

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Franc-Jean Farm,
Bolney

January 2026

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19/01/2026

Ecotecture

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Document Control:

Project no.:		Project name:		
14376		Land at Franc-Jean Farm, Bolney		
Version:	Written by:	Checked by:	Authorised by:	Date:
V1	Robert Anthony	Paul Carter	Richard Schofield	19 January 2026

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Non-technical Summary

Phlorum Ltd was commissioned by Ecotecture to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) which was carried out at Franc-Jean Farm, Bolney, West Sussex RH17 5PJ on the 7th January 2026 in order to determine whether any ecological constraints could affect the proposed works for the site.

Current proposals are for the construction of a new residential property. The survey area extended over approximately 0.07 hectares (ha).

The main findings of the surveys are as follows:

-  The site is not subject to any statutory designations. The closest statutory designated site is High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) located along the northern border of the site.
-  The site comprised buildings, developed land – sealed surface, built linear feature, modified grassland, scattered scrub, bare ground, and individual trees.
-  It is recommended that targeted surveys in respect to great crested newts is undertaken in order to determine presence or likely absence. Alternatively, a District Level Licence can be obtained from NatureSpace.
-  In addition, a precautionary approach to site clearance in respect to birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs are recommended to minimise any adverse impacts on these species groups.

Further information on precautionary working practices and additional surveys together with recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are discussed in Section 5.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Phlorum Ltd has been commissioned by Ecotecture to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), with a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) to inform the potential ecological constraints of proposed future development of Franc-Jean Farm, Bolney, West Sussex RH17 5PJ (hereafter referred to as "the site").
- 1.2 The purpose of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was:
 -  to identify the major habitats present;
 -  to identify the potential for any legally protected species to be present; and
 -  to recommend any additional ecological surveys, if required.
- 1.3 As part of the assessment, a desktop review and a site visit were carried out. The results of which were used to assess the nature conservation importance of the site and the potential of the site to support protected species.
- 1.4 This report has been compiled in accordance with current guidelines (British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of Practice for Planning and Development, 2013 and CIEEM, 2017 and 2018).
- 1.5 It is understood that the proposed development is for the construction of a new residential property.

Site Location

- 1.6 The site is located in the north of Bolney Village, West Sussex. To the north of the site is deciduous woodland, and Wykehurst Park. To the east of the site is deciduous woodland, London Road, and the A23 running north to south. South of the site is Bolney, and to the west of the site is rural developments, and parkland.
- 1.7 The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TQ 26229 23654. The survey area extended over approximately 0.07 hectares (ha).

2. Methodology

Desk Study & Consultations

Database and Map Search

- 2.1 The desktop study involved conducting database searches for statutory and non-statutory designated sites, legally protected species and features of interest within a 2km radius of the site. The database and map search was based on available information provided by the following sources:
 -  Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC, 2026);
 -  Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC, 2026);
 -  Ordnance Survey mapping;
 -  Aerial photography; and
 -  The Woodland Trust online Ancient Tree Inventory.
- 2.2 The desktop study also involved a search of all international designated sites within 12km of the site.

Habitat Survey and Assessment

- 2.3 Phlorum Limited carried out an ecological survey of the site on 7th January 2026. The survey was carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist, Robert Anthony, who has over two years' professional experience of undertaking ecological surveys. The survey results and assessment was reviewed by Paul Carter (BSc (Hons), MBA, MCIEEM), an ecologist with over twenty years of experience of managing ecological and landscaping projects, and by the project director Richard Schofield (BSc (Hons), MSc, CSJK, MCIEEM, MIEMA, CEnv), with over twenty years of experience in managing projects. The weather conditions during the survey were cold with little cloud cover and low wind speeds.
- 2.4 The field survey comprised a walkover inspection of the land and habitats present. The survey followed standard Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) and covered all accessible parts of the site, including boundary features. The description of the site habitats has used the code/referencing from The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2.0 (UKHab 2023). UKHab uses primary habitat codes, either on their own or followed by one or more secondary codes. Each individual code is separated by a space. Habitats were described and mapped (Figure 1: Appendix A). A list of plant species was compiled, together with an estimate of abundance made according to the DAFOR scale. The DAFOR scale provides an estimate of the relative abundance of plant species within the Survey Area (Appendix D).
- 2.5 This assessment provides information on the habitats in the survey area and identifies actual or potential presence of legally protected or otherwise notable species/habitats in or immediately adjacent to the site.

- 2.6 Scientific names are given after the first mention of a species, thereafter, common names only are used. Nomenclature follows Stace (2019) for vascular plant species.

Protected Species Assessment

- 2.7 The potential for the site to provide habitat for protected species was assessed from field observations in conjunction with results of the desk study. The site was inspected for indications of the presence of protected species including:
-  Habitat considered suitable to support widespread reptile species including areas with a scrub/grassland mosaic and potential hibernation sites;
 -  On-site ponds offering potential breeding opportunities for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and the presence of suitable terrestrial habitat including hedgerows and rough grassland;
 -  The presence of features in and on trees indicating potential for roosting bats (*Chiroptera*), including knot and rot holes and loose bark. Secondary evidence of bats including staining, droppings, and feeding remains were also looked for;
 -  The presence of nesting habitat for breeding birds, including mature trees, dense scrub, and hedgerows, and direct evidence of bird nesting including bird song, old nests etc.;
 -  Habitats considered suitable to support badger (*Meles meles*) setts, and evidence in the form of hair, pathways, and latrines;
 -  Presence of woodland and/or hedgerows providing suitable habitat to support hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*);
 -  Riparian habitat supporting suitable features for water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) and otters (*Lutra lutra*); and the
 -  Presence of nationally protected and/or invasive plants.
- 2.8 The potential presence for protected species is categorised as **Negligible, Low, Moderate, High, or Present**, based on the findings of the field survey and on the evaluation of existing data. However, the potential presence for bats in a structure is categorised as **None, Negligible, Low, Moderate, or High** (Collins, 2023). The potential suitability of trees for bat roosts is as assessed as **None, FAR** (further assessment required), or **PRF** (at least one potential roost feature present) (Collins, 2023).
- 2.9 The purpose of this assessment is to identify whether more comprehensive Phase 2 surveys for protected species or mitigation should be recommended.

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

- 2.10 The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was carried out on 7th January 2026. The survey results and assessment was reviewed by Paul Carter who holds a Bat Class Licence Level 1 CL17 (Ref: 2025-83983-CL17-BAT), and by the project director Richard Schofield who holds a Bat Class Licence Level 2 CL18 (2025-84671-CL18-BAT).

- 2.11 The interior and exterior of the buildings were inspected closely with the aim of identifying the presence of bats and any secondary evidence together with any potential roost sites. Secondary evidence includes droppings, feeding remains, scratch marks and oil and urine staining.
- 2.12 The external inspection was carried out first and comprised a detailed search of all accessible architectural features for bat droppings, urine staining, scratch marks, staining around suitable crevices and feeding remains.
- 2.13 The internal inspection was then carried out, where it was safe to do so. A high-powered torch was used to illuminate internal features at height, for instance the apex of the roof and associated supporting beams, and these were inspected using close focusing binoculars when required.
- 2.14 Where access permitted, roof voids were also inspected. This comprised a search of the floor area and other flat surfaces, including stored materials, in order to find evidence of discarded feeding remains and bat droppings. Internal features such as the roof lining were examined to assess actual or potential roost opportunities.
- 2.15 In accordance with current standing advice issued by Natural England (2015), the following types of bat roosts were considered during the assessment:
 -  Day Roost - where individual bats, or small groups of males, rest or shelter in the day
 -  Night Roost - where bats rest or shelter at night between foraging in the active period, but rarely during the day
 -  Feeding 'Perch' Roost - where bats hang to eat or catch their prey or rest at night between feeding sessions.
 -  Hibernation Roost - where bats are found during winter. These roosts typically comprise a stable environment where bats can enter torpor; these areas are normally of a constant temperature.
 -  Transitional or Occasional Roost - where individual or small numbers of bats gather at a temporary site before and after hibernation.
 -  Maternity Roost – where female bats give birth and raise their young.
 -  Satellite Roost – an alternative roost found in close proximity to the main nursery roost colony and used by a few individual breeding females to small group of breeding females through the breeding season.

Caveat

Data Search Constraints

- 2.16 It is important to note that, even where data is held, a lack of records for a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of ecological interest; the area may be simply under-recorded.

Survey Constraints

- 2.17 Ecological surveys are limited by factors that affect presence of plants and animals such as seasonality. Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation of the environment.
- 2.18 The survey was carried out outside of the growing season and therefore many species may not have been visible above ground or readily identifiable.
- 2.19 The appraisal does not constitute a full botanical survey, or a Phase 2 pre-construction survey that would include accurate GIS mapping for invasive or protected plant species. This survey provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on the site based on the suitability of the habitat, known distribution of the species in the local area, and any direct evidence on the site. It is therefore used as a tool to recommend further protected species surveys (or other species of significant nature conservation interest) if on the basis of the preliminary assessment or during subsequent surveys, it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.
- 2.20 It is however considered that the survey was sufficiently rigorous to assess the ecological value of the site.

Bat Survey Constraints

- 2.21 Bats are mobile animals which can move roost sites throughout the year. It is possible that surveys carried out in January may miss roosts not occupied until later in the year. However, where undisturbed, it is generally possible to find secondary evidence of bats throughout the year.
- 2.22 It is considered that the survey was sufficiently rigorous to assess the ecological value of the site for the purposes of this assessment.

Limitations

- 2.23 This appraisal also does not constitute as a full invasive species survey. All surveys are subject to the conditions on site at the time of the survey. Site surveys are non-intrusive and rely on the visual identification of aboveground growth. If parts of a site are inaccessible, then these areas can often not be surveyed unless they can be viewed from other areas. If any aboveground growth is being managed or has been disturbed or covered, or the below ground growth is dormant, then it may be impossible for us to identify invasive plants in these areas during our non-intrusive survey.

3. Baseline Conditions

Desk Study

Aerial Photography and OS Maps

- 3.1 Aerial photographs and OS maps show the site to be predominantly modified grassland, and buildings, with scattered trees. The surrounding habitat appears to be deciduous woodland, grassland, and parkland. There appear to be three water bodies within 250 m of the site, and seven water bodies, and four streams within 500 m of the site (shown below).

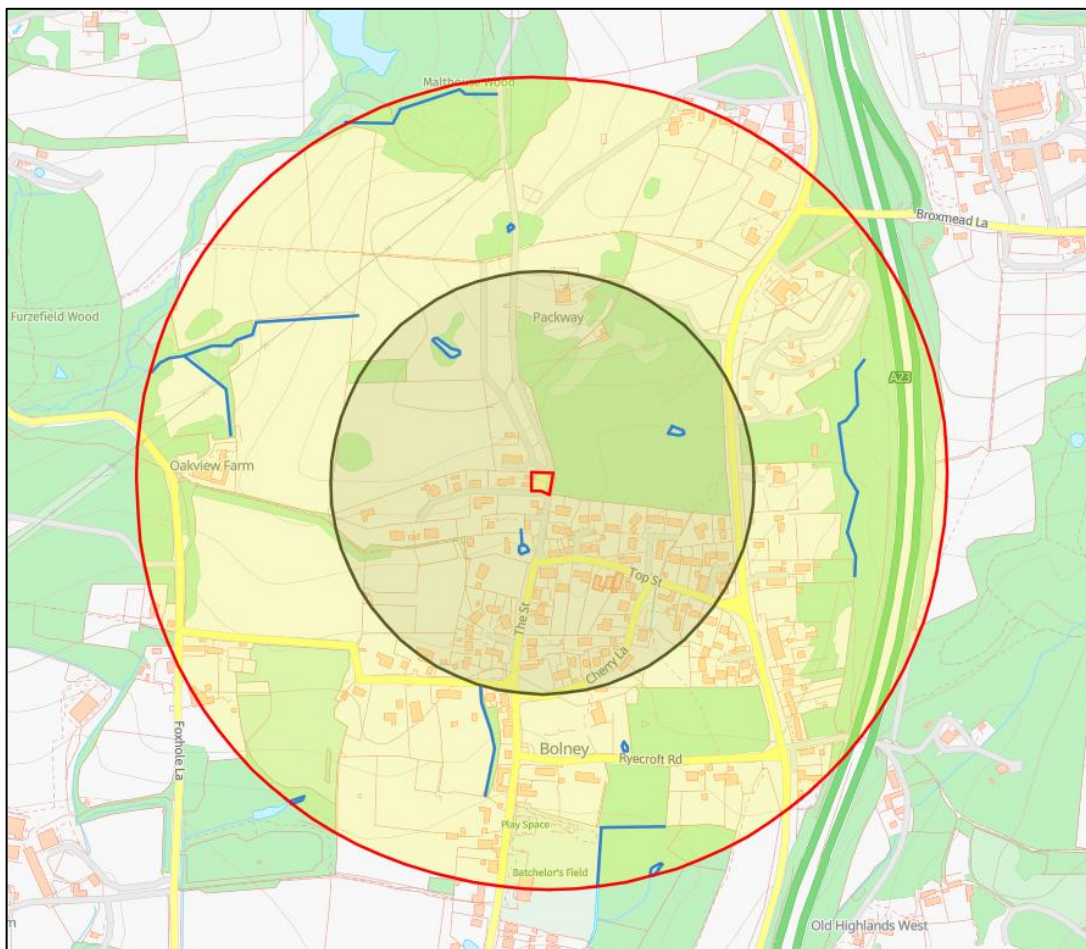


Image one – Water bodies (blue) within 250 m (black circle) and 500 m (red circle) of the site (red centre shape) (MAGIC, 2026).

European Protected Species Licences Records (EPSLs)

- 3.2 European Protected Species Licences Records (EPSLs) were reviewed on Magic Map (2026). These are licences that permit works that will affect a certain protected species subject to strict criteria being followed.
- 3.3 The closest EPSL within 2km of the site is located approximately 1.4 km to the west and was for brown long-eared bats, and common pipistrelles in 2021.

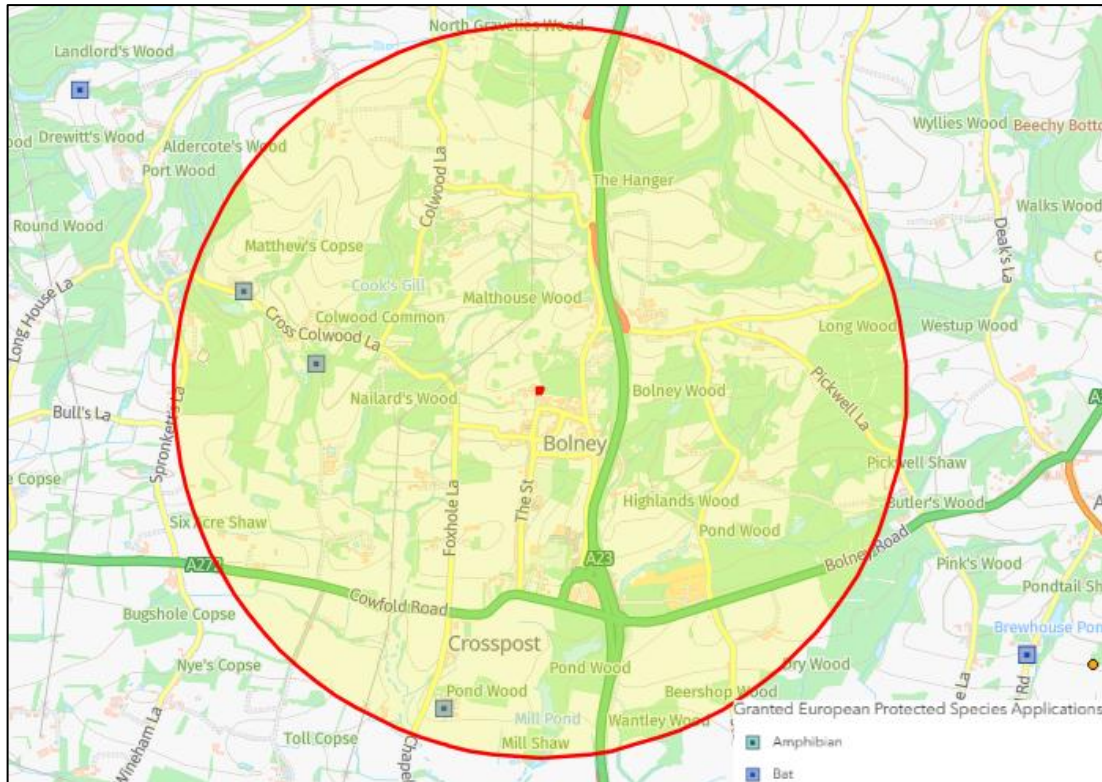


Image two – European Protected Species Licence Records (EPSLs) within 2km of the site (red circle) (MAGIC, 2026).

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

Statutory International Sites

- 3.4 The closest international statutory designated site is Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve. Table 3.1 provides a list of statutory international sites within 12km of the site.

Table 3.1: Statutory international sites within 12km of the site

Site Name	Reason for Designation	Area (ha)	Distance from the Site
Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	Chalk down land makes up the principal terrestrial landscape of the area, bounded at each end by the two river valleys. The coastline is dominated by impressive chalk cliffs in the east and urbanized plains in the west.	29,514	7.6 km to the southeast

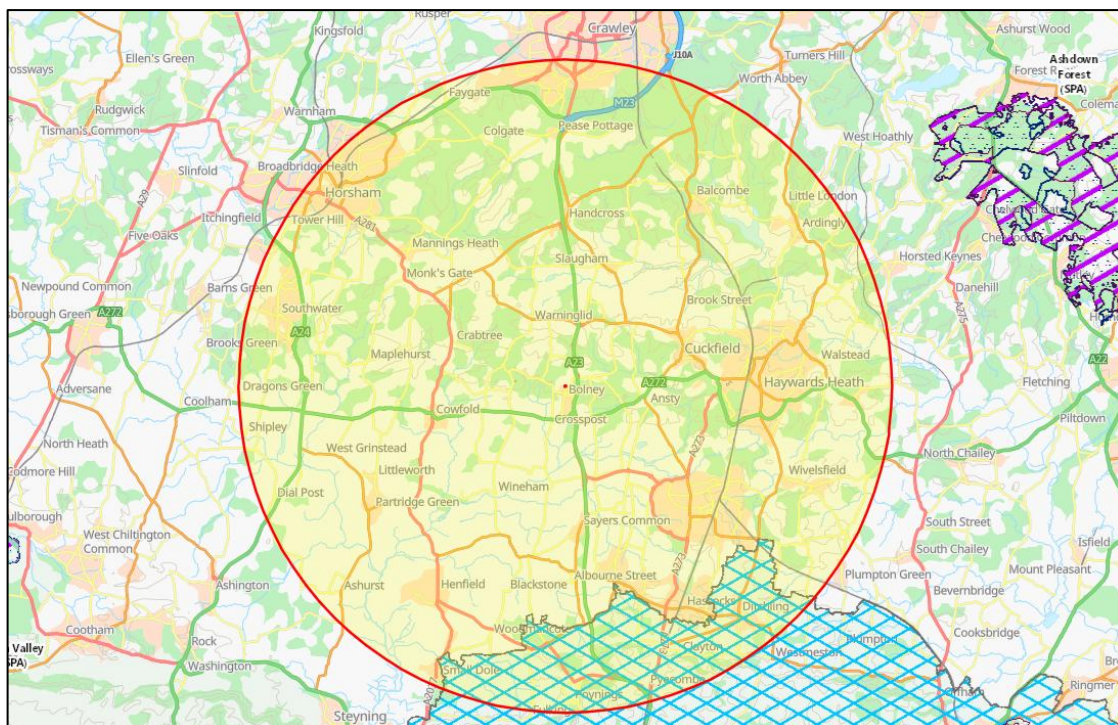


Image three – Statutory International Sites within 12km of the site (red circle). Blue cross pattern – Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere Reserve. Purple pattern – SPAs (MAGIC, 2026).

Statutory National and Local Sites

- 3.5 The closest statutory national and/or local designated site is High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) located along the northern boundary of the site. Table 3.2 provides a list of statutory national and local sites within 2km of the site.

Table 3.2: Statutory national and local sites within 2km of the site

Site Name	Reason for Designation	Area (ha)	Distance from the Site
High Weald AONB	Consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wildflower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.	1461.72	Along the northern border

Non-Statutory Sites

- 3.6 The closest non-statutory designated site is The Hangar Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Table 3.3 provides a list of non-statutory sites within 2km of the site.

Table 3.3: Non-statutory sites within 2km of the site

Site Name	Reason for Designation	Area (ha)	Distance from the Site
The Hanger LWS	Two main types of wood are present within this gill woodland site. Alder occurs along the streams and extends up the lower slopes in parts, with Oak, Hazel and Ash on the upper slopes and the flat ground above. The wood supports a wide range of woodland plants, mosses and liverworts, a good bird community and a number of uncommon butterflies.	35.9	1.3 km to the northeast

Ancient Woodland

- 3.7 There is no ancient woodland covering any part of the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No trees on or adjacent to the site are listed on the Woodland Trusts' Ancient Tree Inventory.
- 3.8 The closest area of ancient woodland is situated 0.4 km to the north of the site.

UK BAP Priority Habitat

- 3.9 UK BAP Priority habitats are habitat types or elements with unique or significant value to a diverse assemblage of species. UK BAP priority habitats are identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).
- 3.10 The closest priority habitat is located on the eastern border of the site, which is deciduous woodland. The UK BAP Priority Habitats are shown below.

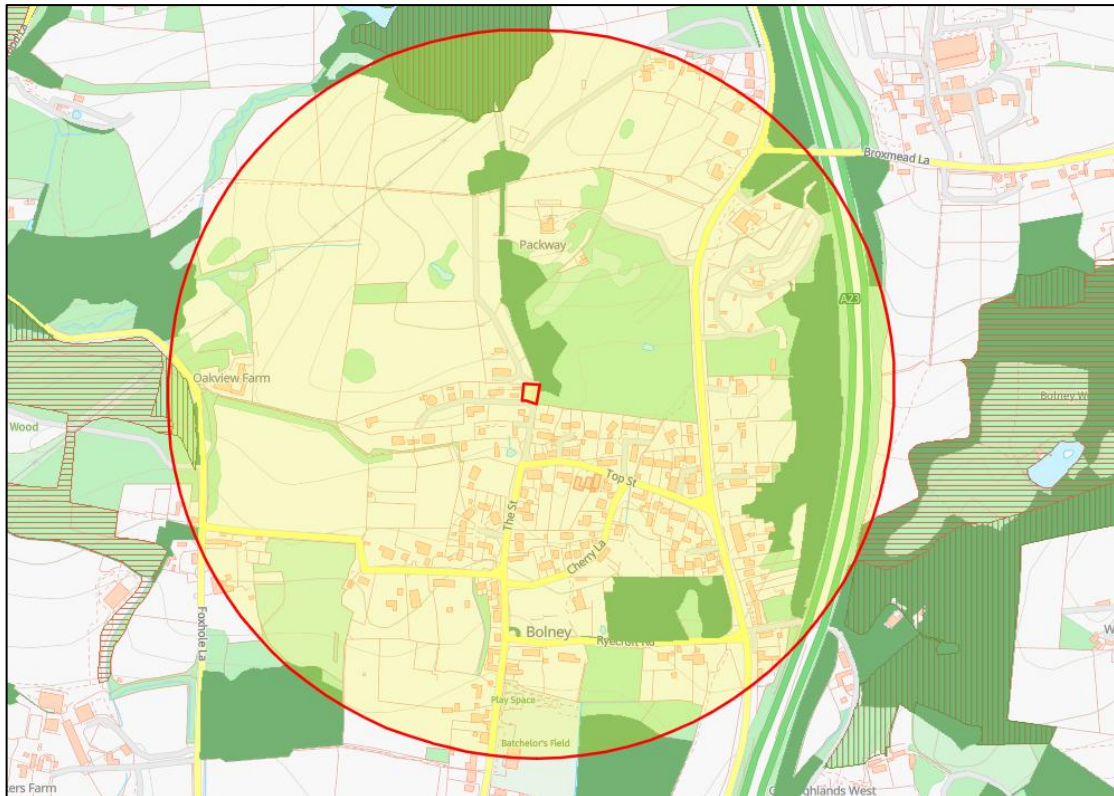


Image four – UKBAP Priority Habitats within 500 m of the site (green – deciduous woodland, lined pattern – ancient woodland) (MAGIC, 2026).

Habitats

Site Summary

- 3.11 The site comprised buildings, developed land – sealed surface, built linear feature, modified grassland, scattered scrub, bare ground, and individual trees.
- 3.12 The main habitats recorded within the site are described below. The UKHab code is shown in the bracket after the habitat type (UKHab 2023). Additional details are shown on the habitat survey plan in Appendix A.

Buildings (u1b5)

- 3.13 Three buildings were present on-site. All three buildings were disused.
- 3.14 Building one (B1) was a wooden shed, with a felted wooden roof.
- 3.15 Building two (B2) was a wooden walled outbuilding, with a corrugated metal roof.
- 3.16 Building three (B3) was an open air shed, with a corrugated metal roof.

Developed land – sealed surface (u1b)

- 3.17 A wooden structure with brick supports was present on-site. This was used to inspect vehicles.

Modified Grassland (g4)

- 3.18 Modified grassland was present throughout the site. Leaf litter was also present on these patches of grassland. Species present included perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

Scattered Scrub (g4 10)

- 3.19 Scattered scrub was present around building two (B2). The dominant species observed was bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*).

Bare Ground (g4 510)

- 3.20 Bare ground was present throughout the site acting as access roads and loading areas for vehicles using the site.

Built Linear Feature (u1e)

- 3.21 Wooden fencing was present along the southern boundary of the site.

Individual Trees

- 3.22 Individual trees were present in the northwest of the site behind building two and three (B2, and B3), and in the northeast of the site, separated from the woodland to the east. Common ivy was present on the trees. In the northwest trees, this ivy was too dense to see through. The ivy on the trees in the northeast was not dense enough to obscure the trunk. Species included sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

Building 1 (B1)

- 3.23 Building 1 (B1) was a disused wooden shed, with a felted wooden roof which was used for storage. The shed was lacking doors along the southern face of the building. Holes were present throughout the northern part of the roof. Common ivy (*Hedera helix*) was growing on the roof.
- 3.24 Internally, the building was open and exposed, with no visible places for bats to roost. The interior was bright inside, and temperatures were the same as they were outside.
- 3.25 No bats or secondary evidence of bats were found during the initial inspection.
- 3.26 According to Collins (2023) Bat Guidelines (4th Edition), negligible buildings and structures will have "*No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.*"
- 3.27 Overall, building 1 was assessed as having **negligible** potential to support roosting bats.

Building 2 (B2)

- 3.28 Building 2 (B2) was a disused wooden walled outbuilding, with a corrugated metal roof. The structure was leaning and clearly had not been used in years. Many areas of the building were open due to the lack of walls and doors.
- 3.29 Internally, the building was open and exposed, with no visible places suitable for roosting bats. Additionally, the interior of the building was light, and temperatures were the same as they were outside.
- 3.30 No bats or secondary evidence of bats were found during the initial inspection.
- 3.31 According to Collins (2023) Bat Guidelines (4th Edition), negligible buildings and structures will have *"No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion."*
- 3.32 Overall, building 2 was assessed as having **negligible** potential to support roosting bats.

Building 3 (B3)

- 3.33 Building 3 (B3) was an open-air wooden shed, with wooden support beams, and a corrugated metal roof. This appears to be used to store hay, wood and other farming related materials.
- 3.34 Internally, the building was open and exposed, with no visible places suitable for roosting bats. Additionally, the interior of the building was light, and temperatures were the same as they were outside.
- 3.35 No potential roosting features for bats were recorded during the survey.
- 3.36 According to Collins (2023) Bat Guidelines (4th Edition), negligible buildings and structures will have *"No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion."*
- 3.37 Overall, building 3 was assessed as having **negligible** potential to support roosting bats.

Protected Species

- 3.38 Legislation relating to the protected species referred to in this section is included in Appendix C.
- 3.39 The following paragraphs detail the suitability of the on-site habitats to support protected species and include information from the data search for protected, rare and otherwise notable species returned within a 2km radius.

Bats

- 3.40 The data search showed records of bats from the genera pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus*), long eared (*Plecotus*), myotis (*Myotis*), serotine (*Eptesicus*), and Noctule/Leisler's (*Nyctalus*) occurring within the 2km search area in the past 15 years.

- 3.41 During the survey, no suitable bat roosting features were identified within any of the buildings on-site. All structures were open and exposed, with high light levels and internal temperatures comparable to external conditions, and lacked enclosed roof spaces, crevices or other features capable of supporting roosting bats. No bats or secondary evidence of bats were recorded.
- 3.42 According to Collins (2023) Bat Guidelines (4th Edition), negligible buildings and structures will have *"No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion."*
- 3.43 Overall, it was considered that the on-site buildings offered **negligible** potential for roosting bats due to the exposed and open nature of the buildings.

Amphibians

- 3.44 The data search showed records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years. Aerial photographs and maps show five ponds within 500m of the site.
- 3.45 The closest active toad crossing was Broxmead Lane (ID No. 1021) located approximately 1.5 km northeast of the site.
- 3.46 The data search showed records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.
- 3.47 The site is located in the amber zone of the NatureSpace impact risk zones map for Mid Sussex District Council (NatureSpace, 2026). According to NatureSpace, this mean that the habitat on site is suitable for great crested newts, and that they are likely to be present.

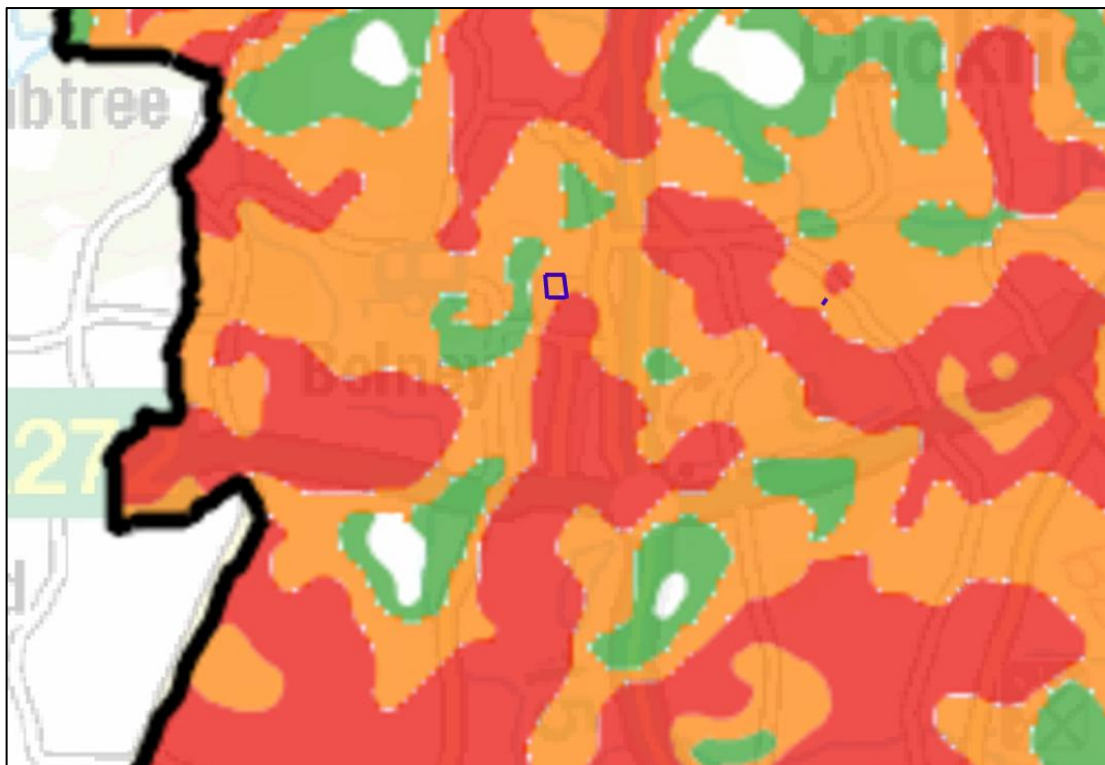


Image five – Great Crested Newts Impact Risk zones map for Mid Sussex District Council (blue square – approximate site location, red – highly suitable habitat, amber – suitable habitat, green – moderate suitable habitat, white – low suitable habitat) (NatureSpace, 2026).

- 3.48 During the survey no water was seen on site. However, the habitat contained features that could support foraging and commuting newts. This was primarily the modified grassland on-site. Additionally, there were five water bodies within 500 m including one approximately 50 m to the south of the site.
- 3.49 It was considered that the site offered **negligible** potential for breeding newts due to the lack of ponds on-site and **moderate** potential for foraging and commuting newts.

Reptiles

- 3.50 The data search showed one record of grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.
- 3.51 The habitat on the site was not considered to be suitable for reptiles. The modified grassland and bare ground are frequently disturbed by vehicles and workers as it is an active yard. Additionally, no suitable habitats were observed during the site visit.
- 3.52 Overall, the site was assessed as having **negligible** potential to support reptiles.

Birds

- 3.53 Several Red or Amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern¹ (BoCC), and notable² bird species were returned by the data search that may utilise habitats within the site. Species include house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).
- 3.54 During the survey it was noted that the onsite trees and buildings provided suitable habitat for nesting birds. However, no old or active nests were observed during the site visit.
- 3.55 Overall, it was considered that the site offered **low** potential for breeding birds.

¹ Birds of Conservation Concern status is prioritised into high concern (Red), medium concern (Amber) and low concern (Green) (Eaton et al, 2009). Red-list species are those that are globally threatened according to the IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and have not shown a substantial recent recovery. Amber-list species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations. Green-list species are those that fulfil none of the criteria.

² Notable Birds are based on a list of birds that are particularly scarce or vulnerable either at national or a regional level. The majority of these bird species are designated as Schedule 1 species, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), or listed as red or amber-listed BoCC.

Hazel Dormice

- 3.60 The data search showed records of dormice within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.
- 3.61 The site did not contain the type or density of vegetation that would be suitable for supporting either breeding or commuting dormice.
- 3.62 Overall it was considered that the site offered **negligible** potential to support breeding dormice and **negligible** potential to support commuting dormice.

Aquatic Mammals

- 3.63 The data search showed no records of water voles or otters within the 2km search area in the past 15 years.
- 3.64 The site did not contain the aquatic habitat and vegetation types that would support breeding, foraging or commuting water voles or otters.
- 3.65 Overall it was considered that the site offered **negligible** potential to support breeding water voles or otters and **negligible** potential to support commuting and foraging water voles or otters.

Hedgehogs

- 3.66 The data search showed records of hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.
- 3.67 No direct evidence of hedgehogs was seen on the site. However, the presence of short grassland and the vicinity to the woodland to the east could have provided the hibernation and foraging areas for this species.
- 3.68 Overall, the site offered **low** potential for hedgehogs.

Stag Beetles

- 3.69 The data search showed no records of stag beetles (*Lucanus cervus*) within 2km of the site within the past 15 years.
- 3.70 There was no evidence of stag beetles, or the habitat they require seen during the survey.
- 3.71 Overall, the site offered **negligible** potential for stag beetles.

Invasive Plants

- 3.72 The data search showed records of plant species including cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), and American skunk-cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*), occurring within the 2km search area in the past 15 years. These plants are listed as invasive in Schedule 9 Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 amended).
- 3.73 During the survey no specimens were seen of plant species that are listed in Schedule 9 Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 amended).

4. Evaluation

- 4.1 On the basis of the information available from the habitat survey and desk study, the site has been evaluated in terms of its potential for biodiversity, support of protected species and habitats, and the contribution the area makes as part of the wider landscape. The nature conservation value of the site has been assessed following standard criteria developed by CIEEM (2017 and 2018) and in accordance with BS 24040:2013 Biodiversity – code of practice for planning and development. This is provided below.
- 4.2 The biodiversity value of protected species within the site is a preliminary evaluation based upon the desk study records, habitat suitability, and the conservation status of the species in question. It should be noted that where European Protected Species (EPS) or species of Principle Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity are present on-site they may be valued at a lower level/scale where it is considered likely that populations would not be of sufficient importance to justify designation at a higher level. However, regardless of their biodiversity value, such species are still subject to national and/or European legislation.
- 4.3 Key aspects of relevant planning policy regarding conservation, including an explanation of species referred to as being of 'Principal Importance for Conservation of Biodiversity' and European Protected Species and habitats, are provided in the Legislation section in Appendix C.

Geographic Evaluation

Features of International Importance

- 4.4 Features of International Importance are principally sites covered by international legislation or conventions. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 implements the Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EC) (Habitats Directive) in England and Wales. The Regulations mainly deal with the protection of sites with certain habitats and populations of species that are important for nature conservation in a European context, i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
- 4.5 The closest site of International Importance is Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere Reserve located 7.6 km to the southeast of the site. The following habitats are part of the reason for its designation; coastal chalk cliffs, sub tidal chalk reef, freshwater wetland, shingle beaches, deciduous woodland, river estuaries and chalk grassland. The site does not contain any supporting habitats for this designated site.

Features of National Importance

- 4.6 Features of national importance include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The site is not subject to any national statutory nature conservation designations and it is not considered that any habitats or populations or assemblages of species within the site would meet the criteria for the designation of SSSIs at an appropriate geographic level³.
- 4.7 The closest designated site of national importance for nature conservation is High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is located along the northern boundary of the site. The site does not provide any supporting habitat for this AONB.

Features of County (i.e. Mid Sussex) Importance

- 4.8 The site does not include any features of value at this level neither is it likely to be selected as a SINC based on the results of the current survey.

Features of Local and/or Value in the Immediate Vicinity (c. 250m) of the Project

- 4.9 The on-site vegetation is of value within the local and immediate vicinity and provides suitable habitat to support protected species including great crested newts, birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs. It also forms part of the wider ecological network of habitats in the locality, providing wildlife corridors for mobile species to move through the landscape.

Summary

- 4.10 Overall on the basis of the survey results and the above criteria, habitats within the site are considered largely to be of ecological value within the immediate vicinity only. The site provides suitable habitat to support several protected species and groups including great crested newts, birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs. However, populations of these are unlikely to be locally significant.

Local Plan Evaluation

- 4.11 It is considered that the statutory Bolney Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted 2016) contains the following nature conservation policies relevant to the site. A list of the policies is provided below. The full text of the relevant policies is contained in the Legislation section in Appendix C, and this should also be referred to.

Bolney Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

-  BOLE1 Protect and Enhance Biodiversity.
-  BOLE2 Protect and Enhance the Countryside.

³ JNCC Guidelines for selection of biological SSSIs (see <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2303#download>).

5. Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

- 5.1 The survey site is located at Franc-Jean Farm, Bolney, West Sussex RH17 5PJ. The survey area extended over approximately 0.07 hectares (ha). Habitats to be impacted by the development proposals include buildings, developed land – sealed surface, built linear feature, modified grassland, scattered scrub, bare ground, and individual trees.
- 5.2 Design proposals include the construction of a new residential property.
- 5.3 Policies BOLE1 and BOLE2 from the Bolney Neighbourhood Plan are relevant to this development. BOLE1 Protect and Enhance Biodiversity requires development proposals to protect, and, where possible, enhance biodiversity. BOLE2 Protect and Enhance the Countryside requires developments outside of the Built-Up Area Boundary, which this site is outside of, to demonstrate that it does not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape.
- 5.4 Habitats within the proposed development area were assessed as being of value to wildlife within the local vicinity with potential to support great crested newts, birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs and these species may pose a constraint to works.
- 5.5 It is recommended that targeted surveys in respect to great crested newts is undertaken in order to determine presence or likely absence. Alternatively, a District Level Licence can be obtained from NatureSpace.
- 5.6 In addition, a precautionary approach to site clearance in respect to birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs are recommended to minimise any adverse impacts on these species groups.
- 5.7 Details regarding specific mitigation, including further surveys and precautionary working practices together with habitat enhancement measures are provided below.

Recommendations

Breeding Birds

- 5.8 The on-site trees, and buildings provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of bird species. All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 5.9 In order to avoid any potential impact on breeding birds, the clearance of any trees, and any demolition of buildings should be undertaken outside the main bird nesting season which runs from March to August inclusive⁴, with clearance works possible between September and February. Where this is not possible, an ecologist would need to check the vegetation for active nests and signs of bird breeding activity.

⁴ It should be noted that this is the main breeding period. Breeding activity may occur outside this period (depending on the particular species and geographical location of the site) and thus due care and attention should be given when undertaking potentially disturbing works at any time of year.

- 5.10 In the event that a nest is found, an exclusion zone around the nest would be established. Works would have to cease within this buffer area until the young birds have fledged.

Great Crested Newts

- 5.11 Great crested newts receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Due to the potential for great crested newts to use on-site habitats, a great crested newt survey and/or licence should be carried out/obtained.

District Level Licence

- 5.12 District Level Licensing is an approach which does not need surveys, although eDNA surveys can help. In this area the District Licence would be via **NatureSpace**. This licence needs to be agreed prior to submitting planning application. This approach does not require any surveys to be carried out although any survey data (such as eDNA surveys) can be used to show what great crested newts are/ or are not using the local ponds, which can impact on the cost of the licence.
- 5.13 This approach enables a development to progress all year round, and results in the developer funding great crested newt projects in the district and county. Although this approach is usually quicker it can be more expensive than a conventional licence if there are ponds on site, or in the immediate vicinity.

Conventional Surveys

- 5.14 An alternative approach to District License is conventional surveys, where all ponds within 500m of the site, should be included in the survey, where possible. The survey protocol should follow that set out in the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2001). An initial four surveys are required to demonstrate presence or absence and these must be carried out between mid-March and mid-June with two of those visits taking place within the peak survey time between mid-April and mid-May.
- 5.15 If great crested newts are found to be present, an additional two survey visits will then be required to allow a population size class assessment to be made, with at least one of these visits being undertaken within the peak survey time between mid-April and mid-May.
- 5.16 The results of the survey should then be used to inform mitigation proposals for this species.
- 5.17 If great crested newts are found to be present in the locality following the survey, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence from Natural England may be required to remove aquatic or terrestrial habitat in order to facilitate the works. Once submitted, a licence application can take up to 30 days to be processed. Natural England will only grant a licence once planning permission has been received.
- 5.18 As part of the licence application, a Method Statement will need to be submitted to guide works in relation to this species. If individuals are found to be using the pond, suitable compensation measures to mitigate for losses to any aquatic habitat will be required in addition to undertaking a formal translocation to ensure individuals are not present within the development footprint. This process will involve fencing the development area and trapping and relocating newts over a number of weeks.

eDNA

- 5.19 An alternative optional, is Environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis. Environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis is a method of detecting great crested newt occupancy by testing for the presence of DNA from pond water within a laboratory. All ponds within 500m of the site need to be tested.
- 5.20 We would recommend that either eDNA sampling or a district licence approach is carried out for the site.

Badgers

- 5.21 Badgers receive protection under The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 5.22 Due to the potential presence of badgers in the area, a series of general precautions are recommended. This will include the following;
 -  Throughout construction, all on-site contractors must be made aware of the potential presence of badgers in the locality and a tool box talk should be given by a qualified ecologist immediately prior to the start of construction works to discuss the potential for badgers to pass through the site and to provide information on legislation and the ecology of this species.
 -  All trenches should be covered at night or if this is not possible, ramps must be installed into the trenches to enable badgers to escape should they enter the excavations. All materials must be stored safely and lids securely fitted, particular waste and other potential food sources.

Hedgehogs

- 5.23 Hedgehogs are listed on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41 as a Species of Principal Importance. They are a rapidly declining species.
- 5.24 Hedgehogs need short grass areas to search for invertebrate prey. Log piles and decaying vegetation are used to forage and hibernate in. Areas of leaf litter can be collected and used in nests. Dense scrub areas are also useful to build hibernation nests during winter. Wildlife friendly corridors allow hedgehogs and other wildlife to migrate across a site. These are discussed in the Wildlife Friendly Pathways Section below.

Habitat Retention

- 5.25 All retained trees, including all adjacent off-site trees should be protected in accordance with British Standards (BS 2012) 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. The root protection areas of any retained trees must be left free from excavation and disturbance and protected during any proposed works. Protection should be in the form of fencing and signs installed for the duration of the works.

Habitat Enhancement

- 5.26 New development offers the opportunity for habitat enhancement in accordance with national and local planning policy and some recommendations are included below.

Wildlife Friendly Pathways

- 5.27 The increase in building can result in ecological areas which are unconnected. Effectively these are ecological islands, and often there is no way for wildlife to migrate to and from these areas. One way to reduce the impact and allow wildlife, including hedgehogs, to migrate across sites is to install wildlife friendly pathways across a site. This can include a range of things such as wildlife corridors, such as hedgerows and scrub or rough grassland corridors, but also installing holes in fences. Wildlife holes, often referred to as hedgehog holes, help wildlife migrate through areas. The holes need to be at least 13cm by 13cm, at ground level.

Compensatory Planting

- 5.28 Additional tree and shrub planting could be incorporated into the landscape proposals to compensate for any removal to facilitate the works. Planting should include a high proportion of native species and be of local provenance where possible. These should be carefully selected to ensure they contain species suitable for the area. Some species of known wildlife value are listed in Appendix E.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The site survey revealed the following habitats:

-  Buildings;
-  Developed land – sealed surface;
-  Built linear feature;
-  Modified grassland;
-  Scattered scrub;
-  Bare ground, and;
-  Individual trees.

6.2 The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory designations. The closest statutory site is Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere Reserve located approximately 7.6 km to the south at its closest point and the survey area does not support any features that contribute to the designation of this site.

6.3 The following protected species surveys are recommended in order to determine presence or likely absence:

-  Great Crested Newts – eDNA or Licence Approach via NatureSpace.

6.4 In addition, a precautionary approach to site clearance in respect to birds, foraging badgers, and hedgehogs are recommended to minimise any adverse impacts on these species groups.

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8. Glossary of Terms

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BRC	Biological Records Centre
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
DBW	Daytime Bat Walkover
Habitats Directive	Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MAGIC	Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside
NNR	National Nature Reserve
Nomenclature	The system of devising of names for plants
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal- formerly referred to as a Phase 1 Habitat Survey
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Figures and Appendices

Appendix A

Habitat Map