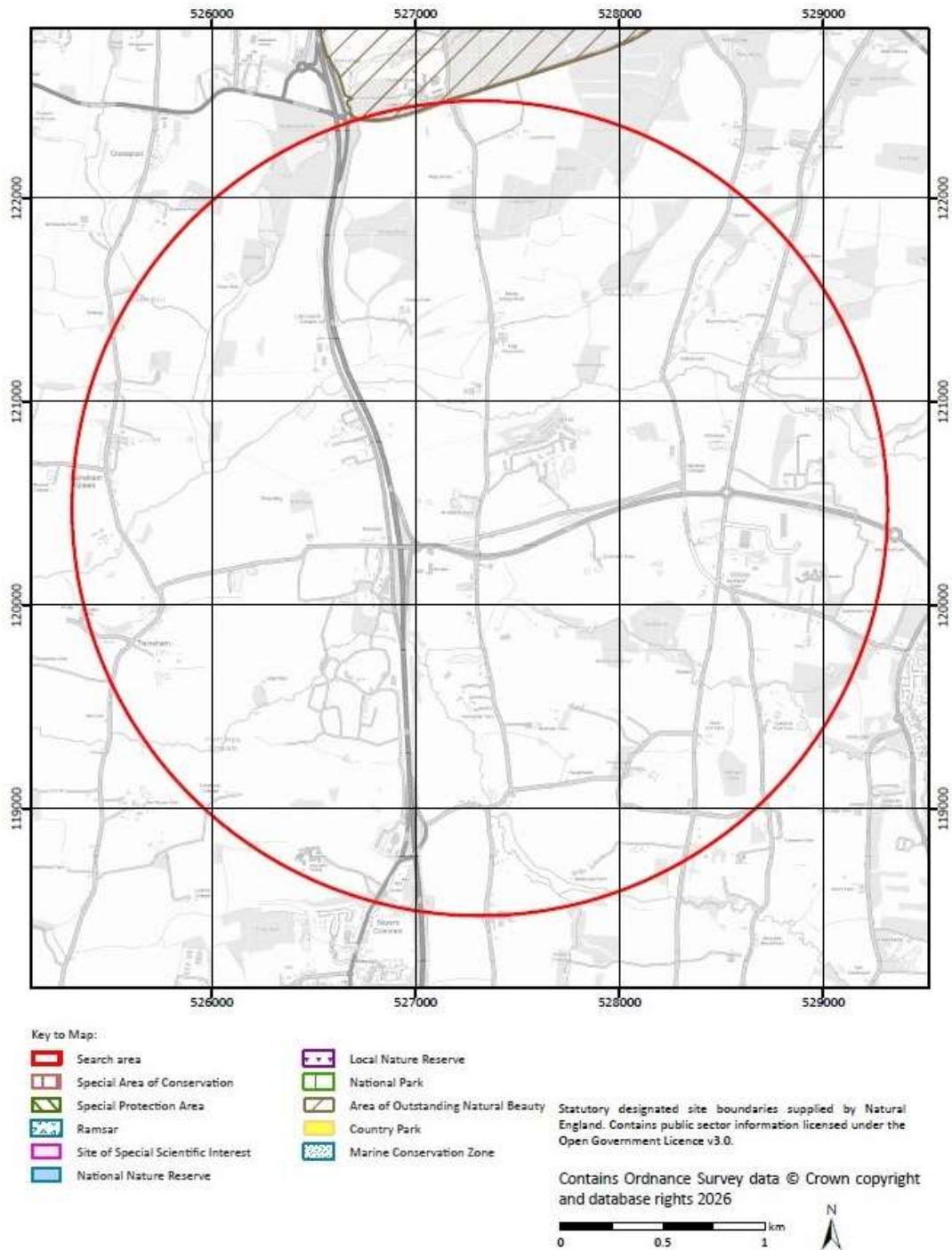


Figure 3: Non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the planned works (SxBRC)

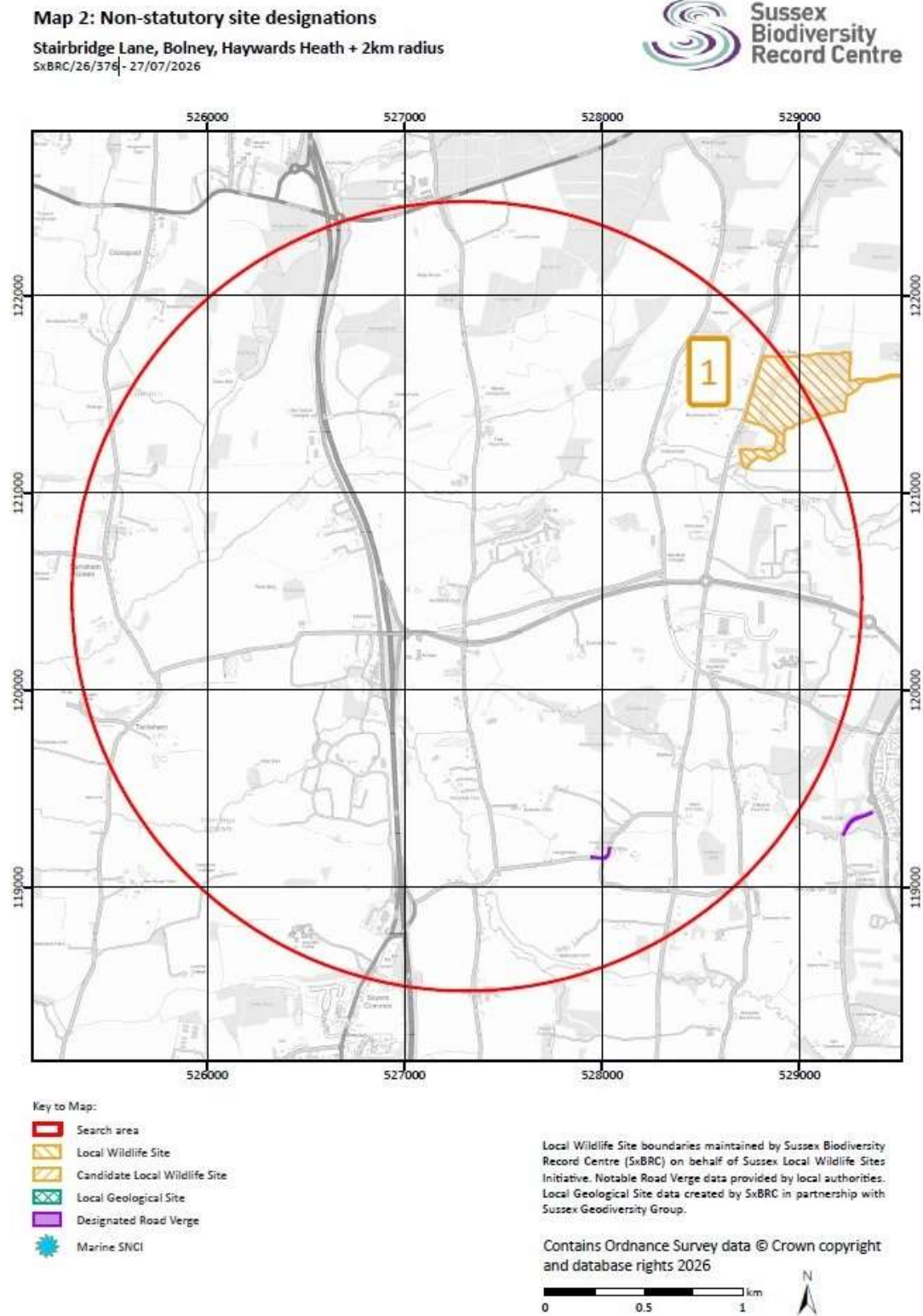
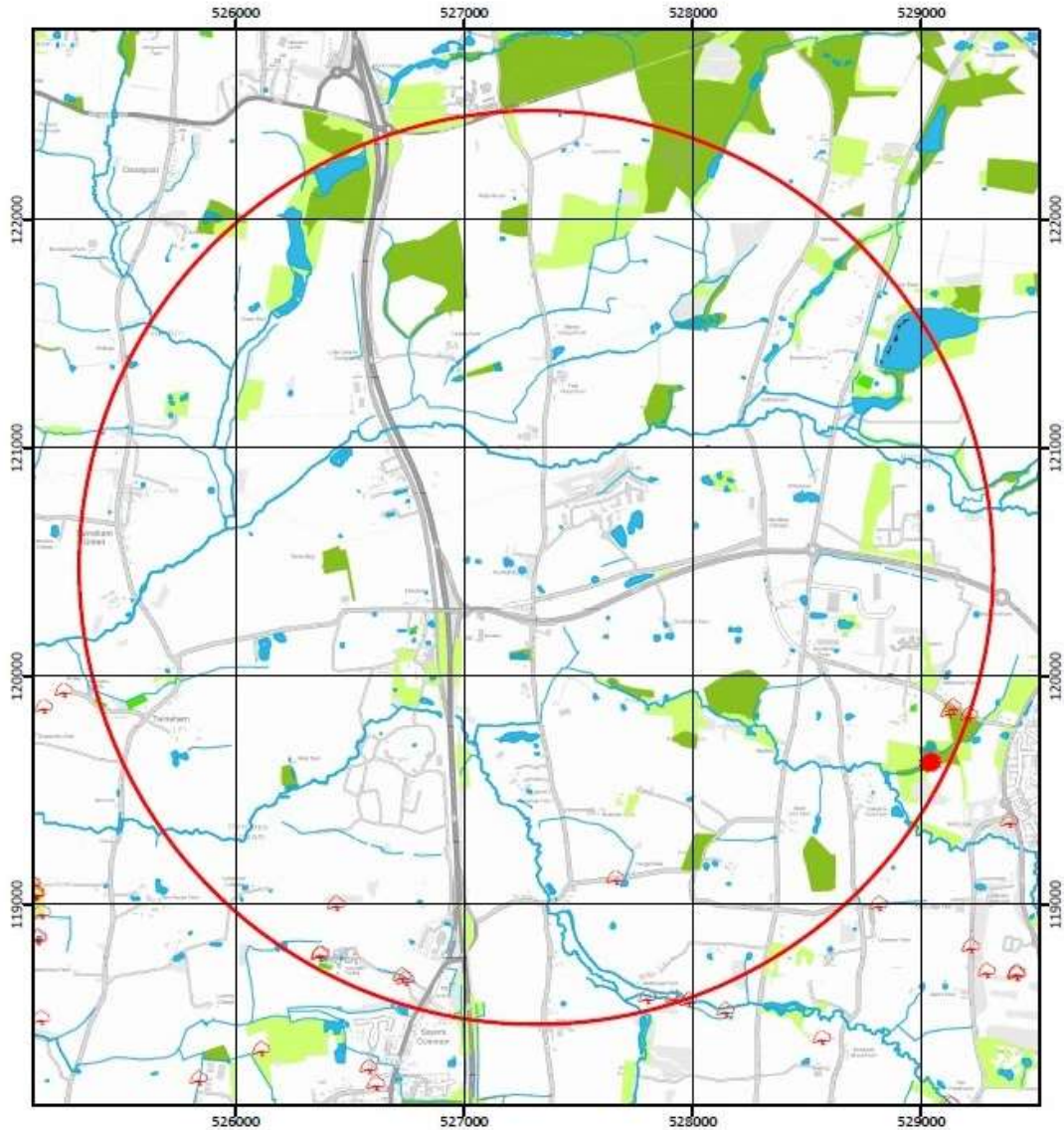


Figure 4: Section 41 habitats within 2km of the planned works, indicating the areas of ancient woodland (SxBRC).

Map 4: Section 41 habitats and other

Stairbridge Lane, Bolney, Haywards Heath + 2km radius
SxBRC/26/376 - 27/07/2026



Key to Map:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Search area | Open Water |
| Ancient or veteran tree | Traditional orchard |
| Black poplar | Ancient woodland |
| Lowland fen | Deciduous woodland |

Ancient woodland, and section 41 habitat data supplied by Natural England. Contains public sector information licenced under the Open Government Licence v3.0. Additional contributors of habitat data include Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs Conservation Board, Environment Agency, Sussex Wetlands Landscapes Project, WSCC, RSPB, High Weald AONB Unit, Ancient Tree Hunt, and Tree Register of the British Isles.

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Figure 5: Ponds within 250m of the planned works (MAGiC).

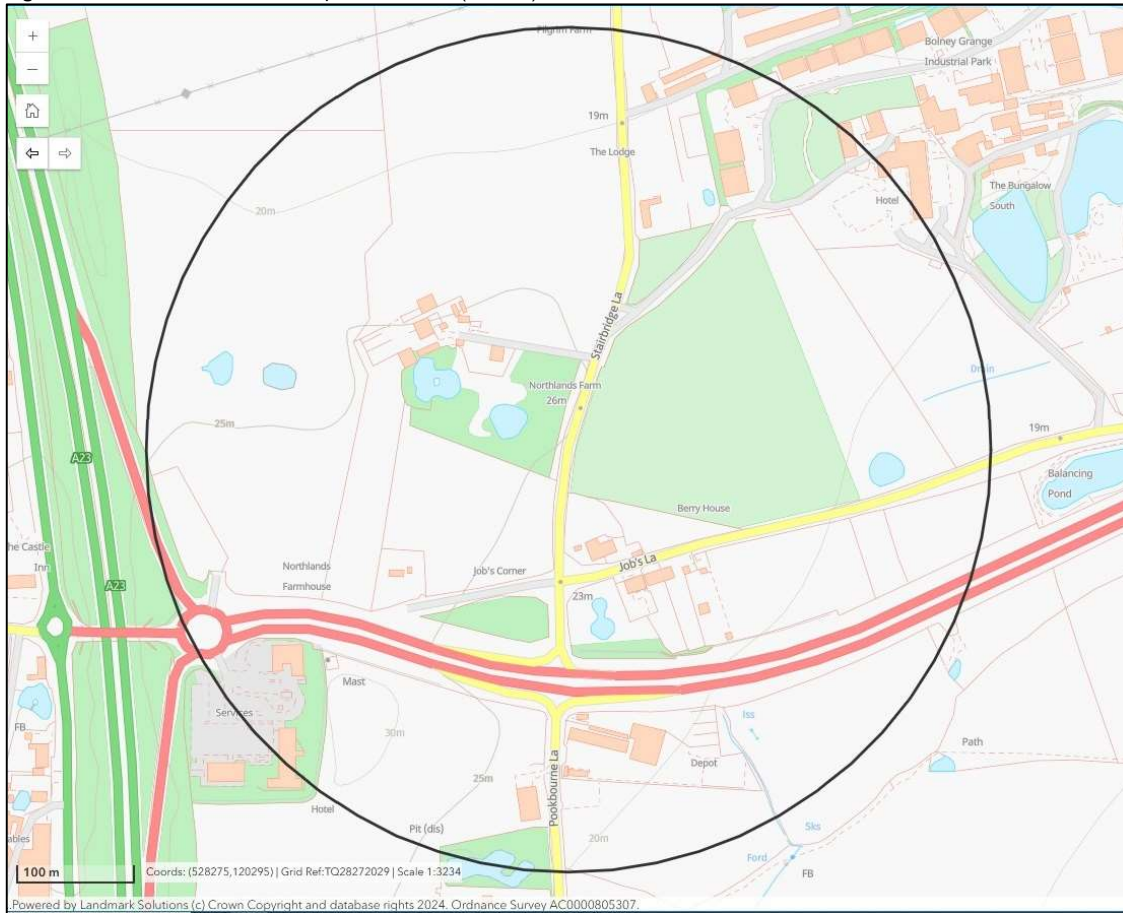


Figure 6: GCN Class Licence Returns within 1km of the planned works (Base map: Google; Data: Natural England).



Appendix A Legislation

The following is a summary of wildlife legislation and planning policy relevant to protected plant and animal species in the UK.

The sections on legislation have been extracted from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's website and the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website.

The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) consolidate all the various amendments made to the [Conservation \(Natural Habitats, &c.\) Regulations 1994](#) in respect of England and Wales. The 1994 Regulations transposed Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive) into national law. The Regulations provide for the designation and protection of a network of 'European Sites' termed Natura 2000, the protection of 'European protected species', and the adaptation of planning and other controls for the protection of European Sites.

Amendments to the Habitats Regulations for England and Wales and the new Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 came into force on the 21st August 2007.

The amendments relate to the protection status of European protected species covered by the Habitats regulations. Taken together it is an offence to undertake the following acts with regard to European Protected Species:

- (a) deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European Protected Species;*
- (b) deliberately disturb animals of any such species in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect:*
 - (i) the ability of any significant group of animals of that species to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young, or*
 - (ii) the local distribution or abundance of that species;*
- (c) deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal; or*
- (d) damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.*

An offence will only be committed if the deliberate disturbance is likely to **significantly affect** a **significant group** of animals of that species' ability to survive, breed, or rear or nurture its young or **significantly affect** the local distribution or abundance of that species.

Any biological definition of what constitutes a significant group of animals should take into account the local abundance of the species, its behaviour and the circumstances in which the disturbance takes place. Species that tend to be solitary, **such as dormice**, probably never form significant groups of adults, but a family group with dependent young could constitute such a group, particularly if the species is rare in the area.

The Regulations make it an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb or trade in the animals listed in **Schedule 2** or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; or pick, collect, cut, uproot, destroy, or trade in the plants listed in **Schedule 4**. However, these actions can be made lawful through the granting of licences (European Protected Species Licence) by the appropriate authorities (Natural England in England and Countryside Council for Wales). Licences may be granted for a number of purposes (such as science and education, conservation, preserving public health and safety), but only after the appropriate authority is satisfied that:

- **Regulation 44 (2)(e)** the development is 'in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment'.
- **Regulation 44 (3)(a)** there is 'no satisfactory alternative'.

- **Regulation 44 (3)(b)** the action 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at favourable conservation status in their natural range'.

To apply for a licence, the following information is required:

- The species concerned.
- The size of the population at the site (note this may require a survey to be carried out at a particular time of the year).
- The impact(s) (if any) that the development is likely to have upon the populations.
- What measures can be conducted to mitigate for the impact(s).

Amendments to the Habitats Regulations for England and Wales and the new Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 came into force on the 21st August 2007. Both Regulations revised the definition of deliberate disturbance of European Protected Species.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended) 1981

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal piece of UK legislation relating to the protection of wildlife. It consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive) in Great Britain.

The Act makes it an offence (with exception to species listed in Schedule 2) to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird or their eggs or nests. Special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on **Schedule 1**, for which there are additional offences of disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young. The Secretary of State may also designate Areas of Special Protection (subject to exceptions) to provide further protection to birds. The Act also prohibits certain methods of killing, injuring, or taking birds, restricts the sale and possession of captive bred birds, and sets standards for keeping birds in captivity.

The Act makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to intentionally kill, injure, or take, possess, or trade in any wild animal listed in **Schedule 5**, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places. The Act also prohibits certain methods of killing, injuring, or taking wild animals listed in **Schedule 6**.

The Act makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to pick, uproot, trade in, or possess (for the purposes of trade) any wild plant listed in **Schedule 8**, and prohibits the unauthorised intentional uprooting of such plants.

The Act contains measures for preventing the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to native wildlife, prohibiting the release of animals and planting of plants listed in **Schedule 9**. It also provides a mechanism making any of the above offences legal through the granting of licences by the appropriate authorities.

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) was passed to provide additional levels of protection for wildlife whilst also strengthening the protection afforded to Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The CRoW act now makes it an offence to 'recklessly' harm the majority of species listed on the Schedules of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The Act places a duty on Government Departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity (**Section 74**).

Schedule 12 of the Act amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, strengthening the legal protection for threatened species. The provisions make certain offences 'arrestable', create a new offence of reckless disturbance, confer greater powers to police and wildlife inspectors for entering

premises and obtaining wildlife tissue samples for DNA analysis, and enable heavier penalties on conviction of wildlife offences.

Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) is designed to help achieve a rich and diverse natural environment and thriving rural communities through modernised and simplified arrangements for delivering Government policy.

It was created to make provision in connection with wildlife, sites of special scientific interest, National Parks and the Broads; to amend the law relating to rights of way; to make provision as to the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council; to provide for flexible administrative arrangements in connection with functions relating to the environment and rural affairs and certain other functions; and for connected purposes.

NERC carries an extension of the CRoW Act biodiversity duty to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Badger Act 1992

In the UK, badgers are primarily afforded protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This makes it illegal to wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or to attempt to do so and to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it.

Badgers also receive limited protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This outlaws certain methods of taking or killing animals.

Under Section 10 (1)(d) of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, a licence may be granted by Natural England to interfere with a badger sett for the purpose of development, as defined by Section 55(1) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

Section 3 of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 defines interference as:

- a) Damaging a badger sett;
- b) Destroying a badger sett;
- c) Obstructing access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett;
- d) Causing a dog to enter a sett; or
- e) Disturbing a badger when it is occupying a badger sett.

The Wild Mammals Act 1996

The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act (1996) makes it an offence for any person to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

The Abandonment of Animals Act 1960

The Abandonment of Animals Act comes into force when an animal is abandoned, whether permanently or not, in circumstances likely to cause unnecessary suffering. With regards to development, this has implications when translocations of animals are proposed. As such, care must be taken to ensure that any receptor sites are suitable for the species in terms of habitat and carrying capacity in order that minimal stress and suffering is imposed upon the animal(s) concerned.

The Hedgerows Regulations

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 were introduced to protect hedgerows of importance from destruction. The Regulations define a hedgerow as, 'a row of bushes forming a hedge with the trees growing in it'. The law however does not clarify the difference between a line of trees and a hedgerow.

However the legislation does not apply to any hedgerow (even if it is within the list above) which is 'within or marking the boundary of the curtilage of a dwelling house'.

For the Regulations to be applicable, the hedgerow must be at least 20 metres in length and less than 5 metres wide. A hedgerow is deemed to be important if it is more than thirty years old and meets at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

If a hedgerow that qualifies under the Regulations is to be removed, the landowner must contact the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in writing by submitting a hedgerow removal notice. The LPA then has a period of 42 days to decide whether or not the hedgerow meets the importance criteria of the regulations.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the view of central Government on how planners should balance nature conservation with development and helps ensure that Government meets its biodiversity commitments with regard to the operation of the planning system. It is a key objective of NPPF to:

"promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the recovery of priority species, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.

NPPF states that development plan policies and planning decisions should be based upon up-to-date information about the environmental characteristics of their areas, including biodiversity. It also states that the aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity conservation interests and to "promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development.

Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm to those interests, local planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the development cannot be reasonably be located on any alternative sites that would result in less or no harm. In the absence of any such alternatives, local planning authorities should ensure that, before planning permission is granted, adequate mitigation measures are put in place. Where a planning decision would result in significant harm to biodiversity interests, which cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

This means that full ecological surveys should be carried out and suitable mitigation measures proposed prior to any planning application being submitted. It is common practice for planning officers to consult Natural England or other conservation bodies for advice regarding the suitability of proposals in relation to biodiversity conservation.

Biodiversity Action Plans

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) set out actions for the conservation and enhancement of biological diversity at various spatial scales. They consist of both Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs).

The UK BAP was the UK's response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro. Following a review in 2007 a list of 1149 priority species and 65 priority habitats has been adopted, which are given a statutory basis for planning consideration under Section 74 of the CRow Act 2000.

Red Data Books

Red Data Books (RDB) is an additional method for determining rarity of species and is often seen as a natural progression from Biodiversity Action Plans.

RDB species have no automatic legal protection (unless they are protected under any of the legislation previously mentioned). Instead they provide a means of assessing rarity and highlight areas where resources may be targeted. Various categories of RDB species are recorded ranging from RDB 1 (endangered) through to RDBX (extinct). As with Biodiversity Action Plans, where possible, steps should be taken to conserve RDB species, which are to be affected by development.