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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Edward Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 9UA

Client:

Scott Curtis

Survey date:

25th July 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Mid Sussex District Council. The proposal is described as erection of a fibre exchange development.

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

The site survey was undertaken by Rachel Wick.					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
25/07/2024	17	94	50	12	None

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plan in appendix 3, pond map in appendix 4, and photos in appendix 5).	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> <i>(UKHab codes used)</i>	<u>Site description</u> The development site is located at National Grid Reference TQ29701869 and has an area of approximately 0.05 ha. The development site comprises entirely of modified grassland, adjacent to more modified grassland featuring seven trees and an area of dense dogwood scrub within the land ownership boundary. Also within the land ownership boundary is a long strip of hardstanding used as an access road to the site and surrounding businesses. A PEA survey map is provided in Appendix 1. <u>Habitats recorded onsite include:</u> Modified grassland (g4) The site is entirely comprised of recently mown modified grassland, maintained to a regular sward height of less than 7cm. The majority of the site is composed of (D) perennial rye-grass, (A) creeping buttercup, creeping thistle, ragwort, field bindweed, selfheal, dandelion, white clover, Yorkshire fog, and (R) wild

	parsnip – around 3 species m⁻². There was a section along the southwest corner with a more diverse species composition. This had the same as previously mentioned, as well as (O) ragwort, trailing blackberry, plumeless thistle, hedge parsley, ivy, (F) nettle, and (R) cut-leaf cranesbill – more than 6 species m⁻². No invasive non-native species were observed, and the grassland had no visible signs of damage or areas of bare ground across the majority of the site, with some small areas of bare ground present within the southwest corner. <u>Habitats within the land ownership boundary include:</u> Modified grassland (g4), with scattered trees [32]: The grassland extends beyond the development site boundary, with both the moderate and poor condition grassland as described above, covering a greater area. The regularly mown grassland habitat extends to the southeast, following the ownership boundary, containing seven common ash trees. Species within this extended area of modified grassland include (D) perennial rye-grass, (A) creeping buttercup, (F) white clover, wild morning glory, selfheal, (O) field rose, ribwort plantain, common knapweed, green alkanet, bramble, ground ivy, (R) garlic mustard, nettle, dandelion, common fleabane, multiflora rose. No invasive non-native species were observed, and no signs of damage or bare ground were found within the wider site. Seven Common Ash trees are located adjacent to the eastern border of the development site boundary, all with a height between 16 and 20m. Starting from the east-most tree, T1, which had three trunks, and ending with T7, the west-most tree within the land ownership boundary, the diameter at breast height (DBH) for each tree was measured. Measurements are provided in the table below:
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	Unique Trunk ID	Diameter at breast height (cm)
	T1a	23
	T1b	28
	T1c	25
	T2	33
	T3	35
	T4	25
	T5	30
	T6	22
	T7	58
	Mixed Scrub (h3h) – Dominated by dogwood Above the northern border of the development site running along the land ownership boundary is an area of dogwood scrub that has grown beyond the boundary fence and into the ownership boundary area. Species include (D) dogwood, (A) bramble, (O) common fleabane, and (R) ragwort. The scrub features a mix of plant ages, and no invasive non-native species are present. Developed land; sealed surface (u1b6)	

	The land ownership boundary surrounds two parcels of land, the western parcel features no hardstanding and is described by the above habitats. The eastern parcel, on the other hand, consists entirely of tarmac road and pavement, providing access to the site and to surrounding businesses. <u>Wider area</u> The site is within an industrial estate, with small pockets of scattered trees. To the north and east is the town of Abbotsford, and to the south and west are hedgerow-lined arable fields. There are many pockets of priority habitat deciduous woodland within 2 km of the site, the closest ~175m north; the closest ancient woodland is ~750 m southeast. There is also a traditional orchid ~1 km southwest. There are 10 ponds within 500 m, the closest ~200 m north.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	This modified grassland will be fully removed and replaced with hardstanding. This is expected to be inconsequential to local biodiversity.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment will be required for this development.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no European sites within 10 km of the site. There is the High Weald National Landscape ~4.4 km north, and Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserves ~2.6 km southeast. There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the site. The site falls within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone of Ditchling Common SSSI, but the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on the habitats and species within the SSSI and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	There are no foreseen impacts of the proposed development on any designated sites, given the proximity of the site to designated sites and the small scale of the development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution must be implemented during construction.
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No invasive species were observed on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Modified grassland will sustain common invertebrate species populations. There is no suitable habitat to support rare or notable assemblages of invertebrates.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Impacts to local common invertebrate species is likely to be inconsequential given the small area, and extensive habitat in the wider area, including immediately adjacent.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There is one granted bat EPSL licence within 2 km of the site, located ~1.9 km northeast, allowing the destruction of a resting place for brown long-eared bats and soprano pipistrelles (2020-50065-EPS-MIT). There is no suitable habitat for roosting bats on site. The grassland could sustain common invertebrate populations which may provide foraging opportunities. Change in land use may result in the change in lighting strategy.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impact to roosting bats foreseen. Grassland and potential invertebrate loss is considered inconsequential to local bat populations. The proposed development is unlikely to cause an increase in light pollution in the immediate area or surrounding areas.

<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No suitable habitat for nesting birds on site, and no evidence of nesting birds was found during the survey. Grassland is regularly mown further reducing suitability.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No reptile EPSL licences were found within 2 km of the site boundary. The grassland within the site is sub-optimal for reptiles due to the frequent management which results in a short sward height, which offers a lack of protection from predators. The hedgerows provide limited commuting habitat for reptiles. The site has limited connectivity to the wider area due to urban infrastructure further reducing site suitability.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	There is a low risk of a low number of reptiles being present on site.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to reptiles, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. However, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the reptile hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible. • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance where necessary, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any reptiles to disperse. The

	vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter reptiles from the working area. • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of reptiles at the site. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for reptiles. • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • In the event that a reptile is identified, they must be left to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are six granted great crested newt EPSL licences within 2 km, the closest ~370 m north (EPSM2011-3094). The terrestrial habitat onsite is likely to be unsuitable to amphibians as it is regularly mown and kept at a consistent short sward height. Connectivity to suitable habitats is limited, as the site is surrounded by majority hardstanding and similarly maintained patches of grassland. Great crested newts exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton et al. 2001).

	A review of aerial imagery suggests the presence of ten ponds within 500m of the site. These ponds are located ~200m north, ~270m northeast, ~290m south, ~310m northwest, ~320m south, ~330m northeast, ~350m north, ~415m southwest, ~420m north, and ~425m north. A pond map is provided in Appendix 4.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Connectivity is very restricted given the industrial estate and urban setting. Nonetheless, amphibian presence cannot be completely discounted, and their presence on site could result in injury or death.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to great crested newts, further surveys are considered disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for amphibians during construction, including the following measures: - Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the amphibian hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible. - A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be trimmed to 15 cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area. - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimize impacts on nearby aquatic habitats that amphibians could use. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.

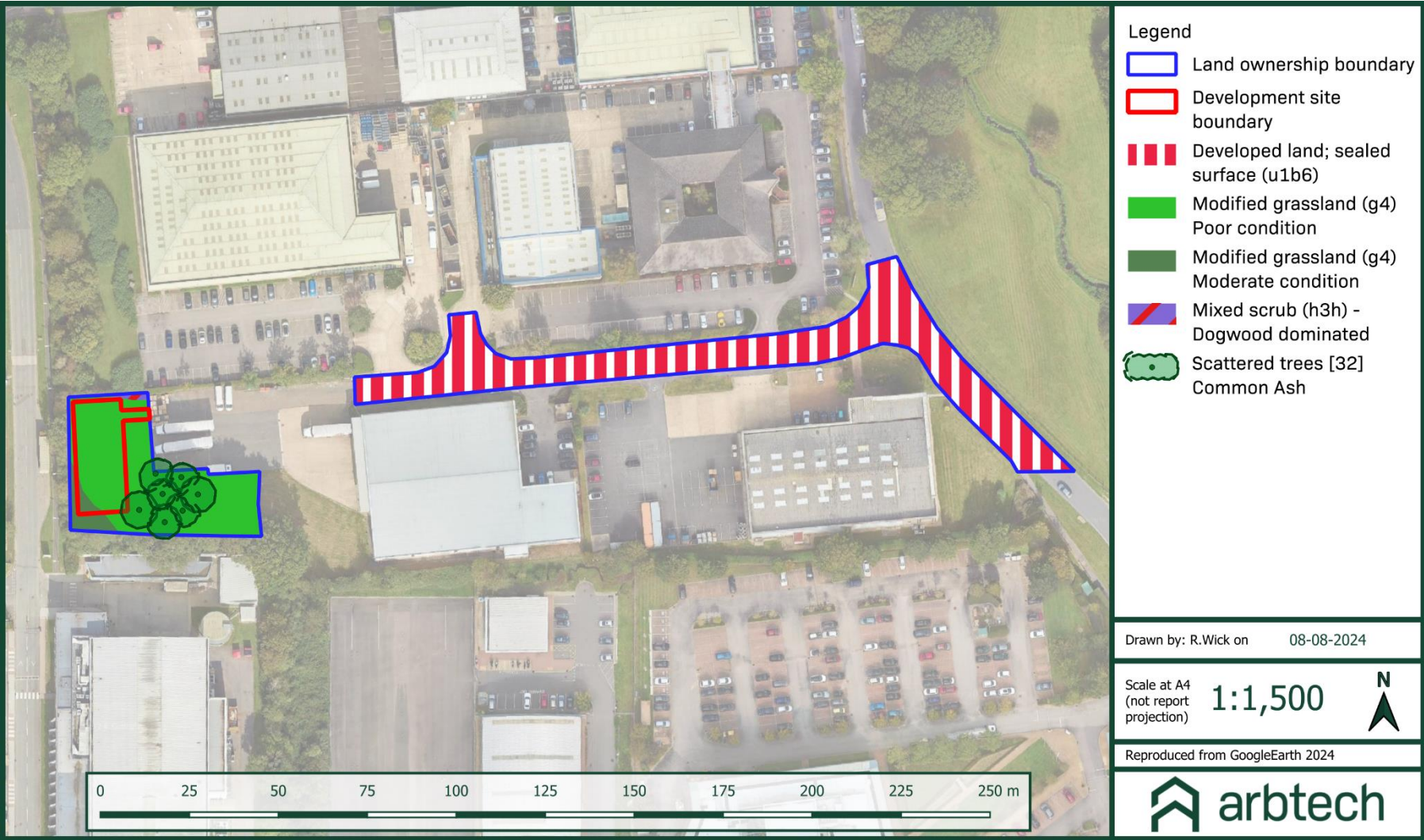
	- If any common amphibians are found in the working area, they should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. - In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is identified, works must cease, and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There was no evidence of badger presence on site such as setts, droppings or distinct mammal paths within the grassland. The habitats onsite provide suitable foraging and commuting opportunities for badgers.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No works will be undertaken within 30 m of a badger sett. Most grassland and scrub will be removed during construction. Given the limited site connectivity, the loss of habitat is considered inconsequential to local badger populations.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the minimal impacts for small mammals and badgers, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of badgers at the site. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for any new badger activity if works do not commence within three months. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.

	- The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers could use. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No EPSL licences within 2 km. The site has unsuitable habitat for riparian mammals and has poor connectivity to any watercourses in the surrounding area.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No EPSL licences within 2 km. Habitat is not suitable for hazel dormice given the absence of three-dimensional habitat such as woodland or scrub. Site is poorly connected for any foraging dormice.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Hedgehogs are known to use gardens and arable fields for commuting and foraging. Hedgehogs may use the grasslands for foraging and commuting to nearby gardens and fields.

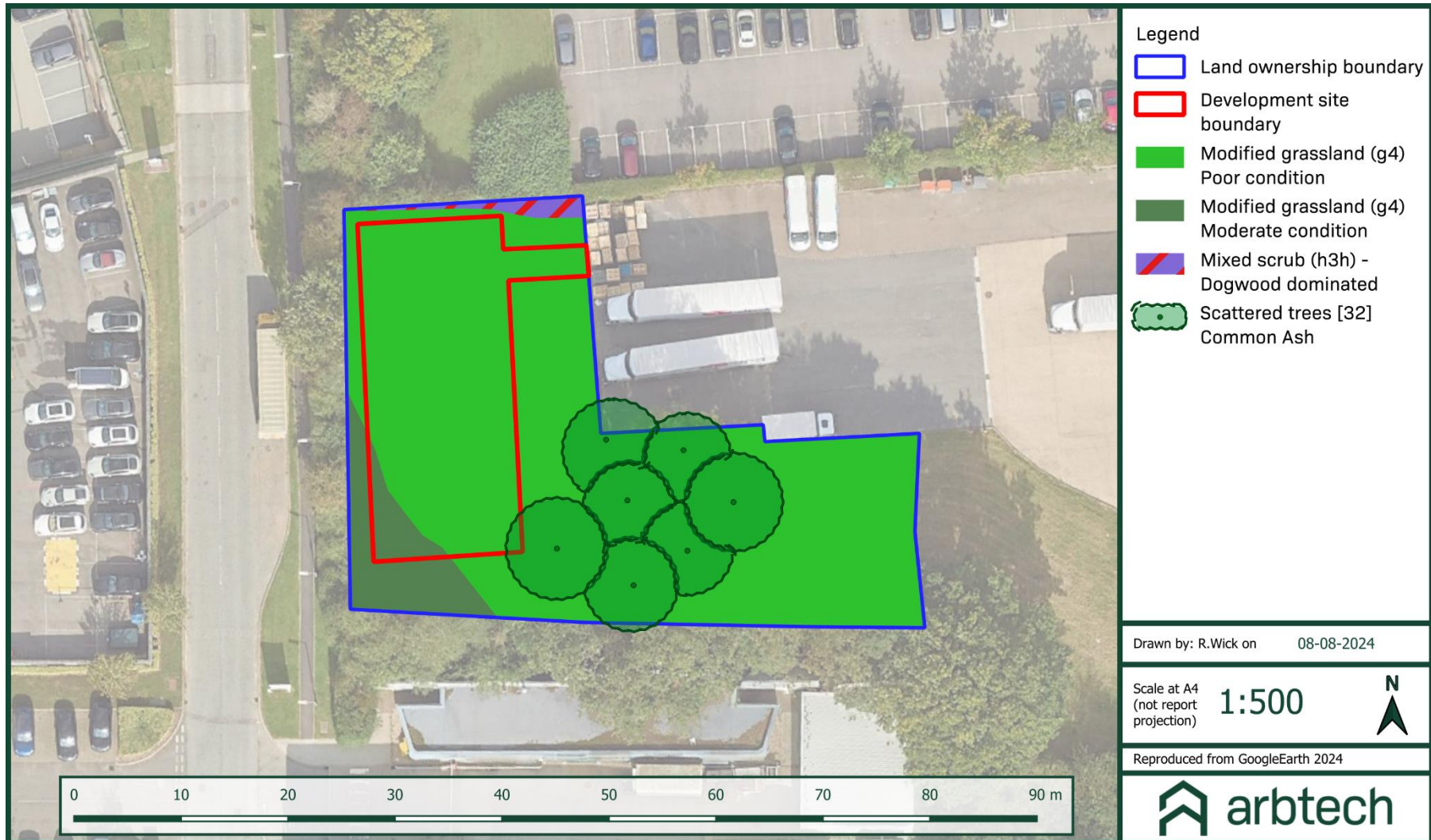
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will result in grassland being removed. This is likely to be inconsequential to hedgehogs given sites limited connectivity, but if hedgehogs venture into this area during the development it may result in injury or death.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, Including the following measures: - Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the hedgehog hibernation season (November to March) insofar as is possible. - A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 30cm and left overnight to allow any hedgehogs to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter hedgehogs from the working area. - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat maps

Appendix 1a: Habitat overview



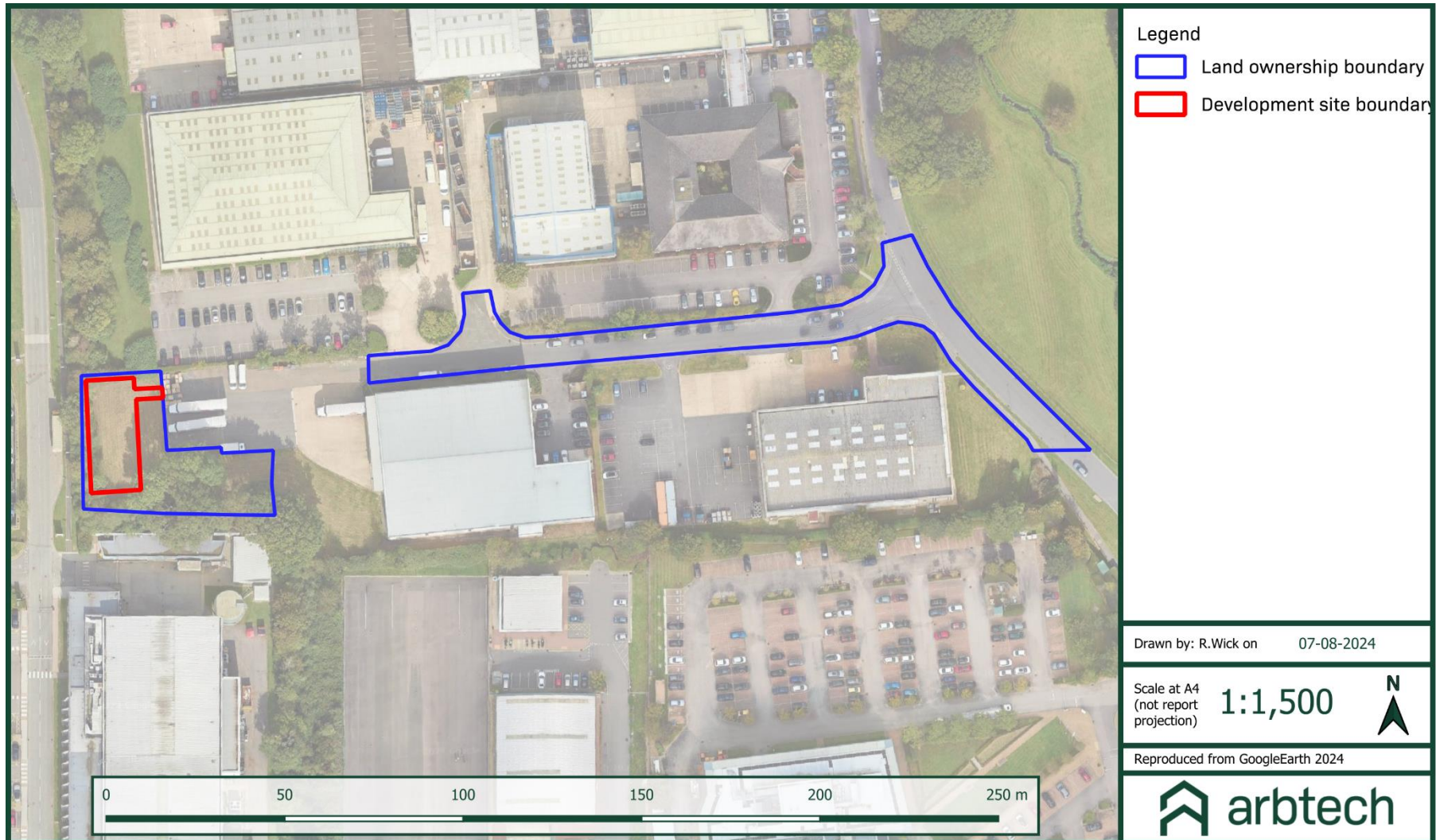
Appendix 1b: Detailed habitat map



Appendix 2a: Wider landscape



Appendix 2b: Detailed view of ownership boundary



Appendix 3: Proposed plan



Appendix 4: Pond map



Appendix 5: Photos

Descriptions	Photos
Photo 1: Looking northwest towards the patch of grassland containing the proposed site.	
Photo 2: Looking east from the proposed site towards the hardstanding.	

Photo 3: Looking west along the northern boundary of the proposed site.



Photo 4: Looking southeast from the site to the scattered trees beyond the red line boundary.



Photo 5: Seven common ash trees located within the modified grassland patch



Photo 6: The eastern-most area of modified grassland



Photo 7 and 8: Access road and pavements located within the land ownership boundary



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