



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land west of Cockhaise Farm

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	2
2.0 METHODOLOGY	6
3.0 RESULTS.....	7
4.0 DISCUSSION	15
5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT.....	23
6.0 CONCLUSIONS.....	25
7.0 REFERENCES.....	27
APPENDIX 1: PHOTOS.....	29
APPENDIX 2: HABITAT MAP	31
APPENDIX 3: SPECIES LIST	32
APPENDIX 4: BIODIVERSITY RECORDS.....	33

LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

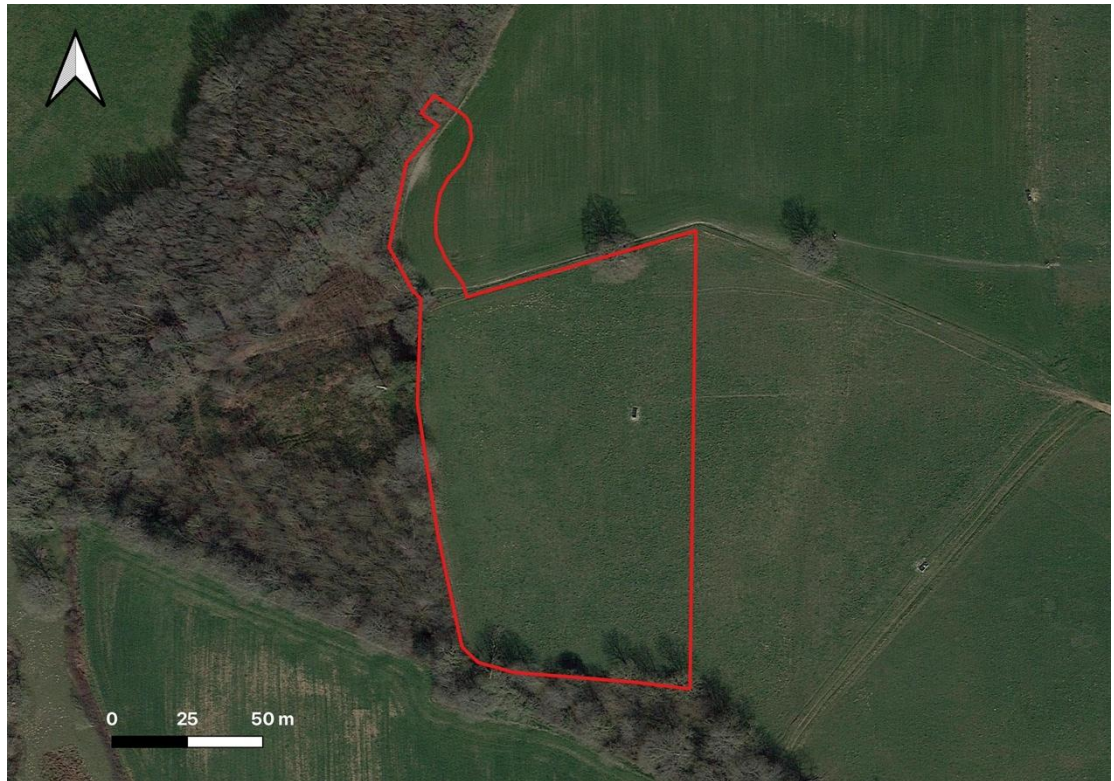
1.0 Introduction

Background

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- 1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Architect Benjamin Machin Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land west of Cockhaise Farm, Monteswood Ln, Haywards Heath, RH16 2QP, hereafter referred to as the 'site' (Figure 1). This is in support of a planning application for the site.
- 1.2 The key objectives of a PEA (CIEEM 2017) are to:
- Identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project;
 - Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required, following the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' (CIEEM 2016; BSI 2013, Clause 5.2);
 - Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA); and
 - Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.
- 1.3 This report comprises the:
- Legislative and planning context (Section 1);
 - Assessment methodologies (Section 2);
 - Results (Section 3);
 - Implications for development (Section 4);
 - An impact assessment (Section 5); and
 - Conclusions (Section 6).

Site Context and Status

- 1.4 The site comprises one field of modified grassland of cattle ley with a line of hornbeam trees on the north-western boundary. Adjacent to the south and west of the site is a mix of ancient woodland and managed coppice and to the north and east there are further agricultural fields. The site is approximately 1.2ha and located northeast of the town of Haywards Heath, with Montes Hill Road to the west and Monteswood Lane to the north (TQ 3689 2577). In the wider area there are numerous blocks of woodland to the north and south, connected by arable land and hedgerows.
- 1.5 A close view of the site boundary and survey area is shown in Figure 1 below, and the wider extent of the site is shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary
Satellite imagery obtained from Google Earth Pro on 06/06/2023*



*Figure 2: Approximate location of the red line boundary showing the wider
landscape Satellite imagery obtained from Google Earth Pro on 06/06/2023*

Description of the Proposed Development

- 1.6 The proposals are for a single residential dwelling and associated access road and garden space. Extensive areas of wildflower meadow and a traditional orchard are to be established in the north-east of the site, along with additional tree planting and species-rich native hedgerows. A 15m vegetated buffer is to be maintained along the boundary of the adjacent ancient woodland to the west of the site.

Planning Policies

- 1.7 The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure the proposals were compliant with relevant planning policy and legislation. Policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), as well as relevant planning policies from the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031. These policies included the following which are considered relevant to ecology, biodiversity and nature conservation:
- DP35: Conservation Areas
 - DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
 - DP38: Biodiversity
- 1.8 This report addresses the site in relation to nature conservation and wildlife and indeed to the local planning requirements as well as national planning and nature conservation legislation.
- 1.9 The Environment Bill (Environment Act 2021) received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021 and is now enacted as the Environment Act 2021. Part 6 (Nature and Biodiversity) and Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 insert a new section 90A and Schedule 7A into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA), which contain the provisions requiring mandatory biodiversity net gain for development granted planning permission pursuant to the TCPA. These provisions require developments to provide a biodiversity value post-development that exceeds the predevelopment biodiversity value of the onsite habitats by at least 10%.
- 1.10 The site has therefore been surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure compliance with national and local plan policies and other relevant nature conservation legislation including; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

- 1.11 The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM 2017) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

2.0 Methodology

Desktop Study

- 2.1 A desktop study search was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and an internet-based aerial mapping service (maps.google.co.uk) was used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features (ponds, woodlands etc.) within the wider landscape. Data for non-statutory sites, and local protected and notable species within 2km of the site was obtained from Sussex Biological Records Centre (SxBRC).

Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- 2.2 An extended preliminary ecological appraisal was originally undertaken on 19th October 2022 by Principal ecologist Matt Pendry BSc (Hons) MCIEEM and assistant ecologist Dominic Martens MSc (The Ecology Partnership 2023). The survey was updated and reassessed on 19th February 2025 by Principal ecologist Matt Pendry BSc (Hons) MCIEEM.
- 2.3 The surveyors identified the habitats present, following the standard UK Habitat classification system (UKHab) auditing method. The site was surveyed on foot and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on an appropriately scaled map (JNCC 2010). In addition, the dominant plant species in each habitat were recorded. The potential of the site to support protected species was also assessed.

Protected Species Assessments

- 2.4 Any evidence of additional protected species was recorded. Standard methods of search and measures of presence, or likely presence based on habitat suitability were used for bats in trees (Collins 2016), breeding birds (BTO 2020), hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* (Bright *et al.* 2006), great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* (ARG 2010), reptiles (Froglife 2015), badgers *Meles meles* (Creswell *et al.* 1990) and water voles *Arvicola amphibius* (Strachan *et al.* 2011).

Limitations

- 2.5 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The site was visited over the period of one site visit, as such seasonal variations cannot be observed and potentially only a selection of all species that potentially occur within the site have been recorded. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.
- 2.6 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time when the survey was carried out. Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

3.0 Results

Desktop Study

- 3.1 There is one internationally designated site within 15km of the red line boundary (Figure 3). This is the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) located approximately 6.2km northeast of the site. Ashdown Forest is an area of heathland, semi-natural woodland and valley bog.

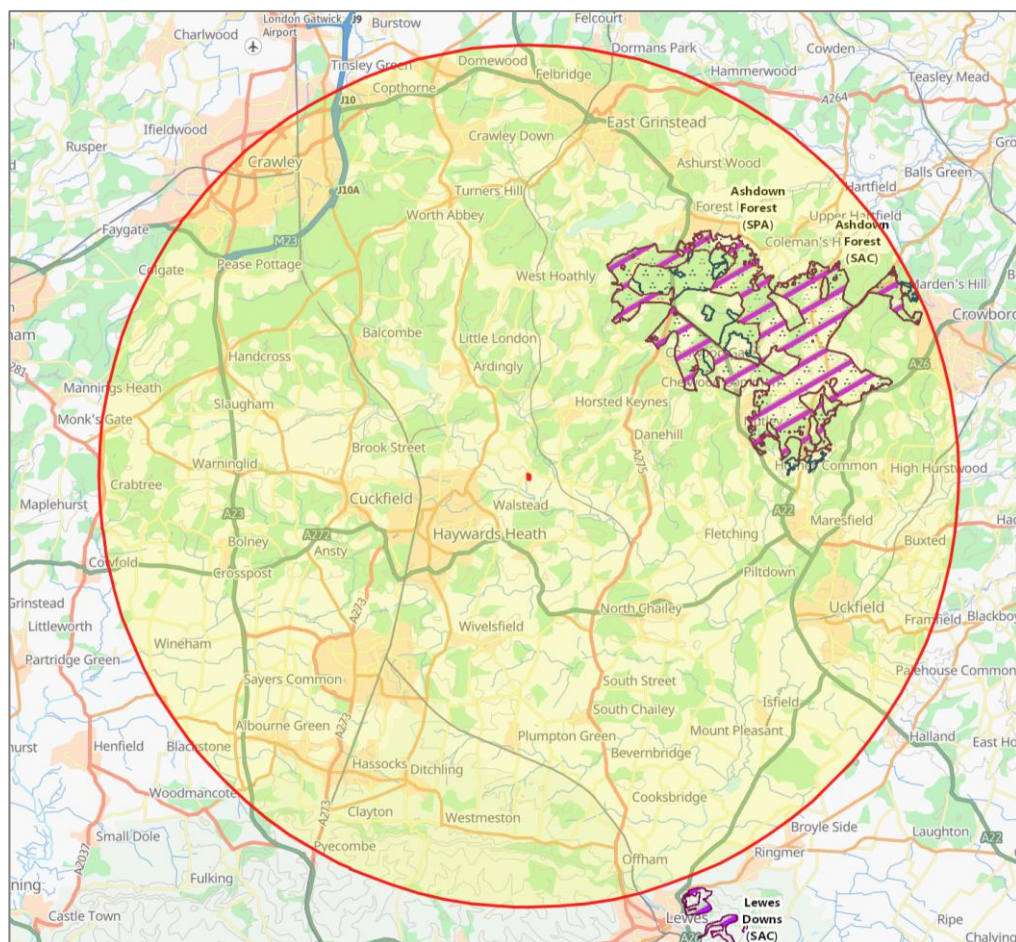


Figure 3: International statutory designations within 15km of the site.

3.2 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any nationally or internationally designated sites. There are two statutory designated sites within 2km of the site (Figure 4):

- Eastern Road Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located approximately 1.5km southwest of the site. The LNR is designated for its mix of woodland, scrub, rough grassland and wetland habitats.
- Freshfield Lane Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located approximately 1.2km northeast of the site. The quarry is internationally important for paleoenvironmental, provenance and palaeogeographical studies.

3.3 The site does fall within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) however only developments involving Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals would require a consultation with the Local Planning Authority.

3.4 In terms of non-statutory designations, there are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the site:

- Costells, Henfield and Nashgill Woods LWS, approximately 1.1km south

- Walstead Cemetery LWS, approximately 1.5km southwest

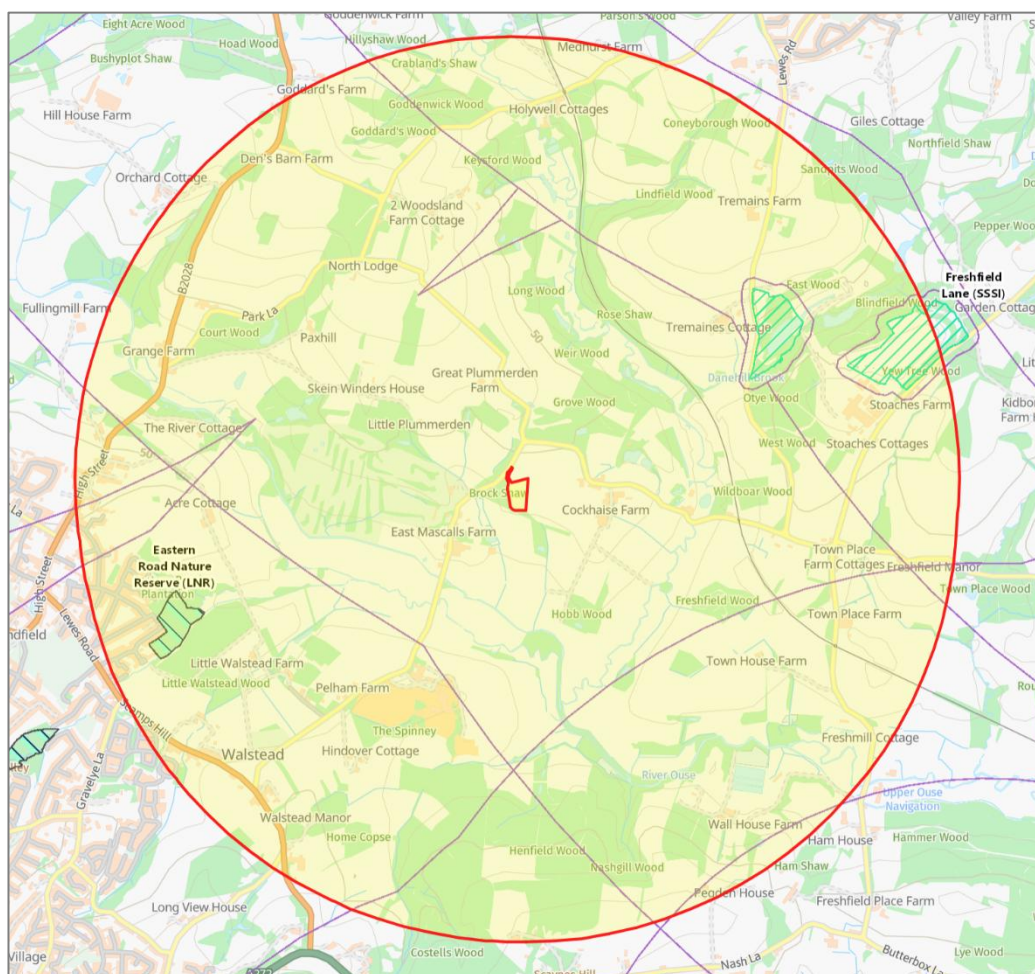


Figure 4: National statutory designations within 2km of the site.

3.5 The site is surrounded by a number of priority habitats (Figure 5), including:

- Numerous parcels of **ancient woodland**, including Brock Shaw woodland which lies adjacent to the south and west side of the site boundary.
- A number of **ancient replanted woodland parcels**. The closest, Weir Wood, is approximately 440m southeast of the site.
- A greater number of priority **deciduous woodland** parcels, including Brock Shaw woodland which lies adjacent to the south and west side of the site boundary and is also an ancient woodland.
- Several **traditional orchards**, the closest being approximately 220m southwest of the site.
- One **woodpasture and parkland BAP priority habitat**, Paxhill Park located 710m northwest of the site.

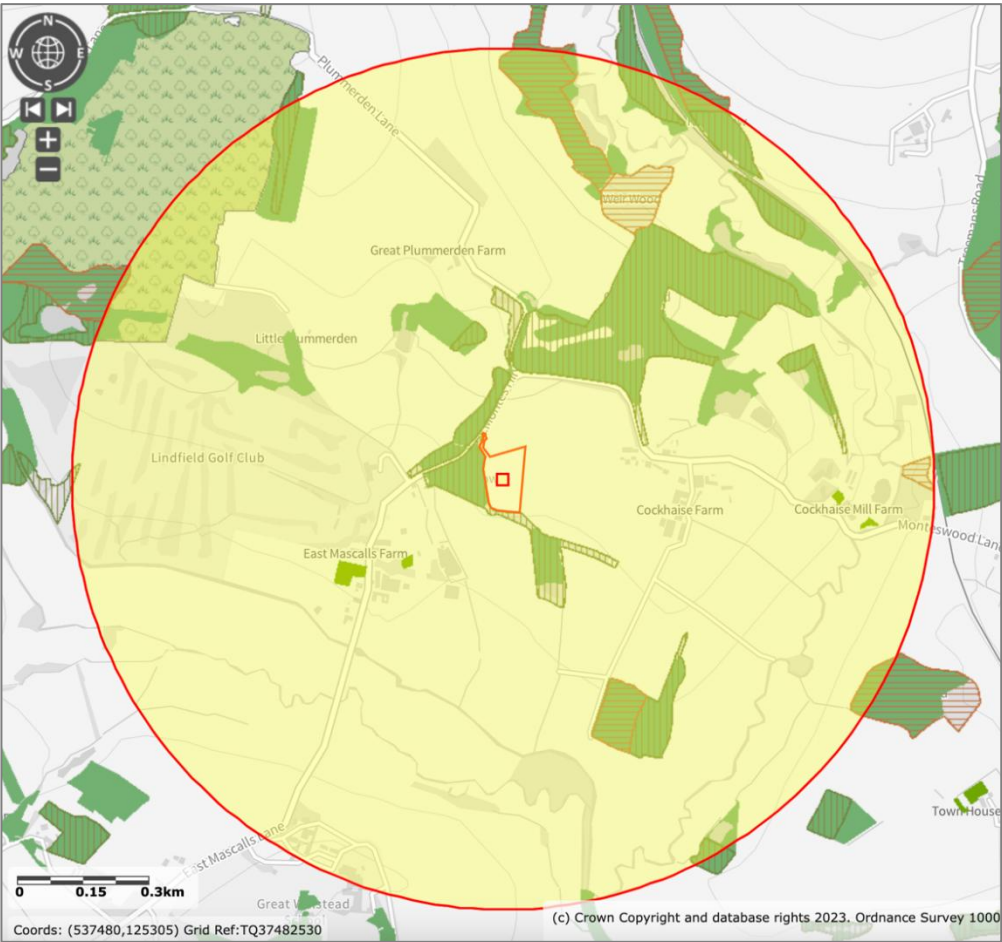


Figure 5: deciduous woodland (dull green), ancient woodland (brown vertical hatching), ancient replanted woodland (red horizontal hatching), traditional orchard (lime green) and parkland (pale green) within 1km of the site

3.6 OS mapping found no ponds on site and five within 250m (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Ponds within 250m of the red line boundary.

3.7 The closest past European Protected Species (EPS) licences for each EPS species is:

- Bats - Located c. 340m northwest of the site, 2016-2020 licence for the destruction of a resting place site for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and brown long ear *Plecotus auratus*.
- Great crested newts – located c. 1.8km west of the site, 2010-2011 licence for the destruction of a resting place.
- Dormouse – located c. 1.8km west of the site, 2010-2012 license for the destruction of a breeding site and resting place.

Table 1: Notable species records within 2km of the site in the last 10 years

Species	Status	Closest record to site	Most recent record
Palmate newt <i>Lissotriton helveticus</i>	WCA Sch5 s9.5a	1.9km west 13/05/2017	
Common Toad <i>Bufo Bufo</i>	WCA Sch5 s9.5a; NERC S41; UK BAP Priority	950m east 03/07/2017	
Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Hab Dir A2 NP; Hab Dir A4; Hab Reg Sch2; WCA Sch5 s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a; NERC S41; UK BAP Priority	1.4km north 17/06/2014	
Grass Snake <i>Natrix Helvetica</i>	WCA Sch5 s9.1/s9.1 kill/s9.5a, NERC S41; UK BAP Priority	1.3km south 25/03/2021	
European hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; RedList GB post2001 VU	Adjacent to eastern boundary of site 2015	
Hazel dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Hab Dir A4 Hab Reg Sch2; WCA Sch5 s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a; NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; RedList GB post2001 VU	290m west 24/09/2018	
Brown long-eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Hab Dir A4; Hab Reg Sch2; WCA Sch5 s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a; NERC S41; UK BAP Priority	290m south west 2018	2km west 24/05/2023
Long-eared bat species <i>Plecotus</i>	As above	1km south west 03/11/2021	
Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	2km west 19/07/2023
Soprano Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	1km south west 18/07/2022
Nathusius's Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	
A bat species <i>Chiroptera</i>	As above	Within 2km 2023	
Myotis Bat <i>Myotis Sp.</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	1km south west 18/07/2022
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	1km south west 18/07/2022
Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	As above	290m south west 2018	1km south west 20/06/2022
Red kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Birds Dir A1; WCA Sch1 Pt1; RedList Global post2001 NT; Notable Bird	1.3km south 02/03/2022	
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	100m north 28/05/2017	290m south west 2018

Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	Within 1km grid square 18/05/2022	
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	460m north 16/04/2020	
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	2km grid square south east 04/03/2015	
Hawfinch <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	NERC; S41 UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	600m east 17/01/2021	
House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Bird Red; Notable Bird	430m south west 09/08/2023	
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	Within 2km square grid 16/04/2016	Within 2km square grid 20/05/2023
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Amber; Notable Bird	Within 2km grid square 23/03/2016	2km grid square 05/06/2023
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Red; Notable Bird	Within 2km grid square west 29/03/2016	2km grid square 23/11/2020
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	NERC S41; UK BAP Priority; Bird Amber; Notable Bird	Within 2km grid square 23/03/2016	2km grid square 06/05/2023
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Bird Red; Notable Bird	Within 2km grid square 23/04/2016	

Habitat Survey

- 3.8 The site is made up of a single field of modified grassland used for cattle grazing pasture with a line of hornbeam trees running along the northwestern boundary adjacent to Montes Hill (Road). Adjacent to the south and west of the site is an ancient woodland that is traditionally managed with areas of coppice.

Modified grassland

- 3.9 The entirety of the site comprised modified grassland sward height was uniform and was used for cattle grazing. This grassland is dominated by tall fescue and perennial rye grass with abundant cock's-foot, frequent creeping buttercup, and occasional dandelion, creeping thistle, ribwort plantain, alsike clover, broad leafed dock and white clover. The species composition indicates that this is a grazing ley and species richness was poor at only 4-5 species/m², based on five quadrats.

Trees

- 3.10 On the northwestern boundary there is a line of trees that is dominated by hornbeam, of which, two small individuals fall within the site boundary. A single mature pedunculate oak was located in the north-eastern edge of the site.

Ancient Woodland

- 3.11 Adjacent to the south and west of the site there is an area of ancient woodland that has been traditionally managed with areas of coppice. The woodland is dominated by sweet chestnut with abundant blackthorn and frequent bramble and elder. There is locally dominant hornbeam along the western edge of the woodland. Other species include hazel, nettles, silver birch, ash (which has dieback), holly, goat willow, bracken, creeping buttercup, wood meadow grass, soft rush, wood sedge, moss, honeysuckle, ground ivy, hawthorn, dog rose and field maple.

Protected Species*Bats*

- 3.12 The data search revealed that the closest bat records was approximately 290m southwest of the site. The site has good connectivity to suitable bat habitat within the surrounding area as the longer grasslands and treelines within the site itself provides suitable foraging habitat. As such, the site is considered to have moderate potential for commuting and foraging bats.
- 3.13 The small hornbeam trees along the western edge had negligible suitability for roosting bats, and no specific features for roosting bats could be observed on the mature oak tree in the north-east.

Dormouse

- 3.14 The woodland adjacent to the west of the contains suitable habitat for dormice due to the occasional hazel trees and suitable composition beneath the hornbeam treeline.
- 3.15 The woodland and treeline network throughout the wider landscape provides direct connections to additional suitable dormouse habitat, such as Grove Wood to the north of the site, and the local records reveal that dormice were found 290m west of the site in 2018. As such, the treeline on site is considered to have potential to support dormouse.

Great crested newt

- 3.16 No ponds were identified on the site however there were five ponds within 250m of the red-line boundary. The local records showed no great crested news close to the site, the closest being 1.4km north.

- 3.17 Upon further assessment, pond 2 was dry, despite a long period of sustained rainfall in the week preceding the survey and appears to have been defunct for a considerable number of years after reviewing historic satellite imagery. Pond 3 had been removed and replaced with a large slurry pit. Ponds 1, 4, and 5 were on private land, and as such were not observable from the ground. However, from reviewing satellite imagery and speaking to the farmer who owns the neighbouring farm, Pond 1 is an artificial private boating lake, that did not exist prior to 2014, and therefore is very unlikely to sustain any great crested newt populations. Pond 4 was also created at the time of the boating lake and has appeared to have become defunct and dried up at some point between 2015 and 2018, based on historic satellite imagery, and as such would no longer be able to support GCN. Pond 5 appears to be an ornamental pond within the grounds of East Mascalls Farmhouse. This may be suitable to support GCN however, this cannot be confirmed. This pond is located 200m from the south-western corner of the site and 215m from the new dwelling. Given the amount of more suitable terrestrial habitat between the pond and the site, such as the ancient woodland, it is unlikely any newts would rely on the grazed modified grassland within the site, however, may be present around the site edges (if pond 5 is populated with GCN).

Badgers

- 3.18 No evidence of badger setts, individual holes or latrines were recorded on site or within 30m. One badger sett was found c.100m southeast of the site.

Reptiles

- 3.19 The longer sward grassland on site and woodland habitats adjacent to the site are suitable to support common reptile species such as slow worm and common lizard. However, as the field is used for grazing the sward length will usually be much shorter making it less suitable for reptiles.

Breeding birds

- 3.20 The tree line on site provides suitable nesting habitat for breeding birds, and taller sward grassland also presents opportunities for ground nesting birds such as skylark, although when the field is actively grazed this may deter nesting. As such, the site is considered to have potential to support breeding birds.

Other Species

- 3.21 Owing to a lack of suitable habitat on site and within the surrounding area, no potential for any other protected species, such as otters and water voles, was identified within the site.
- 3.22 Due to the suitable tree line on site, the adjacent woodland and records of hedgehogs next to the site, the site is considered to have moderate potential to support hedgehog.

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 The following paragraphs consider the effects of the development on designated sites, priority habitats and protected and priority species. Where the desk study and Phase 1 survey provide sufficient evidence for an assessment of effects on any of these groups to be taken through planning, these are detailed below, the need for additional surveys and when and how these should be completed are summarised, if required.

Effects on designated sites

- 4.2 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any designated sites, however, it does fall within the 7km zone of influence for the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA, which is approximately 6.2km north-east of the site. Any planning applications for residential development within this zone may need to mitigate potential impacts in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) payments. As such, the proposed development will result in a net increase in residential units and therefore will be subject to SANG and SAMM tariffs. These tariffs will ensure that the proposed development does not impact Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA.
- 4.3 There are two statutory (Eastern Road LNR & Freshfield Lane SSSI) and two non-statutory sites (Costells, Henfield & Nashgill Woods LWS & Walstead Cemetery LWS) within 2km of the site. Due to small scale nature of the proposals and the distance between the site these designations it is considered that the development will not result in any direct or indirect impacts on any statutory or non-statutory sites within the local area.

Effects on Priority Habitats

- 4.4 There are no priority habitats on the site. The closest priority habitat is the Brock Shaw ancient woodland located adjacent to the south and west of the site. A buffer zone of at least 15m should be created around to the woodland to prevent root damage. It is recommended that this buffer zone should be planted with a semi natural habitat in the form of either a woodland, a mix of scrub or grassland to further protect the ancient woodland.

Effect on other habitats

- 4.5 The line of trees on the site between off site woodland areas provide wildlife corridors, allowing animals to safely traverse the site. Whilst two small trees will be lost, the canopy will remain continuous with the trees over the road. It is recommended as compensation that additional high value linear habitats such as species-rich native hedgerows are incorporated into the site.
- 4.6 The modified grassland habitats on site are in poor condition as well as being common and widespread in the local area. As such, this habitat is considered to be of low ecological value. The proposed use of flower-rich planting, traditional orchard, and additional tree planting, will likely result in a significant net-gain in the biodiversity value of the site.

Protected Species***Bats******Bat foraging and commuting potential***

- 4.7 The linear habitats and longer sward grasslands on site provide suitable habitat for commuting/foraging bats.
- 4.8 The Bat Conservation Trust survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) state in table 4.1 that the “*guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, are to be applied using professional judgement*”. It is important that proportionality is employed when recommending further survey work for bat species on a proposed development site. As stated within section 8.2.7 of these guidelines (Collins 2016), the following points need to be considered with regard to planning activity surveys:
- Likelihood of bats being present;

- Likely species concerned;
- Number of individuals;
- Type of habitat affected;
- Predicted impacts of the proposed development on bats;
- Type and scale of proposed development.

4.9 The proposals indicate that a maximum of two small trees could be lost from the line of trees to make space for an access road. However, this will not affect the linear habitat of the line of trees as its canopy is connected to the adjacent woodland across the road, retaining its function and allowing bats to commute across.

4.10 Considering the small-scale nature of the development and the limited loss of trees, as detailed above, and that the development will not impact upon any ancient woodland habitats or buffer zones, or indeed the ecological functionality of the landscape, no impacts are predicted on flight lines or foraging habitats for bats. No further surveys are therefore recommended.

4.11 It is, however, recommended that any proposed lighting scheme as part of the development will have to take into account bats in the surrounding area, as well as on site. All bat species are nocturnal, resting in dark conditions in the day and emerging at night to feed. Bats are known to be affected by light levels which can affect both their roosting behaviour as well as their foraging behaviour. This needs to be taken into account, with a sympathetic lighting scheme for the development, creating dark wildlife corridors which avoid the use of street lighting and only installing lighting if there is a significant need. Recommendations include:

- Lighting should only be installed if there is a significant need;
- Light levels should be kept low, the use of low-pressure sodium lamps or high pressure sodium instead of mercury or metal halide lamps where glass glazing is preferred due to its ultra-violet filtration characteristics;
- Warm LED lighting can also be used, however, recommended colour temperature of 2700K or lower.
- Lighting should be avoided near trees and hedgerows, with light angled away from these areas, bats use linear features such as treelines to commute across the landscape to forage; and

- Lights should have focussed luminance on their target area, preventing light spill and pollution into other areas of the site and local area.
- Lighting in areas where it is infrequently needed can be linked to motion controlled sensor, while other areas can be set to a timer to ensure they are only on when needed.

Dormice

- 4.12 The treeline and adjacent woodland habitats are considered to have potential to support dormice due to the presence of hazel trees and other favourable woody species. However, the understory of the treeline is sparse limiting commuting and foraging habitat to the canopy. The commuting habitat provides connectivity between the site and other suitable habitats such as Brock Shaw and Grove Wood.
- 4.13 Although dormice may be present, the proposed vegetation clearance of a maximum of two small trees to provide access to the site is minimal and will not impact connectivity as the canopy of the line of trees is connected to the adjacent woodland across the road. It is therefore recommended that sensitive vegetation clearance under ecological supervision be carried out.
- 4.14 Dormice nest in different locations within the habitat according to the time of year. In summer, they nest above ground in scrub or trees, however, their hibernation nests are made on the ground, under leaf litter or within cavities made by tree roots. Also, during the summer, females are likely to have dependent young, which will not be able to move of their own accord. As such, vegetation clearance can either be a single-stage clearance or a two-stage clearance depending on the time of year.
- 4.15 Two-stage includes vegetation clearance in the Winter (November-March) and Spring (April-May).
- In Winter the scrub and trees to be removed as part of the proposed development will be cut down by hand to around 30cm high (this also avoids the bird nesting season and limits the suitability of the site for nesting birds). Ground disturbance will be avoided, and all cut materials will be removed from the site and chipped to avoid suitable dormouse and bird habitats being left on site.
 - In Spring, the dormice will have woken up from hibernation and will be able to move away of their own accord. The remaining vegetation can then be cut to

ground level by hand and stumps can be removed. This will be done under an ecological watching brief and any nests found will be checked and moved to other suitable habitats that are not to be affected. Furthermore, the clearance work will be carried out in sections, moving towards retained suitable habitat. This will allow the dormice to move to the retained habitat and not become isolated.

- 4.16 Single-stage clearance can be undertaken between April and May or between mid-September and October.
- 4.17 It is recommended that the two-stage clearance be undertaken, however, if this is not possible due to time constraints a sensitive single-stage clearance should be undertaken. This involves the clearance of scrub and trees using hand tools to avoid disturbance by heavy machinery. The area of clearance must be supervised, and finger searched by an ecologist prior to works commencing to determine the presence of dormice. A detailed methods statement must be drawn up before this process begins.

Great crested newts

- 4.18 Of the five ponds within 250m identified in the desk study, three were defunct and one was a recently constructed ornamental boating lake so considered to be unsuitable to support GCN. The fifth pond is located over 200m from the application site, well outside the 50m core sustenance zone of the pond. GCN were recorded within the wider landscape therefore there is potential for the newts to present within this pond and find and utilise the site, however it is unlikely due to the grazed nature of the site.
- 4.19 Using the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment tool, it is considered 'highly unlikely' that the development on site will have an impact on any GCN if present in pond 5 (See Table 2 below).

Table 2: Natural England: Rapid Risk Assessment

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.03
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

- 4.20 Although unlikely to be present on site, it is recommended a precautionary approach be taken to vegetation clearance, with a detailed method statement prepared to inform these methods, such as seasonal timing of works, two stage clearance, and ecologist supervision. If a GCN is found then works will need to cease and an application for a mitigation licence from Natural England will be required.

Reptiles

- 4.21 The grassland edge and small log pile on site and woodland habitats adjacent to the site are suitable to support common reptile species such as slow worm and common lizard.
- 4.22 The grassland on site is largely maintained to a shorter sward height due to cattle grazing and the habitats value to reptiles is minimal, therefore it is not recommended that reptile presence/absence surveys be undertaken. It is recommended, however, that the grass be kept short after the winter period prior to works beginning to deter reptiles entering the works area.

Nesting Birds

- 4.23 The line of trees on site has the potential to support nesting birds. If the removal of these trees is to be carried out, it should be done outside of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If active nests are identified, works in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest.

Badgers

- 4.24 A single badger sett was found approximately 100m southeast of the site. As such it is considered that the badger sett will not be impacted by any works. However, the presence of badgers are therefore known to be in the area.
- 4.25 The plans for the development are expected to take place centrally on the grassland. Therefore, with the prevalence of more suitable surrounding habitat it is considered unlikely that the development of the site will have any impact on badger foraging or commuting habitats. Although there are safety measures that can be taken to ensure that no badgers are harmed during the development process:

- Any trenches or excavations on site should either be covered over at night or have a plank of wood placed in to allow any animals to escape if they were to accidentally fall in
- Any open pipes or conduit laid should be blocked off each night to prevent badgers from entering them

4.26 The retention of the margin habitats and provision of enhanced ecological networks would ensure that badger access to foraging habitats and water is retained.

Other Species

4.27 No potential for any other protected species, such as water voles or otters was identified within the site.

4.28 The site has potential to support hedgehog. Whilst receiving no specific legal protection, they are protected from certain forms of harm under the wild mammals (Protection) Act 1996. There is a risk that without mitigation, vegetation clearance on site may result in mutilation or crushing of hedgehog nesting in brash piles. As such, it is recommended that areas of dense vegetation needing clearance are cut in two stages, the first to 300mm, then then the second to ground level after the area has been searched for hedgehog. If any are found, they will be safely move to a suitable brash pile outside the clearance area.

Ecological Enhancements

4.29 Several enhancements can be made to the final development to help reduce potential ecological impacts and increase ecological opportunities for a range of species. Local planning encourages developments to improve biodiversity, therefore some enhancements are detailed below.

4.30 It is recommended that the development incorporate wildflower-rich grassland through use of an appropriate seedmix such as EM5 Meadow Mixture for Loamy Soils from [Emorsgate](#). This will provide valuable nectar opportunities for pollinators.

4.31 Creating an orchard on site which is managed using traditional methods with a species-rich grassland ground layer can be of great value to a wide variety of wildlife.

A series of different fruit trees are recommended to create a range of flowering periods within this habitat and maximise its value for wildlife.

4.32 Artificial house sparrow and swift nest site can be built into the development. Nest boxes should be installed in order to provide new nesting opportunities for birds. These will be inserted into the building and become integral with the design. Such boxes include the following below. Either of these models can be used within the building (Figure 7):

- Schwegler Sparrow Terrace (1SP) should be inserted into the wall structure or inserted on to the wall.
- Woodstone Build-in House Sparrow Nest Box.



Figure 7: Schwegler sparrow terrace (left) with the Woodstone Build in House box (right).

4.33 Bat boxes can be installed on retained mature trees in the adjacent woodland at least 3 metres from the ground. The location of the box should be unobstructed by branches and foliage with a clear flight line, be sheltered from strong winds and be exposed to the sun for part of the day, ideally south-west or south-east facing. This will enhance the site by creating new roosting opportunities for bats in an area of trees with little existing roosting potential. Recommended boxes include the below, or similar:

- CJ Wildlife Vivara Pro Woodstone Bat Box;
- CJ Wildlife Vivara Pro Low Profile WoodStone Bat Box;
- CJ Wildlife Large Multi Chamber WoodStone Bat Box; and
- CJ Wildlife Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box.

4.34 It is recommended that log piles and hibernacula be created along the edges of the site (Figure 8). The log piles should be created from existing trees on site that are set to be removed as part of the proposals. Some of these logs should be buried c. 50cm into the soil to create new opportunities for invertebrate species such as stag beetles.

Planting around the newly created and retained log piles with species such as honeysuckle or clematis can also add value.



Figure 8: Log piles and hibernacula can be created within the edges of the site.

- 4.35 Hedgehog boxes can also be installed within areas of greenspace in discrete locations against boundary features and/or scrub where they will be sheltered and undisturbed (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Example of hedgehog boxes with predator proof entrance

5.0 Impact Assessment

- 5.1 This section of the report forms an EcIA (Ecological Impact Assessment) and is designed to quantify and evaluate the potential impacts of the development on habitats and species present on site or within the local area.
- 5.2 The approach to this assessment accords with guidance presented within the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM 2018). In essence, an EcIA assesses the activities associated with a proposed scheme that are

likely to generate changes within identified zone of influences, on identified ecological features and receptors. The proposals are subsequently reviewed and mitigation and compensation measures are outlined which help to reduce negative impacts.

5.3 Table 2 below summarises the impacts and required mitigation for each receptor as previously detailed in the discussion.

Table 2: Assessment of effects from the proposal after mitigation and compensation

Feature	Scale of Importance	Mitigation/Compensation Required	Residual Effect
Ashdown Forest SAC SPA	International	SANGS & SAMMS tariffs	Not significant
Freshfield Lane SSSI	National	None required	Not significant
Eastern Road LNR	Regional	None required	Not significant
Local Wildlife Sites	County	None required	Not significant
Priority Habitats	District	Brock Shaw ancient woodland is located adjacent to the south and west of the site. Mitigation in the form of a 15m buffer to prevent root damage and enhancement in the form of a semi natural habitat of either a woodland, a mix of scrub or grassland.	Not significant
On-Site Habitats	Site	The creation of traditional orchard, wildflower meadow, and tree planting	Not significant
Dormice	Local/Site	Sensitive clearance under a method statement at appropriate time of year	Not significant
Bats (commuting/foraging)	Local	Sensitive lighting strategy	Not significant
Nesting Birds	Site	Mitigating direct harm to nests by removal of any suitable nesting habitat outside of nesting bird season or after a check by a suitably qualified ecologist. Additional bird boxes post development.	Not significant
Badgers	Site	Best practice guidelines to be followed throughout development to ensure no individuals are harmed.	Not significant
Great Crested Newts, and Reptiles	Site	Sensitive clearance under a method statement at appropriate time of year	Not significant

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The site comprises species-poor modified grassland, grazed by cattle and a line of trees on the northwestern boundary. Adjacent to the site on the south and west is an area of ancient woodland.
- 6.2 Ashdown Forest SAC SPA is located 6.2km to the north-east and therefore the site falls within the 7km zone of influence for this designation. As the development results in an increase in residential units, albeit one, a SAMM tariff and SANG payment contribution will be required to offset cumulative impacts.
- 6.3 There are two national statutory designated sites and two non-statutory sites within 2km of the red line boundary. However, due to the small-scale nature of the proposals, they are of a sufficient distance away to not be affected by this development.
- 6.4 There are no priority habitats on site. The closest priority habitat is the Brock Shaw ancient woodland located adjacent to the south and west of the site. A buffer zone of at least 15m should be created around to the woodland to prevent root damage. The line of trees on site is ecologically valuable and a maximum of two small trees will be removed to create an access road. This, however, will not impact the connectivity of the line of trees as its canopy is connected to the adjacent woodland across the road.
- 6.5 These two small trees to be lost have '**Negligible**' suitability for roosting bats.
- 6.6 The site contains linear habitats, open grassland, and woodland edge providing suitability for foraging and commuting bats. It is recommended that sensitive lighting be used to reduce the works impact on nocturnal bat activity.
- 6.7 The treeline and adjacent woodland were suitable to support dormouse. It is recommended that sensitive clearance of the two small trees be carried out to prevent harm to dormice. A full survey is not considered necessary given the low impact nature of the proposals.
- 6.8 A single pond potentially suitable to support GCN was present within 250m of the site. Given the distance (200m) and low impact of the proposals the Natural England rapid risk assessment concluded an offence to be highly unlikely, if this pond were to support GCN. As such, reasonable avoidance measures are recommended to avoid

harm to GCN during construction and it is recommended that the grass length be kept short after the winter period to deter GCN from entering the grassland.

- 6.9 The grassland/woodland edge habitats on site are considered to provide suitable habitat for common reptile species, however, the majority of the site is less optimal owing to cattle grazing. It is recommended therefore that the grass length be kept short after the winter period to deter reptiles from entering the grassland.
- 6.10 Trees, and grassland on site have the potential to be used by birds as nesting habitat during the breeding season. The UK breeding season for most bird species takes place between March and September. Ideally, work affecting these areas should be avoided during this period. If unavoidable, it is recommended that any works affecting trees and scrub on site should be carried out under ecological watching brief.
- 6.11 No evidence of badger setts or latrines was identified on site, however a badger sett found approximately 100m away from the sett suggests that badgers may use the site for foraging. It is recommended that safety measures be put in place, for example covering trenches and blocking off open pipes.
- 6.12 Recommendations for enhancements have been made within this report, and have been incorporated into the landscape strategy for the site and will provide a significant improvement to the ecological value of the site post-development.

7.0 References

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[1https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdatlas/methods/breeding-evidence](https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdatlas/methods/breeding-evidence)

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Wilson, G.J., Harris, S. & McLaren, G. (1997) *Changes in British badger population, 1988-1997*. People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.

Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.google.co.uk/maps

Magic Interactive Map: www.magic.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Photos

Photograph 1: Modified grassland in the south of the site looking south(October 2022)	
Photograph 2: Managed adjacent ancient woodland coppice (October 2022)	
Photograph 3: Line of hornbeams where access road will come through in the north of the site.(February 2025)	

Photograph 4: Modified grassland covering most of the site, looking north (February 2025).	
Photograph 5: Defunct Pond 2 to the south-east of the site (February 2025).	
Photograph 6: New slurry pond that has replaced Pond 3 to the south-east of the site (February 2025).	

Appendix 2: Habitat Map



Appendix 3: Species List

LATIN	ENGLISH	Abundance	Quadrats				
			1	2	3	4	5
<i>Lolium arundinaceum</i>	Tall fescue	D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocks foot	A	✓			✓	
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial ryegrass	D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Common dandelion	O					✓
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	O					
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	O	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	F	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled dock	O					✓
<i>Trifolium hybridum</i>	Alsike clover	O					
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	O					
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	O	✓	✓			
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Common sow thistle	R					
<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>	Greater bird's foot trefoil	R					
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	R					
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam	R					
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate oak	R					

Appendix 4: Biodiversity Records



Ecological Data Search SxBRC/24/851 - Summary Report

An ecological data search was carried out for land at Cockhaise Farm, Haywards Heath on behalf of Hayley Gale (The Ecology Partnership) on 04/03/2025.

The following datasets were consulted for this report:

	Requested	Radius/buffer size
Designated sites, habitats & ownership maps	Yes	2km
Protected, designated and invasive species	Yes	2km

Summary of results

Sites and habitats

Statutory sites	1 SSSI / 1 AONB / 1 LNR
Non-statutory sites	2 LWS / 1 LGS / 1 Designated Road Verge
Section 41 habitats	2 habitats
Ancient and/or ghyll woodland	Present

Protected and designated species

International designations	24 species	169 records
National designations	85 species	1,329 records
Other designations	219 species	2,801 records
Total	234 species	2,960 records
Invasive non-native	24 species	248 records

The report is compiled using data held by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) at the time of the request. SxBRC does not hold comprehensive species data for all areas. Even where data are held, a lack of records for a species in a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that the species does not occur there – the area may simply not have been surveyed.

This summary page may be published.
The full report and maps may not be published or otherwise shared.
The data search report is valid until 04/03/2026 for the site named above.

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