



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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Report	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
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Executive Summary

Ecosupport Ltd was instructed by Remmus Homes Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at 'Land to the East of College Lane, Hassocks' (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). This was required in order to identify any potentially important ecological features that may be affected by the proposed development. As part of this assessment, the following surveys were undertaken:

- Walkover survey with UK Habs habitat assessment (March, 2026); and
- Data request submitted to SxBRC (March, 2026).

The following important ecological features were identified on site following the conclusion of the above survey work and may be subject to adverse impacts in the absence of suitable mitigation / compensation:

- Low potential for commuting and foraging bats;
- [REDACTED]
- Low potential for Great Crested Newts;
- Low potential for breeding and nesting birds;
- Low potential for Reptiles; and
- Low potential for Hazel Dormice.

In the absence of any mitigation measures, the proposed development is anticipated to result in **adverse impacts** although measures, including recommendations for Phase II surveys where necessary, are outlined within **Section 6.0** of this document to provide mitigation where impacts have been identified as well as provide targeted ecological enhancements.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief

Ecosupport Ltd was instructed by Remmus Homes Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at 'Land to the East of College Lane, Hassocks' (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The purpose of this survey was to assess any ecological impacts that may arise as a result of the proposed development. The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- Identify and classify any priority habitats;
- Assess the ecological value of the site;
- Identify any signs of protected species and potential features that may support them;
- Make recommendations for further survey work as necessary; and
- Make recommendations for any necessary ecological avoidance and mitigation where possible at PEA stage.

NB: If the works do not take place within 18 months of this report¹ then the findings of this survey will no longer be considered valid and may require updating.

1.2 Site Description & Location

The site comprises of a parcel of grassland with a line of trees and bounding hedgerow with trees located east of College Lane, Hurstpierpoint BN6 9AF (centred on OS grid reference TQ 29157 17011) (**Fig 1**). The western boundary is marked by College Lane, residential dwellings and associated gardens, the north of the site is bounded by an access track, and the east and south of the site are connected to further fields. The wider environ is semi-rural, with residential dwellings mostly located to the south-west, and agricultural fields surrounding the site.

Figure 1. Aerial image of the site with approximate redline boundary provided (Google Earth, 2026).

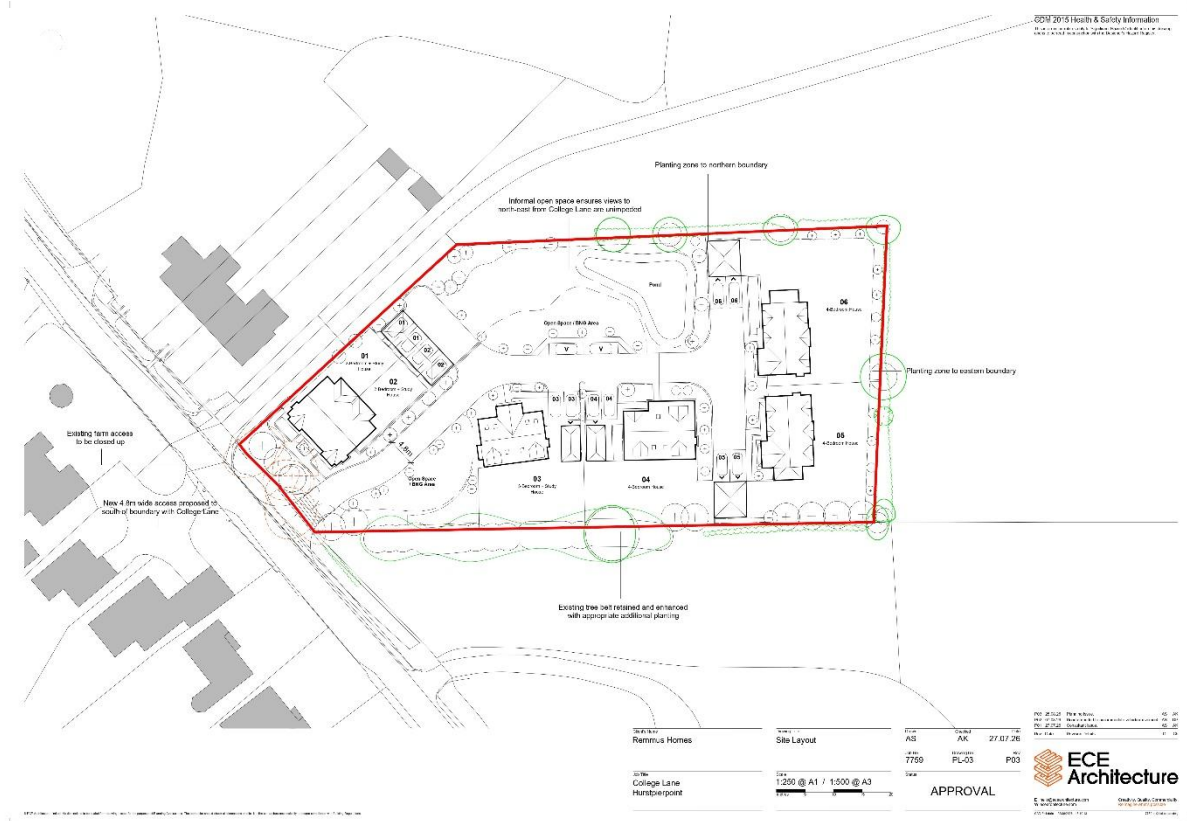


¹ <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

1.3 Proposed Development

It is understood that the proposed development will entail the erection of 6 residential dwellings, with private gardens, associated access and landscaping (**Fig 2**).

Figure 2. Plans showing the proposed development (Drawing No: PL03. Rev: P03) (ECE Architecture, 2026).



2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 transposes the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into UK domestic law. It provides protection for sites and species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure species listed in Schedule 2 or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or shelter. It is also illegal to deliberately disturb these species in such a way that is likely to significantly impact on the local distribution or abundance or affect their ability to survive, breed and rear or nurture their young.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit) makes changes to the three existing instruments which transpose the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives so that they continue to work (are operable) upon the UK's exit from the European Union (EU). These include The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This instrument also amends section 27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ensure existing protections continue. The intention is to ensure habitat and species protection and standards as set out under the Nature Directives are implemented in the same way or an equivalent way when the UK exits the EU.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence must first be obtained from Natural England.

2.1.2 *The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)*

This is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity is protected within the UK. Protected fauna and flora are listed under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Act. They include all species of bats, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is occupying a roost or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost. Similarly, this Act makes it an offence to kill or injure any species of British reptiles and also makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy their eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built).

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) states that it is an offence to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 part II of the Act. This list over 30 plants including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*).

2.1.3 *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)*

This Act strengthens the Wildlife & Countryside Act by the addition of "reckless" offences in certain circumstances, such as where there is the likelihood of protected species being present. The Act places a duty on Government Ministers and Departments to conserve biological diversity and provides police with stronger powers relating to wildlife crimes.

2.1.4 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires that public bodies have due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning authorities must consider biodiversity when planning or undertaking activities. Section 41 of the Act lists species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the *UK Post – 2010 Biodiversity Framework*.

[REDACTED]

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- [REDACTED]
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- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2.1.6 The Environment Act (2021)

The Environment Act 2021 is the UK's new legislation for environmental protection in the UK, which includes protection of water quality, clean air, and biodiversity among other key protections. This Act provides the government power to set targets to reach long-term aims relating to the environment, which will be periodically reviewed and updated. This legislation also establishes a new environmental watchdog organisation, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), which will hold the government accountable on environmental issues.

Part 6 of The Environment Act relates to nature and biodiversity. This section makes provision for biodiversity net gain to be a condition of planning permission in England and a requirement for nationally significant infrastructure projects. Biodiversity net gain will require maintenance for a period of at least 30 years after the completion of enhancement works to be achieved.

The legislation also includes updates to existing environmental legislation, such as the NERC Act 2006, to strengthen biodiversity enhancement rather than just conservation and includes a requirement for local, or relevant, authorities to publish biodiversity reports. Further, The Environment Act places a requirement on responsible authorities to prepare local nature recovery strategies, which will outline nature conservation sites and priorities and opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity within the local area. Within England, the legislation also provides Natural England with the power to publish 'species conservation strategies' and 'protected site strategies' to identify activities that may affect a species or site's status and outline their opinions on measures that would be appropriate to avoid, mitigate or compensate any adverse impacts.

2.2 Policy

2.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

Chapter 19 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' states that planning decisions should safeguard and enhance the natural environment, recognising the hierarchy of designated sites and the wider value of natural capital. Development should be directed to land of least environmental value and must avoid, minimise or appropriately mitigate ecological impacts. The Framework emphasises nature recovery, requiring opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and strengthening ecological networks to be identified and delivered, informed by Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Proposals must incorporate high-quality green infrastructure and achieve statutory biodiversity net gain. Development affecting irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless wholly exceptional circumstances apply. For designated sites—including habitats sites, SSSIs and locally important wildlife sites—development is only acceptable where impacts are avoided or clearly justified and mitigated. Overall, Chapter 19 sets a clear expectation that development contributes positively to biodiversity, integrates nature-based solutions, and supports long-term ecological resilience.

Specifically, the NPPF states determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- 1) Development plans should safeguard and enhance the natural environment, and reflect the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, by using Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Protected Landscape Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans, National Forest Strategies, Community Forest Plans and other relevant evidence at the most appropriate level to:
 - a. Set out the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and areas of importance for their landscape, geodiversity or biodiversity value in the plan area, and identify other features which require particular consideration in managing development due to their environmental value such as chalk streams;
 - b. Identify opportunities for the conservation, enhancement and recovery of landscapes, sensitive waterbodies, habitats and priority or threatened species, including through habitat restoration, the use of nature-based solutions, and the creation and strengthening of ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures (including opportunities which exist at a catchment or landscape scale across plan boundaries);
 - c. Steer the location of development, including through site allocations, in ways which utilise land of least environmental value where that would be consistent with other policies in this Framework. This should include limiting the scale and extent of development within Protected Landscapes, avoiding the use of higher quality agricultural land where land of poorer quality is available and avoiding and minimising harm to designated sites of importance for nature. Areas which could become of particular importance for nature identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be taken into account as

- opportunities to integrate development with environmental restoration, but should not necessarily preclude the allocation of land for development; and
- d. Set out standards for green infrastructure provision, in a way which complements and/or incorporates those for recreational land (as set out in policy HC1). These should draw upon Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards for England, tailored as necessary to local circumstances.
- 2) Development plans should only set local standards for biodiversity net gain which are in excess of the statutory net gain requirement where this is for specific site allocations, and is fully justified and deliverable. Local standards should not extend to categories of development which are exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain.

2.2.2 Local – Mid Sussex District Council

Adopted in March 2018 the District Plan states nearly 50% of the District is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and over 10% is within the South Downs National Park. Mid Sussex is the tenth most wooded District in the South East and two-thirds of this woodland is classified as 'ancient'. It also has many sites valued for their biodiversity including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

Strategic Objectives to protect and enhance the environment include:

1. To promote development that makes the best use of resources and increases the sustainability of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change
2. To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District's distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence
3. To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities
4. To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities
5. To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes
6. To ensure that development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure in the right place at the right time that supports development and sustainable communities. This includes the provision of efficient and sustainable transport networks

DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected.

Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.

Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of suitable species, usually native, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose.

Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and
- prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and
- where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and
- has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and
- takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and
- does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets.

Trees, woodland and hedgerows form part of the District's green infrastructure, and in particular, are important for health and well-being, biodiversity, and increasing resilience to the effects of climate change. Ancient woods are irreplaceable wildlife habitats with complex ecological conditions that have developed over centuries. They contain a wide range of wildlife including rare species, however, because the resource is limited and highly fragmented, ancient woodland and their associated wildlife are particularly vulnerable and must be protected from damaging effects of adjacent and nearby land uses that could threaten the integrity of the habitat and survival of its special characteristics.

The District Plan recognises this contribution and will support the protection of trees, woodland and hedgerows, as well as encouraging new planting. Development will be required to incorporate trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design and landscaping scheme.

All hedgerows on farmland and open land are protected and consent is required from the District Council to remove them. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 also define 'important' hedgerows as being of particular archaeological, historical, wildlife or landscape value.

DP38: Biodiversity

Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and
- Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and

- Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and
- Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and
- Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas. Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.

Policy DP38 'Biodiversity' reflects the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (section 11) where it relates to biodiversity and the natural environment. It takes into account the duty on the District Council to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Development proposals should be informed by local ecological and geological evidence and national guidance. Local ecological evidence should include protected and notable species as well as considering the potential effects of the development on the habitats and species on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 section 41 list.

DP17: Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

In order to prevent adverse effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, new development likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in combination with other development, will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects. Within a 400 metres buffer zone around Ashdown Forest, mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA and, therefore, residential development will not be permitted.

Within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA, residential development leading to a net increase in dwellings will be required to contribute to mitigation through:

- 1) The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to the minimum level of 8Ha per 1,000 net increase in population; or a financial contribution to SANGs elsewhere; or the provision of bespoke mitigation; and
- 2) A financial contribution to the Ashdown Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Strategy.

Large schemes proposed adjacent or close to the boundary of the 7km zone of influence may require mitigation for the SPA. Such proposals for development will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Where bespoke mitigation is provided, these measures will need to be in place before occupation of development and must be managed and maintained in perpetuity. The effectiveness of such

mitigation will need to be demonstrated prior to approval of the development. Bespoke mitigation will need to be discussed and agreed by the District Council as the competent authority following advice from Natural England.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Waterbodies

Any ponds located within 500m of the proposed development were searched for using Ordnance Survey maps and available aerial images.

3.1.2 Data Request

A data request was submitted to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) to ascertain any records held of nature conservation designations and protected species within a (2 km) search radius.

The data search covered:

- Statutory designated sites;
- Non-statutory designations such as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS); and
- Records of protected and notable species.

3.2 Field Survey

3.2.1 Personnel

The field survey work which forms the basis of the findings of this report was carried out by Darla Brown BSc (Hons), Project Ecologist, and Anabelle Reed BSc (Hons), Assistant Ecologist with Ecosupport Ltd on the 5th March 2026.

3.2.2 Habitats

Habitats on site pre-development were identified in accordance with the categories specified for a UK Habitats survey, using Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd., 2023). Where appropriate primary habitat codes were used although for some habitat types, the use of secondary habitat codes was necessary as well.

[REDACTED]

3.2.4 Bats – Ground Level Tree Assessment

A non-exhaustive Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) assessment of any notable trees on site was undertaken by Darla Brown of Ecosupport in March 2026 (Natural England CL18 Licence Holder). This followed BCT (Collins (ed) 2023) best practice survey which includes aiming to identify the following Potential Roost Features (PRFs):

- PRFs formed by disease and decay: woodpecker holes, squirrel holes, knot holes, pruning cuts, tear outs, wounds, cankers, compression, forks, butt rots;
- PRFs formed by damage: lightning strikes, hazard beams, subsidence cracks, shearing cracks, transverse snaps, welds, lifting bark, desiccation features, frost cracks; and
- PRFs formed by association: fluting Ivy.

The presence or absence of any of the features listed above are then feed into the classification of the tree which is as follows (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats, to be applied using professional judgement (Collins (ed) 2023).

Suitability	Description
None	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further Assessment Required (FAR) to establish if any PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present.

3.2.5 Great Crested Newts – eDNA Survey

Following the results of the desk study it was recommended that waterbodies within 250m of the site were subject to further assessment. As such, a site visit was undertaken to conduct an eDNA test on waterbodies within 250m of the site during June 2026. During the eDNA test, 20 evenly spaced sample sites were identified around the ditch's perimeter, and one ladle of water was collected from each of the pre-identified sites. The samples were then mixed along with preservative following guidance from SureScreen Scientifics and sent for eDNA analysis.

3.3 Assessment Methodology

3.3.1 Introduction

The methodology for the assessment of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development is based on CIEEM's *Guidelines for Ecological Assessment in the UK* (CIEEM 2018). Although this assessment does not constitute a formal Ecological/ Environmental Impact Assessment, the CIEEM guidelines provide a useful framework for assessing ecological impacts at any level.

3.3.2 Valuation

Features of ecological interest are valued on a geographic scale. Value is assigned on the basis of legal protection, national and local biodiversity policy and cultural and/or social significance.

3.4 Limitations

3.4.1 Habitats

Although the survey was taken outside the optimum timing for the identification of botanical interest species, it was considered that the majority of species present could be suitably identified; this was therefore not considered to represent a significant limitation to the overall assessment. This survey

does not constitute a full site assessment for invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*).

3.4.2. Great Crested Newts

A visit was undertaken to collect water samples for the eDNA survey. Due to late instruction, the visit was undertaken towards the end of the Great Crested New eDNA survey season. During the visit, access was refused or not possible for waterbodies 2, 11, 10, and 9. As such, the eDNA survey was unable to be completed. Notwithstanding this, a mitigation strategy outlining a precautionary approach to ensure protection of Great Crested Newts has been set out within this report. As such, this is not considered to be a major limitation of the survey effort.

4.0 ECOLOGICAL BASELINE

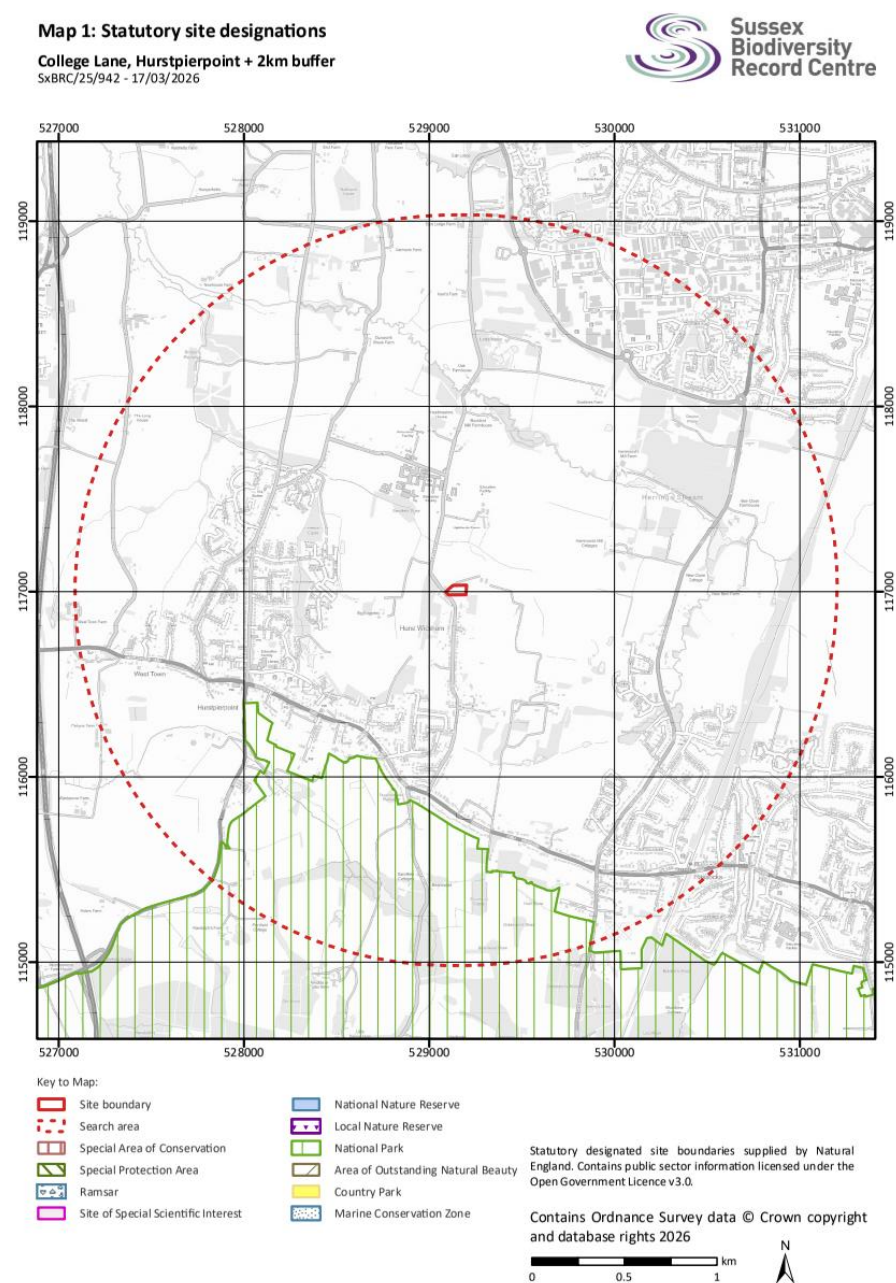
4.1 Data Request

A 2km data search has been requested from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC). Using freely available resources, the following designated sites and priority habitats have been identified.

4.1.1 Statutory Designated

SxBRC returned one statutory designated sites within 2km of the site, South Downs National Park (approximately 950m south) (**Fig 3**).

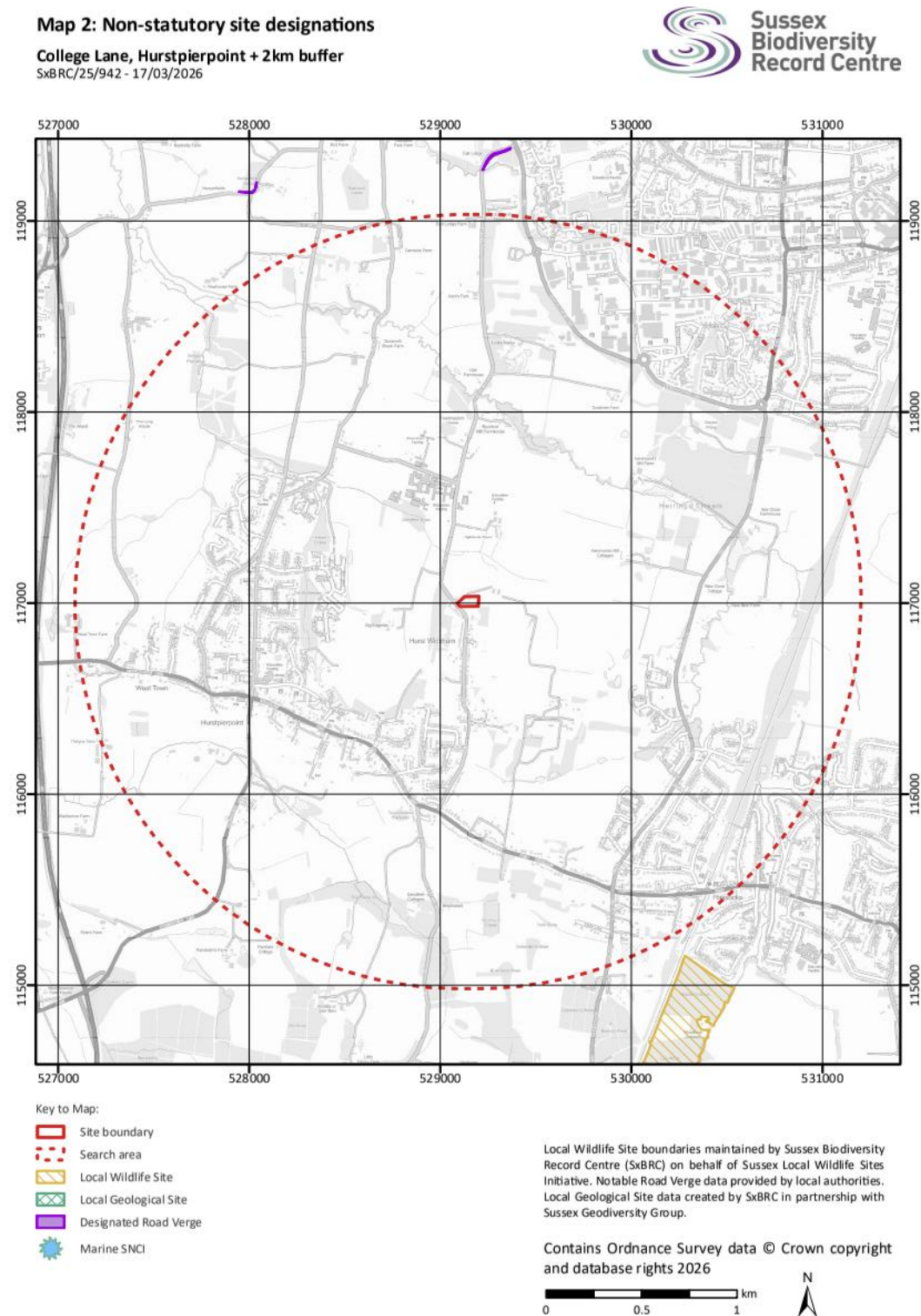
Figure 3. Statutory designated sites located within 2km of the site as provided by SxBRC (approximate redline boundary).



4.1.2 Non-Statutory Designated

There are no non-statutory designated sites within 2km identified by SxBRC are shown in **Fig 4**.

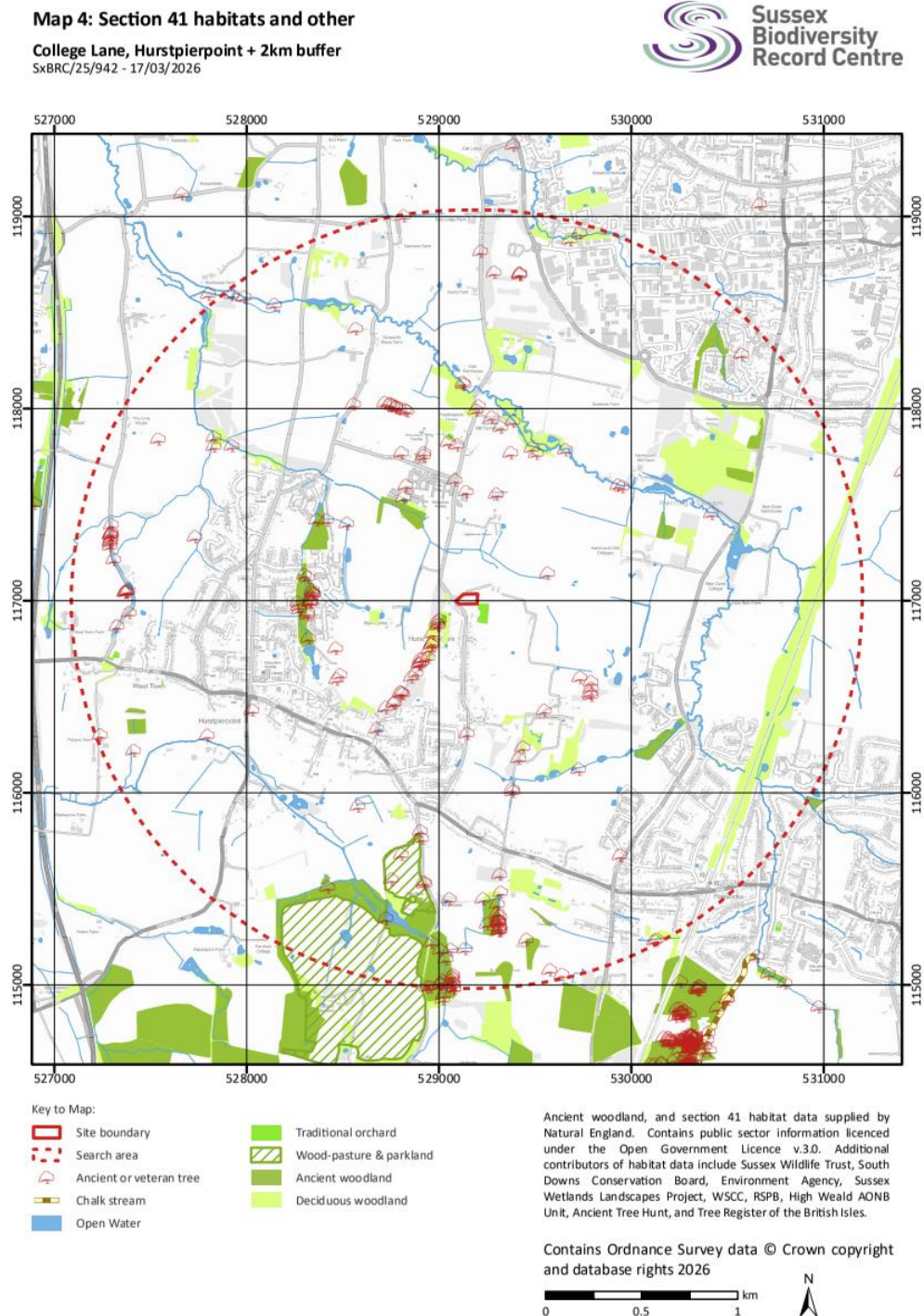
Figure 4. Non-statutory designated sites located within 2km of the site as provided by SxBRC (approximate redline boundary).



4.1.3 S41 Priority Habitats

SxBRC identified three S41 priority habitats present within 2km of the site (**Fig 5**). These include Traditional Orchard, Deciduous woodland and Ancient Woodland. The Traditional Orchard is located to the south-east of the site, however, upon the site visit, the adjacent habitat did not seem consistent with this habitat classification.

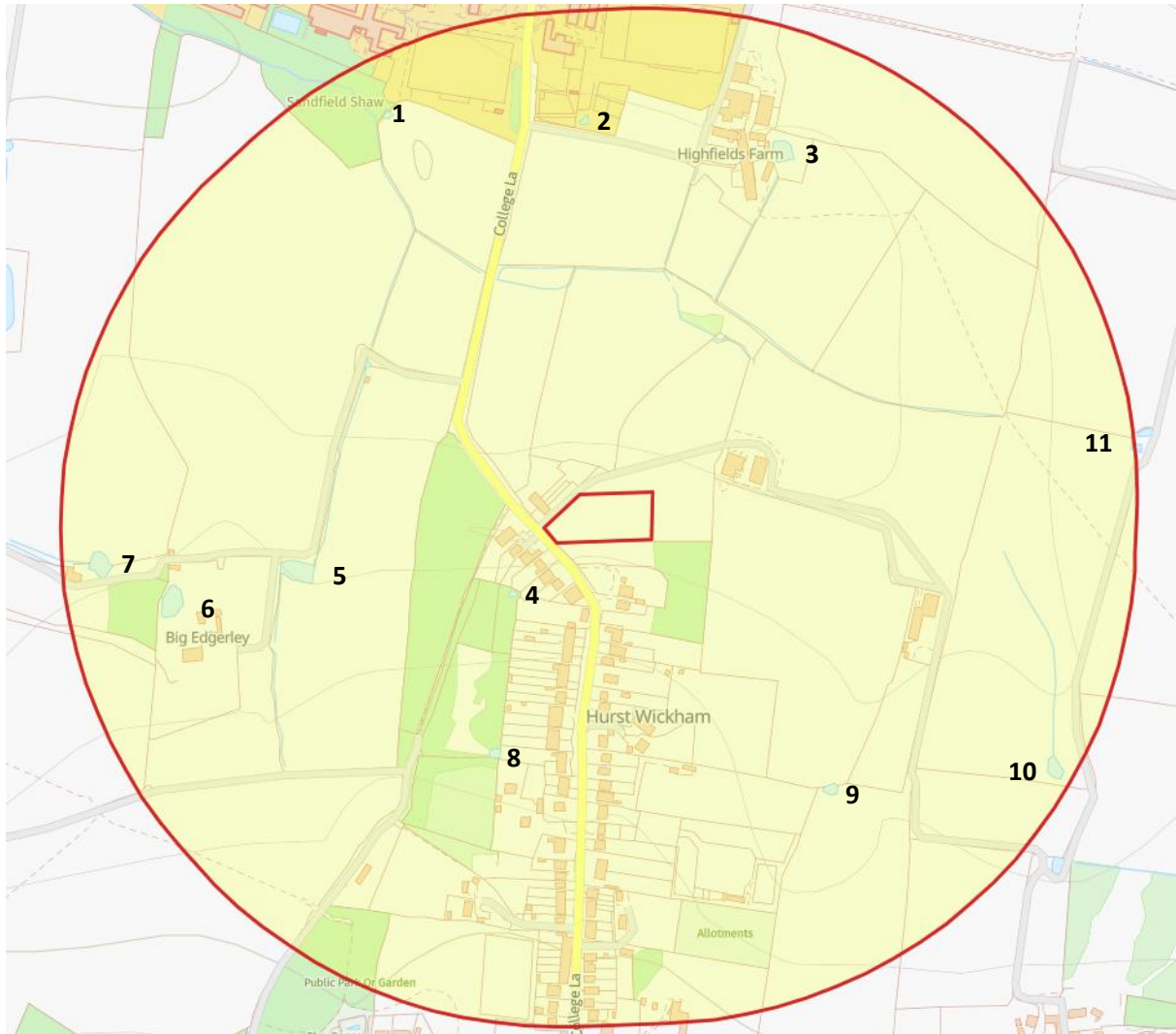
Figure 5. Priority habitat within 2km of the site as provided by SxBRC (approximate redline boundary).



4.1.4 Waterbodies

Using freely available online mapping resources, a total of 11 ponds were identified within 500 m of the site. Ponds 1 and 2 are located within Hurstpierpoint College; ponds 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 and 11 lie within surrounding fields; and ponds 6 and 7 are situated within residential gardens. Their approximate distances and directions from the site are as follows: 450 m north (Pond 1), 380 m north (Pond 2), 385m north (Pond 3), 60m south-west (Pond 4), 245m south-west (Pond 5), 380m west (Pond 6), 450m west (Pond 7), 220m south (Pond 8), 310m south-east (Pond 9), 480m south-east (Pond 10) and 495m east (Pond 11). These are shown in **Figure 6**, below.

Figure 6. Search for waterbodies within 500 m of the site (OpenStreetMaps, 2026).



4.2 Vegetation Survey Results

The vegetation within the site has been described below using classification terminology as described within Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd, 2023). The below species should not be considered an exhaustive list and instead refer to dominant, characteristic, and other noteworthy species associated with each community within the survey area. The habitat types identified within the site comprise of:

- Modified Grassland (g4);
- Other Woodland; Broadleaved (w1g) with secondary code 33 (Line of Trees); and
- Native Hedgerow (h2a) with secondary code 11 (Hedgerow with Trees).

4.2.1 Modified Grassland (g4)

The dominant habitat on site comprised of modified grassland (g4). The grassland was noted to have <6 species per m² and the area was noted to possess a short, clipped sward, with a species composition considered to fall within the definition of modified grassland. Species noted on site included Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*), Bent Grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Hairy Bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), Cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum*), Broadleaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Nettle (*Urtica* sp.), Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Doves-foot Cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), Purple Dead Nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), Daffodil (*Narcissus* sp.), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), and *Poa* species (**Fig 7**).

Figure 7. Modified grassland to the north of the site, with a close-up showing the poor species diversity (taken March 2026).



4.2.2 Other Woodland; Broadleaved (w1g) with secondary code 33 (Line of Trees)

Two tree lines are present on site, one along the southwestern boundary (**Fig 8**) comprising Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Cypress (*Cupressus* sp.), Field Maple (*Acer campastre*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.), and the other on the southern boundary (**Fig 9**), comprising various Fruit Trees, Blackthorn (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Sycamore.

Figure 8. View of the line of trees along the south-western boundary (taken March 2026).



Figure 9. Line of trees to the south of the site, forming part of the southern site boundary (taken March 2026).



4.2.3 Native Hedgerow (h2a) with secondary code Hedgerow with Trees (11)

Native hedgerows with trees are present on site, running along the northern, eastern, and southern site boundaries (**Fig 10 & 11**). All three hedgerows are comprised of Hawthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), with

the hedgerows with trees (along the north and east of the site) containing several young Oak trees (*Quercus robur*).

Figure 10. Native hedgerow with trees along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site (taken March 2026).



Figure 11. View of the native hedgerow along the southern boundary of the site (March 2026).



4.3 Bats

4.3.1 Pre-existing Information

The data request from SxBRC returned the following bat records within 2km of the site (**Table 2**) The locations of the Annex II species: Barbastelle and Bechstein's records are shown below in **Fig 12**.

Figure 12. The stars show the known locations of Barbastelles (yellow star) and Bechstein's (purple star) within a 2km radius, as provided using freely available resources and SxBRC (Google Satellite, 2026).



Table 2. List of bat records within 2km of the site provided by SxBRC.

Taxon Name	Species Name	Number of Records	Further Information
<i>Barbastella barbastella</i>	Western Barbastelle	1	Record from bat detector
<i>Chiroptera</i>	Bat	6	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, field observations and emergence surveys
<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	Serotine	29	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, emergence surveys, and droppings

<i>Myotis</i>	Myotis species	10	All records from various bat detectors and emergence surveys
<i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	Bechstein's Bat	8	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, and field observations
<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Daubenton's Bat	1	Record from bat detector
<i>Myotis mystacinus/brandtii</i>	Whiskered/ Brandt's Bat	1	Record from bat detector
<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	Natterer's Bat	5	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, and field observations
<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Noctule	11	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, and emergence surveys
<i>Pipistrellus</i>	Pipistrelle species	15	Records from bat detectors, roost inspections, and emergence surveys
<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Nathusius's Pipistrelle	4	Records from bat detectors and roost inspections
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common Pipistrelle	116	Records from various bat detectors, visual ID, roost inspections, and emergence/re-entry surveys
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle	15	Records from various bat detectors, visual ID, roost inspections, and emergence/re-entry surveys
<i>Plecotus</i>	Long-eared species	6	Records from various bat detectors, visual ID, roost inspections, and field observations
<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown Long-eared Bat	21	Records from bat detectors, roost visits, and field observations

4.3.2 Commuting and Foraging Bats

The majority of the site comprised of poor-quality grassland however, lines of trees and hedgerows encompass the boundaries of the site. Notwithstanding this, the hedgerows and trees are considered to be relatively gappy and comprises immature vegetation, with limited connectivity to the wider environment. Due to the lack of species diversity on site, foraging habitat and invertebrate availability is considered to be limited. Streetlamps are also present down College Lane which in turn would decrease the likelihood of light-adverse species (such as Barbastelle or Bechstein's) being present. However, there is a parcel of woodland and several linear features within close vicinity to the site that

could be considered to offer suitable habitat to support commuting and foraging bats. Taking all into consideration, it is thought such habitats would be of **low potential** for foraging and commuting bats.

4.3.3 Trees

A number of trees are proposed to be removed to facilitate access, comprising trees G140, T12, T11, G13, and T10. No trees on site, including the trees along the proposed access, southern line of trees, and individual trees within the hedgerow, contained any potential roosting features (PRFs). As such, all trees on site were considered to be of **negligible potential** to support roosting bats.

4.4 Reptiles

4.4.1 Pre-existing Information

SxBRC returned 66 records of Slow-worms (*Anguis fragilis*), 45 records of Grass Snake (*Natrix helvetica*), 6 records of Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and 3 records of Adder (*Vipera berus*) within 2km of the site.

4.4.2 Site Assessment

The habitat on site offers limited suitability for reptiles as although scattered bramble is present beneath the western line of trees, the site predominantly consists of modified grassland of a short-sward height which does not offer the heterogeneity favoured by reptiles. Notwithstanding this, the modified grassland offers some connectivity to small managed field parcels within the immediate environment and as such, the site is considered to be of **low potential** for common reptiles.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4.6 Great Crested Newts

4.6.1 Pre-existing Information

SxBRC returned 116 records of GCN (Great Crested Newts) (*Triturus cristatus*) within 2km of the site with the locations of the most local records shown in **Fig 13**.

Figure 13. The stars show the known locations of GCN within a 2km (a) and 250m (b) radius, as provided using freely available resources and SxBRC (Google Satellite, 2026).



4.6.2 Site Assessment

Similar to reptiles, the habitat on site offers limited suitability for GCN as although scattered Bramble is present beneath the western line of trees, the site predominantly consists of modified grassland of a short-sward height, which is not favoured by GCN.

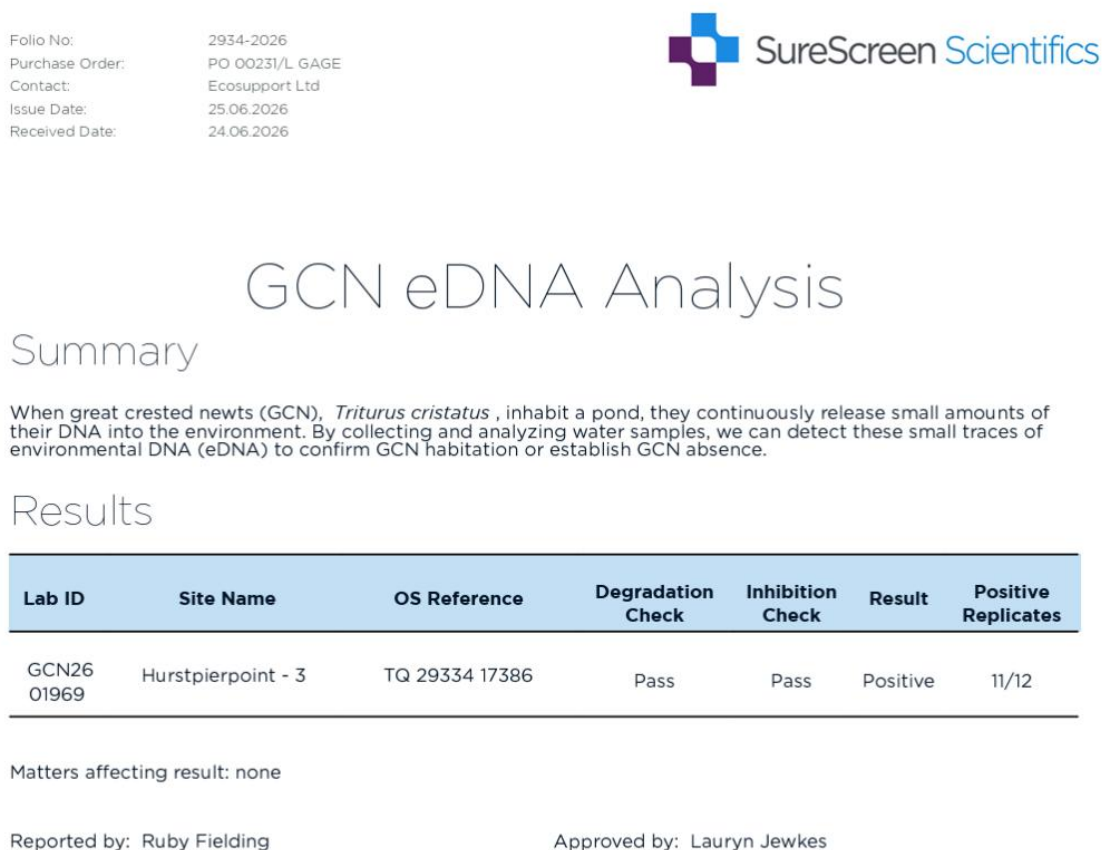
Using the NatureSpace Partnership (2022) 'Mid Sussex District Council – Impact Risk Zones' map the site does appear to at least partially fall within the red impact risk zone. Nevertheless, six of the 11 ponds lying within 500m of the site can be scoped out due to significant barriers to dispersal such as

urban development. This includes Ponds 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Due to the presence of GCN records and number of waterbodies within the local vicinity, it is recommended that Ponds 2 (380m north), 3 (385m north), 11 (495m east), 10 (480m east), and 9 (310m east) were subject to further investigation.

4.6.3 eDNA Assessment

A site visit was undertaken in June 2026 to collect water samples from Ponds 2, 3, 11, 10, and 9. During the visit, only Pond 3 was accessible, with all other waterbodies inaccessible or access refused. Notwithstanding this, Pond 3 returned as positive for presence of Great Crested Newt (**Fig 14**).

Figure 14. A screenshot of the eDNA analysis results for Pond 3 from SureScreen.



4.6.4 Evaluation

As described above, the habitats on site are considered to offer limited suitability to support GCN, with an absence of waterbodies or ditches on site or within the immediate vicinity. The nearest waterbody that has not been scoped out of the assessment is located approximately 310m east (Pond 9), with Pond 3 with GCN presence located approximately 385m north. Using this information, the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment tool has been completed for this application, on the assumption that Pond 9 and Pond 3 comprise breeding populations of GCN. This returned that an offense as a result of the development is Green: Offence Highly Unlikely (**Fig 15**).

Although the on-site habitats provide limited suitability for GCN, with the nearest potential suitable waterbodies at a distance in excess of over 250m, given the confirmed presence of GCN within Pond 3 and records within the local area, a **low** but non-negligible risk of GCN occurring on site remains. As such, works will proceed under a Precautionary Working Method Statement to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and to minimise the risk of harm to GCN.

Figure 15. Screenshot of the Rapid Risk Assessment Tool (Natural England).

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 score
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)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.03
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
		Maximum:
		0.03
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

4.7 Breeding Birds & Nesting Birds

4.7.1 Pre-existing Information

SxBRC returned a variety of records of birds of conservation concern within 2km of the site (the list has not been reproduced here due to the quantity of records).

4.7.2 Site Assessment

The line of trees and hedgerows on site provide suitable opportunities for nesting birds. However, given the small extent of the suitable habitat to be impacted upon (line of trees for access) and the abundance of more suitable habitat within the wider area, it is considered that the site is of **low potential** for nesting birds.

4.8 Hazel Dormouse

4.8.1 Pre-existing Information

SxBRC returned 8 records of Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) within 2km of the site with the locations of the most local records shown in **Fig 16**.

Figure 16. The stars show the known locations of Hazel Dormice within a 2km radius, as provided using freely available resources and SxBRC (Google Satellite, 2026).



4.8.2 Site Assessment

The habitat on site offers some suitability for dormice with lines of trees surrounding the boundaries of the site, comprising of trees species favoured by hazel dormice. Notwithstanding this, lines of trees have limited understory and will be mostly retained as part of the proposals, with the exception of a small section of line of trees to be removed to facilitate access along the adjacent College Road. Furthermore, there are low records of Hazel Dormice within 2km of the site and as such, although the site offers low potential to support Hazel Dormice, the area of impact is considered to offer **low potential** to support Hazel Dormice.

5.0 LIKELY ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS IN ABSENCE OF MITIGATION

5.1 Introduction

The CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM, 2018) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, in some cases, features of less than local value may be protected by legislation and/or policy and these are also considered within the assessment. Although significant effects may be identified at this stage of the assessment, it is often possible to provide appropriate mitigation.

5.2 Site Preparation and Construction

5.2.1 Impacts to Habitats

The proposals will predominantly involve the loss of the areas of modified grassland considered to be of value at the **site level** of significance. The line of trees and hedgerows with trees on site are considered to be of **site level** of significance and may be damaged by machinery and particularly by root zone compaction, with an area of treeline removal to facilitate access. Therefore, the loss of habitat and potential indirect effects would have a **moderate adverse impact** to habitats of **site** value.

5.2.2 Impacts to Wildlife

The proposed works may involve groundworks and the creation of some excavations. This may lead to the potential for [REDACTED] Hedgehogs, and other terrestrial mammals becoming trapped or injured during the works. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation **an adverse impact is possible** at the **local level**.

The proposed plans will involve the loss of a small area of habitat on site, which has been assessed as offering low potential for reptiles and Great Crested Newts (GCN). This has the potential to cause harm, or even death of common reptile species and GCN which may be present on site. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation **an adverse impact is possible** at the **local level**.

The proposed plans will involve the loss of line of trees on site, which has been assessed as offering Hazel Dormice. This has the potential to cause harm, or even death to Dormice which may be present on site. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation **an adverse impact is possible** at the **local level**.

Any works to the treeline could result in the disturbance of nesting birds and damage to their nests if conducted during the nesting season. As such, removal of suitable habitat without adequate mitigation could potentially constitute an offence under the W&CA, 1981. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation **an adverse impact is possible** at the **site level**.

5.3 Site Operation

5.3.1 Impacts to Nocturnal Wildlife

The development will result in an increase in lighting within the general area from external lights accompanied with the proposed development. This can affect the behaviour, particularly foraging, of nocturnal wildlife. [REDACTED]
and nocturnal birds.

5.3.2 Impacts to Designated Sites

The site is not situated within the Zone of Influence for any designated sites. As such, it is anticipated that the proposals will result in a **negligible impact** to designated sites of up to **international value**.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The below sections outline a number of recommendations for further survey work to inform an impact assessment for the site and ensure mitigation / compensation is proportionate. In addition to this, measures are outlined to protect the existing features of value and provide enhancements post-development.

6.2 Protection of Retained Habitats

The existing hedgerows with trees and boundary treeline will be retained and will be protected from damage during the works. All the site boundaries outside the area of impact will be fenced using Heras fencing or similar, with a tarpaulin screen to prevent the spread of dust and prevent access by machinery, throughout works. Where large mature trees are present, they will be fenced using Heras fencing or similar to prevent damage from machinery. Where mature trees are present, they will be protected using standard arboricultural tree protection measures which include protection of the canopy and prevents root compaction. This will protect the retained habitats and suitable reptile, GCN & Dormouse habitat from direct damage/disturbance and dust.

6.3 Bats

Due to the small-scale proposals and retention of suitable commuting and foraging habitat, it is not considered feasible to undertake further survey effort. Notwithstanding this, due to the low potential for commuting and foraging bats to be present on site, the following recommendations will be implemented in regard to lighting.

6.3.1 During Construction

In order to avoid any disturbance to bats (and other potential nocturnal wildlife) construction works should be limited to daylight hours and should not be undertaken 30 minutes prior to dusk through to dawn. All lighting should be sensitive to the use of the site by nocturnal wildlife, for example by including low-level downward-facing / hooded lights that are sensor-operated where possible.

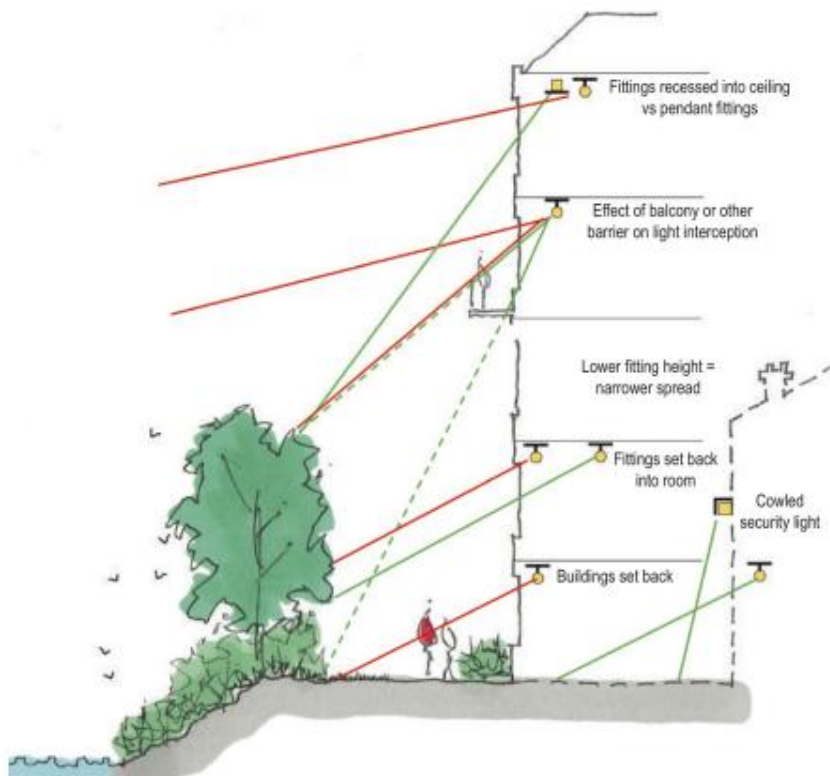
6.3.2 During Operation

In addition, it is recommended that any lighting complies with the following the *Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at night* (ILP / BCT, 2023) produced via a collaboration between the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) and the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), which outlines the latest recommendations to minimise the impacts of increased artificial lighting on bats. The key recommendations within this document have been outlined below and will be implemented as far as is practicable:

‘Light sources, lamps, LEDs and their fittings come in a myriad of different specifications which a lighting professional can help to select. However, the following should be considered when choosing luminaires and their potential impact on Key Habitats and features:

- *All luminaires will lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used*
- *LED luminaires will be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability*

- A warm white light source (2700Kelvin or lower) will be adopted to reduce blue light component
- Light sources will feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats (Stone, 2012)
- Internal luminaires can be recessed (as opposed to using a pendant fitting - See **Fig 17**) where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill
- Waymarking inground markers (low output with cowls or similar to minimise upward light spill) to delineate path edges (see Case Study 1)
- Column heights will be carefully considered to minimise light spill and glare visibility. This should be balanced with the potential for increased numbers of columns and upward light reflectance as with bollards
- Only luminaires with a negligible or zero Upward Light Ratio, and with good optical control, should be considered - See ILP GN01
- Luminaires will always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt
- Where appropriate, external security lighting will be set on motion sensors and set to as short a possible a timer as the risk assessment will allow. For most general residential purposes, a 1 or 2 minute timer is likely to be appropriate
- Use of a Central Management System (CMS) with additional web-enabled devices to light on demand Use of motion sensors for local authority street lighting may not be feasible unless the authority has the potential for smart metering through a CMS
- The use of bollard or low-level downward-directional luminaires is strongly discouraged. This is due to a considerable range of issues, such as unacceptable glare, poor illumination efficiency, unacceptable upward light output, increased upward light scatter from surfaces and poor facial recognition which makes them unsuitable for most sites. Therefore, they should only be considered in specific cases where the lighting professional and project manager are able to resolve these issues. See Case Study 6
- Only if all other options have been explored, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed. However, due to the lensing and fine cut-off control of the beam inherent in modern LED luminaires, the effect of cowls and baffles is often far less than anticipated and so should not be relied upon solely'

Figure 17. Internal lighting mitigation options (ILP 2023).

6.4 Reptiles

Any reptile habitat (such as grassland) requiring removal will be reduced in height gradually in a two-stage clearance under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECOW), using the methodology detailed below in **Section 6.5**. Where common amphibians or reptiles are found, they will be moved to adjacent retained habitat. These works will be done immediately prior to any ground works to prevent the habitats from re-growing. Habitat on site must also be managed and maintained at a short sward for the duration of the works to prevent suitable habitat from occurring.

6.5 Great Crested Newts

It is considered that GCN are likely absent on site, as site lacks suitable habitat. Notwithstanding this, to further give confidence due to the presence of GCN in excess of over 250m, a precautionary working method statement (PWMS) will be implemented. The precautionary measures outlined below are considered to be feasible in line with the results of the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment which concluded Green: Offence Highly Unlikely.

In the unlikely instance that a GCN is found during any works, all works must immediately stop and the project ecologist must be informed. Natural England will then need to be contacted in order to obtain a European Protected Species development licence before any further works proceed. If any GCN are found on site updated GCN surveys will be required for all water bodies within 500m of the site to establish the population size present. It is essential that these processes are immediately followed to ensure that no offence is committed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or the Conservation.

6.5.1 Passive Dispersal

It is considered that the most appropriate form of mitigation would be to adopt a precautionary approach. The following methods will be undertaken to ensure that no reptiles or GCN are harmed during the works:

- The days prior to ground works commencing:
 - i. **Stage 1:** During the first stage, the vegetation will be cut down to a height no lower than 20cm. Cutting will occur directionally, working towards suitable habitat to be retained along the site boundaries to encourage any reptiles or amphibians (if present) to these areas. This will be done under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist holding a Natural England Licence for GCN.
 - ii. **Stage 2:** A second cut (the following day) will take it down to ground level. At this time, the supervising ecologist will do a fingertip search of any tussocky areas. Any potential refugia (i.e., deadwood, rubble, earthbanks) will also be searched and removed. Any potential reptiles or amphibians encountered will be captured and relocated to areas of retained habitat on the margins of the site. This will be done under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.
- The ecologist on site will then hand search any denser areas of cover such as leaf litter where these areas are to be directly impacted upon.
- All vegetation on site must be kept managed during the development to ensure that reptiles or amphibians don't establish whilst works take place.
- Materials must not be stored along the boundary vegetation on site and must be kept raised off of the ground (i.e., stored on pallets).
- ***Depending on the habitat type present, a destructive search may also be required, as detailed below, under supervision of an ECoW.***

6.5.2 Destructive Search (if required)

Following the two-stage clearance, a destructive search may be carried out under the supervision of the suitably qualified ecologist depending on the habitat type present. Topsoil will be gently stripped to 100mm depth using a digger with a toothed bucket. The supervising ecologist will capture any reptiles or amphibians found and relocate them to the retained boundary habitat. Please note, any suitable habitat within the root protection zone will not have the topsoil stripped and will only be maintained cut at ground level.

These works will be undertaken during the active reptile and amphibian period (April – October) when temperatures are above 10°C with sunshine. This area of habitat will be regularly managed and maintained unsuitable for amphibians and reptiles for the duration of the works and will be cordoned off from the site to prevent vehicles entering the area. The arisings will be removed and any materials will be stored off the ground using pallets or skips if stored in the grassland to prevent sheltering reptiles or amphibians.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6.7 Avoidance of Impacts to Breeding and Nesting Birds

In order to avoid disturbance of breeding and nesting birds or damage to their nests, any proposed works to the scattered trees should avoid bird nesting season (typically March – August, dependent on weather). If this is not possible, these habitats should be thoroughly checked by an ecologist immediately prior to works. If any active nests are found, they should be left undisturbed with a suitable buffer within which works cannot take place (ca. 5m) until nestlings have fledged.

6.8 Hazel Dormouse

In relation to the habitats present on site and the connectivity, a Precautionary Working Method Statement would be most appropriate. This outlines that if any vegetation suitable for Dormice is to be cut back, this includes the treeline for access, a fingertip search must be undertaken immediately prior to these works, by a suitably qualified ecologist, to ensure there is no presence of Dormice. This ecologist will act as an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECOW), ensuring a fingertip search is completed ahead of each section of clearance on every day work occurs. In the unlikely instance that Dormice are found on site during these checks or during construction, all work must cease, and the supervising ecologist consulted. A license from Natural England may be required in this instance to facilitate the works.

6.9 Biodiversity Net Gain

A biodiversity net gain assessment will be carried out for the proposed development and presented in a dedicated report ensuring that a 10% gain in biodiversity units is achieved.

6.10 Enhancements

Full enhancements will be recommended following the completion of further survey work, but the following general enhancements are likely to be included.

6.10.1 Bat Boxes

Half of the newly built dwellings will have 1 No Ibstock bat brick each (**Fig 18**) integrated within the external brick work. These features are entirely self-contained and available in a variety of different colours to match different construction materials. They should ideally be placed on an elevation which will benefit from some degree of sunlight exposure and be located away from windows.

Figure 18. Ibstock bat brick 'B' which will be integrated into the gable walls of the newly built dwellings.



6.10.2 Hedgehogs

6.10.2.1 Hedgehog Home

The retained boundaries on site will incorporate 1 No Hedgehog home (**Fig 19**) (such as the Igloo Hedgehog home or Hogitat Hedgehog house). This will be provided within or adjacent to areas of retained trees / shrubs and will provide a rapidly declining species with a place to shelter / hibernate.

It is recommended that the hedgehog home is maintained to ensure it remains suitable for use by Hedgehogs. The hibernation period for Hedgehogs typically spans from October – April, therefore it is recommended that the hedgehog home is inspected every year in mid to late-April, after hibernation but prior to the nesting period. During these inspections the hedgehog home should be checked for any damage and replaced/repaired where necessary.

Additionally, the hedgehog home should be cleared of any old nesting material and would be beneficial to be replaced with fresh, dry hay. The hedgehog home should be placed back in their original location, unless the hedgehog homes have been interfered with by the public or not utilised by any Hedgehogs, an alternative discrete location should be considered.

Figure 19. Example of the Igloo Hedgehog Home.



6.10.2.2 Gaps in Fencing

Should any new fencing be erected on site, or around the site, these will ensure that at least 1 gap is present within the gravel boards to allow for movement of Hedgehogs throughout and into the wider area. The gaps should be at least 15 cm high by 15 cm wide with permeability for small mammals.

Small signage could be installed at these points to ensure they remain open upon completion of the development. The People's Trust for Endangered Species provide such signage, the purchase of which also supports conservation efforts (**Fig 20**).

Figure 20. Example of Hedgehog Highway signage to be placed above fence gaps provided to allow movements between gardens (PTES, 2019).

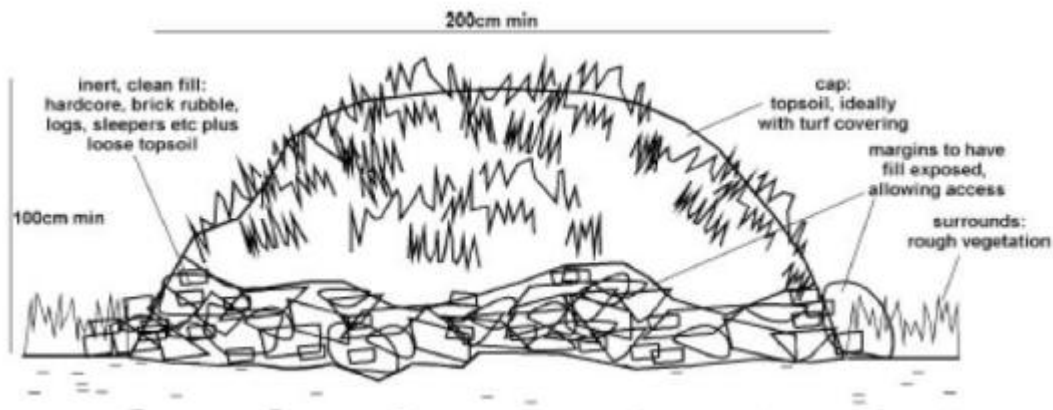


6.10.3 Log Piles

At least 1 No log / brash pile will be created from the deadwood created from tree / hedgerow removal to facilitate access will be retained to provide an enhancement for invertebrates, such as Stag Beetles and other species such as amphibians/reptiles. Log piles can also be created from habitat management on site. This may use a combination of logs, branches, brash and grass cuttings, and any tree surgery. These should be located within areas receiving partial sun / partial shade.

An example of a log pile hibernaculum is shown in **Fig 21** below.

Figure 21. Example of a hibernaculum design.



6.10.4 Bird Boxes

To act as biodiversity enhancement, a ratio of 1:1 Swift bricks to dwellings will be incorporated on site. The Ibstock 'Eco Home for Swifts' bricks are recommended (**Fig 22**) as they are a discreet and attractive box ideal for new dwellings. The boxes should be installed under the eaves or in high walls in shaded areas out of direct sunlight and away from windows. The installation of such boxes has also been shown to be beneficial for House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) which are a nationally declining species. Each dwelling does not need to have a brick; rather as a colony species the preference is to cluster the bricks in groups.

Figure 22. Ibstock eco home for swifts that will be incorporated into the newly built dwellings.



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