

Ecological Review



Parkfield Farm,
Hophurst Lane,
Crawley Downs,
RH10 4LN

Client:	Squires Planning		
Planning Application No.:	DM/20/2440 – Mid Sussex Council		
Date:	January 2026 (Revised)		
E	Author:	Proof:	Approved:
00	Kenneth Coyne CMLI	Kenneth Coyne CMLI	Kenneth Coyne CMLI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>1</u>	<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>SITE.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>AREA DESIGNATION</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>CONCLUSION</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>9</u>	<u>HABITAT MAPS.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>10</u>	<u>SITE MAPS</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>11</u>	<u>PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY</u>	<u>10</u>

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed to carry out an ecological assessment of land adjacent to Parkfield Farm, Hophurst Lane, Crawley Down, RH10 4LN for a planning application to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). This is for new commercial building on the site. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) of adjacent ponds for Great crested newts (GCN) were initially undertaken in September 2025. These studies found no ecology of importance, including bats and GCN, both European Protected Species (EPS)
- 1.2 An ecology assessment has also been undertaken by the Ash Partnership which the client wishes reviewing. Following changes to the proposal a new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has also been requested. This required the PEA to be re-assessed, which includes reviewing the site boundaries, to enable the required BNG re-assessed mitigation, to be within the ownership of the client's land (see Site Map with blue and red line boundaries) .
- 1.3 From the analysis of this study, it will be possible to review the ecological assessments, to ascertain what measures are needed to achieve a satisfactory environmental result for the site. This should enable MSDC to consider the impact of the proposal on the environment. It can then discharge its legal obligations under the "Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2018) and any" Outline Mitigation and Compensation Strategy" if required
- 1.4 I am a qualified Ecologist, with over 40 years' experience in the environmental field. This includes being a license bat worker (Bat License 2015-15943-CLS-CLS). The initial PRA Survey was carried out by the Ash Partnership in 2024 and the PEA review in September 2025 by Coyne Environmental Ltd. This was undertaken in line with the CIEEM guidelines

2 LOCATION

- 2.1 Crawley Down is a village in west Sussex, 9.7 km. east of Crawley and just one mile from the border with Surrey. It has a King George's Field in memorial to King George V . Until the 17th century the area of the village was used by iron producers, and in the 1600s, small farms were part of the Enclosures Act reforms. The Grange manor, was built in the 18thC as the settlement slowly grew, with brick works taking over from local clay
- 2.2 With the coming of the railway from Three Bridges to Tunbridge Wells spurred rapid growth of the village, with several new estates, and Saints Church was built in 1843. The railway was closed in 1967 as part of the Beeching report and is now part of the Worth Way, an ecological corridor and cycle route.

3 SITE

- 3.1 Parkfield Farm is a 18C Listed Building (LB) Grade 11 where much of the former farm buildings have been converted into new industrial uses and the applicant has now taken over them. It is proposed to remove the existing dog and chicken huts and construct a new building along with improvements to the surrounding areas.
- 3.2 The ecological studies by both the Ash Partnership and Coyne Environmental Ltd have been considered in this re-assessment of the site. The PEA and Review PEA with HSI have found no additional ecology of importance on site. However, the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric and required off -site mitigation is being re-assessed, due to an ownership review.

4 AREA DESIGNATION

- 4.1 Management and protection of biodiversity within the UK planning system is set out through European and UK legislation. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) is the main protection for wildlife, including bats (European Protected Species). There is also legislation for specific species, Bats, WCA (1981), Protection of Badgers Act 1992, EU Habitats and Birds Directive and more general guidance, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2020. This study and report have also considered BS 42020 (2013) Biodiversity -Code of practice for planning and development.
- 4.2 Sussex County Council has several environmental initiatives from its Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) to the environmental strategy, (Local Nature Recovery) and investing in Natural Capital. There is also a Kent Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Site Register which proposes a county-wide approach to BNG to be adopted by all the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) with a 20% net gain target above the mandatory 10% in the Environment Act 2021. At the local level the Mid Sussex District Council Plan 2014 - 2031 and the Neighbourhood Plan 2016 have been consulted. All these policies are aimed at ensuring the environment of the county are good for improving overall biodiversity development.

5 ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is a type of biodiversity habitat survey and is the first stage in assessing the ecological value of a site, enabling the identification of features of ecological interest. A full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not deemed necessary as the site appeared to support habitats typical of the surrounding area and no ecology of significance was anticipated. A Walkover Ecological Survey has therefore been undertaken using the methodology set out in the UK Habitat Classification User Manual (2018). However, should the survey identify any wildlife of significance, appropriate measures will be implemented in accordance with the User Manual and the CIEEM Guidelines (2017). As the site was previously subject to a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by The Ash Partnership, and the red line boundary has since been amended, Coyne Environmental Ltd has undertaken an updated ecological review to assess any changes in ecological conditions within the reviewed site boundary. From the survey and subsequent analysis, it will be possible to review the proposals to determine what measures, if any, are required to achieve a satisfactory ecological outcome for the site. The PEA will enable Mid Sussex District Council to consider the potential ecological impacts of the proposal and to discharge its legal obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017, as amended), including any outline mitigation or compensation strategy should this be required.
- 5.2 **Bats**
Bats are a priority consideration within a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. As no buildings fall within the revised site boundary, the assessment was limited to trees within and immediately adjacent to the site. These were inspected from ground level for features with bat roost potential, including cavities, cracks, loose bark and dense ivy cover. No such features were identified and no evidence of bat activity, such as droppings, staining or feeding remains, was recorded. Therefore, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance, the site is assessed as having **low bat activity potential** and **negligible suitability for roosting bats**. No further bat surveys are considered necessary unless site conditions change.

5.3 Birds

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), particularly during the breeding season (March–August). The site supports mainly managed grassland, which were inspected for nesting activity. The survey was undertaken outside the breeding season and no nests, nesting behaviour or birds were observed. Although common garden birds may use boundary vegetation for foraging or nesting during the breeding season, the site offers **low suitability for breeding birds** due to its managed nature and limited habitat structure, in line with British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) guidance.

5.4 Reptiles

No reptiles were recorded during the survey, which was undertaken during the winter period when reptiles are likely to be inactive and in hibernation. The site is largely characterised by artificial surfaces and maintained grassland, offering limited opportunities for basking, shelter or refugia within the developed areas. As such, the site itself is considered to have **low suitability for supporting resident reptile populations**.

5.5 Amphibians

No ponds, lakes, ditches or other standing water features were identified on or within proximity to the site during the survey. As amphibians are dependent on aquatic habitats for breeding, the absence of suitable waterbodies means the site offers negligible suitability for amphibians, including Great Crested Newts. **No further amphibian surveys or mitigation measures are therefore considered necessary.**

5.6 Mammals

The site offers limited shelter and foraging opportunities for small mammals. No evidence of mammal activity was recorded during the survey, including footprints, runs, droppings, burrows or molehills and there were no signs of badger activity such as setts or latrines. Boundary features provide minimal refugia for species such as hedgehog (a Priority Species), although no evidence of use was identified. Larger, mobile mammals such as red fox may pass through the wider area; however, more suitable habitat is available within the surrounding countryside and adjacent semi natural landscapes.

5.7 Flora & Invertebrates

The central areas of the site are dominated by closely managed amenity lawn, consisting primarily of common grass species such as *Poa* spp. and *Festuca* spp., with scattered ruderal weeds including ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.) and common daisy (*Bellis perennis*). The uniform sward structure and intensive management result in limited botanical diversity. Consequently, the site provides **low suitability for invertebrates**, offering few nectar sources or shelter opportunities for pollinating species such as bees and butterflies.

5.8 UKHAB CLASSIFICATION

Habitats within the site include:

g4 – Modified Grassland

u1c - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

u1b - Developed land; sealed surface

- 5.9 Modified Grassland (**g4**) consists of regularly managed amenity grassland dominated by common agricultural and lawn grass species such as *Poa* spp. and *Festuca* spp. The areas are short and uniform, with only scattered ruderal and lawn weeds including ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.) and common daisy (*Bellis perennis*).
- 5.10 Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (**u1c**) includes areas of disturbed ground and compacted substrates associated with access routes and hardstanding adjacent to the dwelling and grassland.
- 5.11 Developed land; sealed surface (**u1b**) relates to the existing built form and permanently hard-surfaced areas, including the dwelling and associated sealed surfaces.

6 ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

- 6.1 The site consists of managed grassland, artificial surfaces and a scattered tree. Overall, the habitats within the immediate working area are of low ecological value, reflecting intensive management and limited structural or botanical diversity.
- 6.2 No evidence of bats (European Protected Species) was recorded during the survey. Surrounding trees lacked cavities, peeling bark or ivy cover. In accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance, the site is assessed as having low bat activity potential and negligible roost suitability, and no further bat surveys are required.
- 6.3 Birds were not observed nesting on site at the time of survey, which was undertaken outside the breeding season. While the site offers limited nesting opportunities, common garden bird species may utilise surrounding trees and boundary vegetation. As a precaution, any vegetation clearance should avoid the bird breeding season (March–August inclusive) or be preceded by a nesting bird check if works are unavoidable.
- 6.4 The site provides low suitability for reptiles, amphibians and terrestrial mammals due to the predominance of short-mown grassland, regular disturbance and absence of suitable refugia or waterbodies. No signs of protected mammals or other notable species were recorded, and no additional surveys are recommended for these groups

7 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

- 7.1 The client has now instructed a review for the required BNG mitigation. This follows the site area within the revised blue line boundary of the property with a review of this land considered for its ecological value.

This consists of rough pasture (*Poa* spp / *Fescue* spp) with boundary hedges (*Crataegus monogyna*, *Acer campestre*, *Ilex aquifolium*) and mature hedgerow trees (*Quercus robur*). At the extreme top of the site is a small area of secondary woodland (*Quercus robur* with *Acer campestre*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Betula pendula* and an understorey of *Sambucus nigra*, *Prunus spinosa* and *Ilex aquifolium*) which extends beyond the client's lands. It is proposed that the required BNG mitigation will be planting in this area.

- 7.2 The Environment Act 2021 has a mandatory require for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on developments of a minimum of 10%. A revised BNG has now been undertaken and achieved a **10.13 %** habitat net gain with a **11.46 %** hedgerow net gain with off -site mitigation (but within the same ownership as the applicant). This will require:

- **25no** small native trees, including *Quercus robur*, *Acer campestre*, *Carpinus* *betulus*, *Prunus avium*

- **29m.lin.** species rich native hedge including *Crataegus monogyna*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Viburnum opulus*

These proposals should meet the enhancement requirements as part of the planning permission to meet the Statutory Net Gain which can be incorporated into the ecological and landscape design proposals. This can be set out in an ecological plan, as part of any required Reserve Matters.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Coyne Environmental Ltd has been instructed to undertake an ecological study of Parkfield Farm, Hophurst Lane, Crawley Down, RH10 4LN, for a proposal of a new store on the site. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken, and no ecological habitats of importance have been found. The site survey and subsequent desk top study indicates that this is not in an area of high risk for any specific species or sensitive habitats, including European Protected Species (EPS). The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), now within the revised blue line boundary, has achieved the required net gain, all on site.
- 8.2 Therefore, in my professional opinion I assess that the proposal to develop part the site will have minimal impact on the overall ecology of the area and bats (EPS) in particular. I conclude that, no further environmental studies are required and that the proposal can be determined by Mid Sussex District Council, on this basis.

REFERENCES

Baseline Habitat Map

Site Map

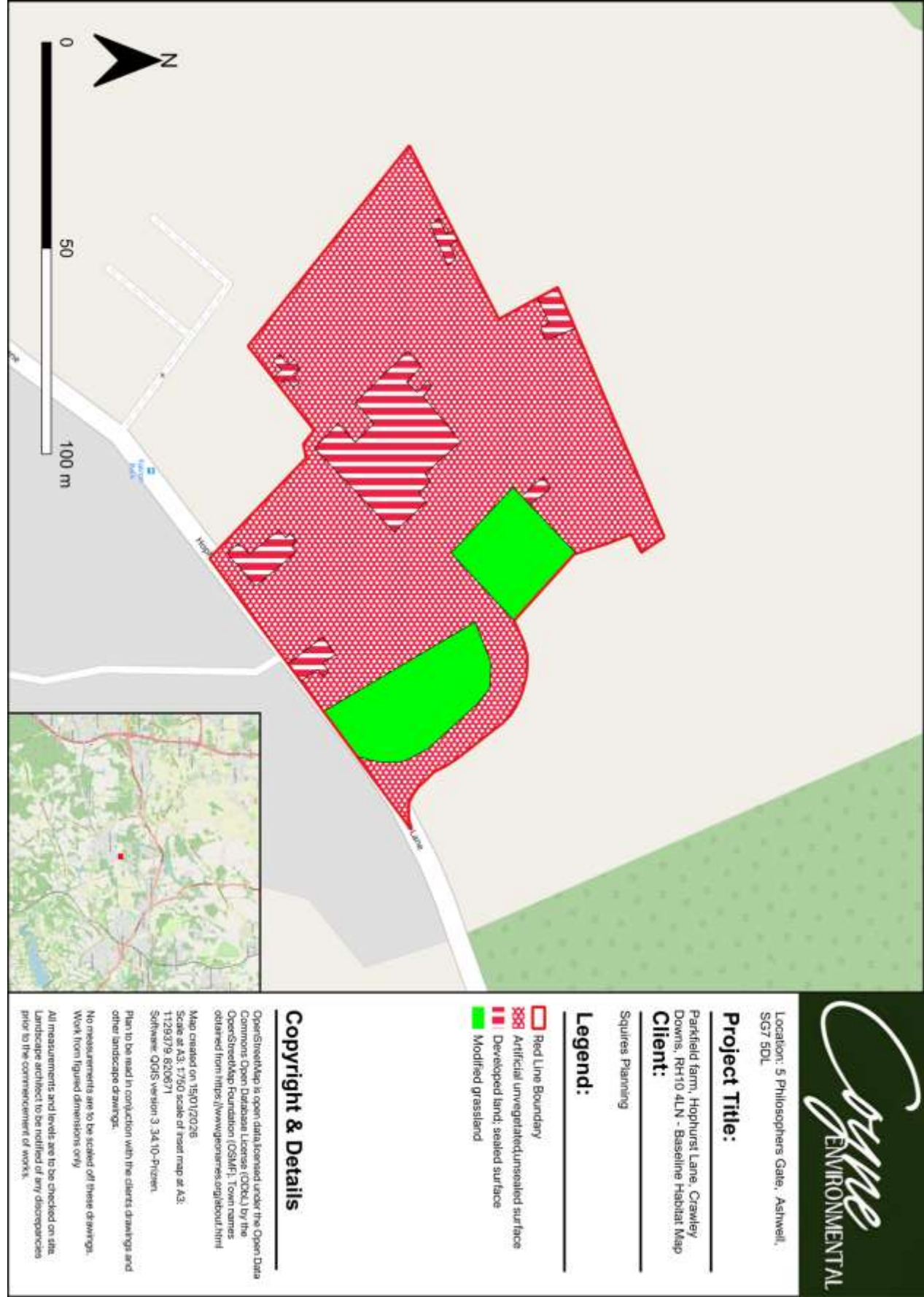
Photographic Gallery

Collins, J. (4th ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, BCT, London. ISBN-13 978-1-872745-

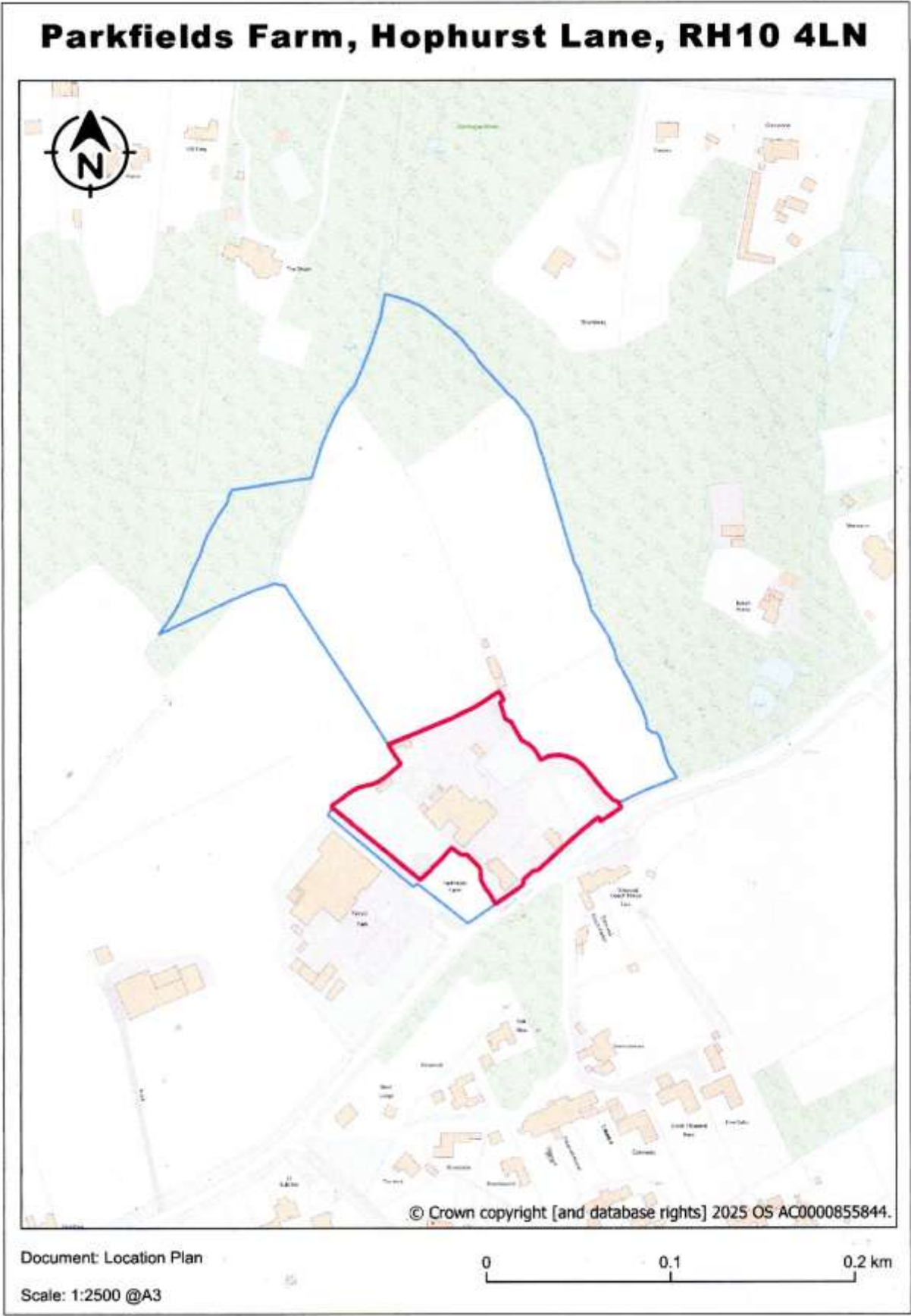
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (c. 69), available at:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

Environmental Act 2021 (c. 30), available at:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>

9 BASELINE HABITAT MAP



10 SITE MAP



11 PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY



