

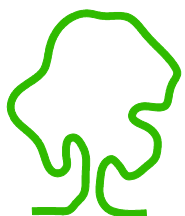
BENJAMIN ALLEN CONSTRUCTION LTD



TOWNHOUSE FARM, CHURCH LANE, ARDINGLY, RH17 6UR

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

January 2025



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Environmental Assessment Services Ltd

REPORT DATA SHEET

Requirement	Data
Report Reference	723b/BAC/TownhouseFarm/PEA
Date	January 2025
Client	Benjamin Allen Construction Ltd
Report type	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Purpose	Submission to Planning
Revisions	N/A
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PLOT 2, TOWNHOUSE FARM, CHURCH LANE, ARDINGLY, RH17 6UR

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

January 2025

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Environmental Assessment Services Ltd has been appointed to prepare a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in relation to the proposed redevelopment of Plot 2, Townhouse Farm, in Ardingly, West Sussex for residential use.

The site (as existing) comprises part of a farmyard associated with Townhouse Farm. The site, which has previously comprised of multiple agricultural buildings, has largely been cleared of buildings and hardstanding. It is proposed to develop the site for residential use (including plan alterations to a previously approved scheme) which is to include the provision of a single residential dwelling together with a number of outbuildings and a private garden.

The aim of this report is to collate preliminary, baseline information on the conservation and ecological status of the site in terms of habitats and species within the framework of current environmental legislation and provide recommendations in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the site, where appropriate.

The assessment comprises consultation with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre to obtain records of protected, rare, and notable species within 1 km of the site, consultation with Mid Sussex District Council regarding Tree Preservation Orders for trees within and adjacent to the site, review of previous ecological assessments, and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (walkover survey) undertaken on 9 January 2025 to identify features of ecological value and the site's likely potential to support protected and other notable species.

Consultation with Mid Sussex District Council has confirmed that there are no trees within or adjacent to the site which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Assessment of the site, along with a review of previous ecological reporting and updated consultation data provided by Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, found the site to be of generally low ecological value.

Recommendations for the protection of ecological features and species, and where appropriate, mitigation and compensation measures, have been made in relation to the hedgerow with associated drainage ditch and adjacent grassland to the south of the site, birds, bats, reptiles and amphibians (including great crested newt). Where protection, mitigation, and compensation measures are implemented, the potential impacts of the proposed development and future site use should have minimal impact on the biodiversity value of the site.

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PLOT 2, TOWNHOUSE FARM, CHURCH LANE, ARDINGLY, RH17 6UR

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

January 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The following report, prepared by Environmental Assessment Services Limited, is a preliminary assessment of the baseline status of the ecology of land at Townhouse Farm in Ardingly, West Sussex

The site comprises part of a former farmyard which has largely been cleared of buildings and hardstanding previously present within the site. As existing, the site comprises an area of sparsely vegetated and bare disturbed ground with some isolated areas of hard surfacing. The Ordnance Survey map reference for the centre of the site is TQ 33771 29351. See Appendix A for the Site Location and Existing Site Plans.

It is proposed to redevelop the site for residential use. The proposed development is to include the provision of a single residential dwelling together with several outbuildings (to include a home office, double garage, and a garden store), and a private driveway. A residential garden with soft landscaping areas is to be included within the redevelopment of the site. See Appendix B for the Proposed Site Plans.

1.2 Aim of the Report

The aim of the report is to collate preliminary, baseline information on the conservation and ecological status of the site in terms of habitats and species, within the framework of current environmental legislation.

The report also evaluates the potential of the site to support protected species, in particular for:

- Animals and plants listed under Schedules 1 and 5, and Schedule 8, respectively, of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) as amended, and those European protected species listed under Schedules 2 and 5 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
- Plants and animals with Red Data Book¹ or Notable² status.

¹ The World Conservation Union Red List of threatened species provides taxonomic, conservation status and distribution information on taxa (species or group of related species) evaluated to determine their relative risk of extinction.

² Notable (or Nationally Scarce) species occur in 16 – 100 10 km squares in Britain.

³ Species derived from Section 41 list of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 + the hen harrier.

- Plants, animals and habitats identified as Priority Species / Habitats or Species / Habitats of Principal Importance for Conservation in England (formerly UK Biodiversity Action Plan)³.

Where the site includes features of ecological value and/or has potential for protected species, an assessment of the likely impacts of the proposal is made, together with recommendations for any further surveying, mitigation and enhancement as considered appropriate.

1.3 Legislation

The legislation relevant to this study is:

- i. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which transposes into UK law the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (known as the “Bern Convention”) and the Birds Directive 2009.
- ii. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, which strengthens the legal protection for threatened species.
- iii. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, which through Section 41 provides a list of habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity conservation (Priority Habitats and Species) in England.
- iv. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. These consolidate all the various amendments made to the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, which transposed the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (EC Habitats Directive) into national law.
- v. Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which safeguards both the animals and their setts.
- vi. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (made under section 97 of The Environment Act 1995), which make provisions for the protection of important hedgerows.
- vii. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which makes requirements for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning system.

1.4 Assessment Method

This assessment has been prepared generally in accordance with the CIEEM EcIA guidelines, as applicable, as recognised by the British Standard on Biodiversity BS42020:2013.

The assessment was undertaken in two stages:

- a) Consultation and data review: comprising data searches by Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) and Mid Sussex District Council, and a review of previous ecological reporting prepared for the site.

b) Preliminary ecological appraisal (walkover survey) carried out on 9 January 2025 to:

- Assess the baseline status of the site.
- Identify its use by species of flora and fauna protected or controlled under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and associated European legislation.
- Identify notable features of interest that should or could be retained and/or enhanced as part of the proposals.

2. CONSULTATION AND BASELINE DATA SEARCH

2.1 Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre Data Search

2.1.1 Data obtained from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC) provided information on statutory and non-statutory designated sites and records of protected and notable species within the search area. The search was conducted for a 1 km radius surrounding the Ordnance Survey grid reference TQ 33771 29351. The search area was selected based on the scale and likely impacts of the proposed development.

2.1.2 The statutory and non-statutory designated sites identified by SxBRC within 1 km of the site are set out in section 3.2 below, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on these sites. Mitigation, where appropriate, is recommended in section 4.

2.1.3 Records of protected and rare species within 1 km of the site have been provided by SxBRC. These records are discussed under the protected species headings in Section 3.3 below, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on these species. Mitigation, where appropriate, is recommended in section 4.

2.2 Mid Sussex District Council

2.2.1 Online mapping provided by Mid Sussex District Council was used to identify Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and conservation areas within and adjacent to the site. The mapping was accessed on 7 January 2025. The mapping shows that there are no trees within or adjacent to the site which are protected by a TPO, however, the site does lie within the Ardingly (West) Conservation Area.

3. SITE ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (walkover survey) was carried out on 9 January 2025. The following is based on the findings of that assessment, together with a review of information provided by the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) and Mid Sussex District Council. Photographs taken during the site survey are provided in Appendix C.

3.1 Habitat Assessment

- 3.1.1 The site is located at the southern end of Church Lane which extends to the south from both Balcombe Lane and Street Lane to the west of Ardingly, West Sussex. The site is set within an area characterised by irregular shaped fields divided by well-established hedgerows, treelines, and parcels of woodland. Ardingly Reservoir lies to the west.
- 3.1.2 Land to the north and east of the site includes areas which have been developed for residential use which include large, detached dwellings together with areas of residential gardens and soft landscaping. Agricultural land lies to the south and west. Ardingly Reservoir lies approximately 450 m to the west of the site.
- 3.1.3 The site comprises part of a farmyard associated with Townhouse Farm. The site, which previously comprised multiple agricultural buildings, has largely been cleared of buildings and hardstanding. As existing, the site predominantly consists of sparsely vegetated and bare ground.
- 3.1.4 A small pile of rubble and a small mound of earth, together with some areas of the remaining hard surfacing, are all that remain of the previous development within the main area of the development plot. A larger vegetated earth mound is situated within a strip of grassland along the site's southern boundary, which is mainly to remain as existing. The southern boundary is marked by a hedgerow, in generally poor condition, comprising blackthorn, with an oak and ash tree, and associated drainage ditch.
- 3.1.5 The grassland, hedgerow with associated trees and drainage ditch, together with the vegetated mound to the east and emerging scrub to the west, are separated from the main development area by an existing access track. We understand that this track, and the habitat to the sound of the track is to remain as existing (i.e. they do not form part of the area being redeveloped but do lie within the redline boundary of the site). The impact assessment provided in section 3.3 below is based on this understanding. If this area is to be cleared and redeveloped, this report should be updated accordingly.

3.2 Designated Sites and Priority Habitats

- 3.2.1 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There is one statutory site within 1 km of the site. This is the Ardingly Reservoir Local Nature Reserve which lies approximately 380 m to the west of the site. There are no other statutory sites within 1 km of the study site. The Ardingly Reservoir & Loder Valley Nature Reserve is Local Wildlife Site, which is a non-statutory site and is situated approximately 380 m to the west of the site.
- 3.2.2 European sites include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). These, together with Ramsar sites, are protected for their ecological significance. Proposed developments should not adversely affect the integrity of European or Ramsar sites. Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA lies within Mid Sussex; with the site lying within the 7 km Zone of Influence as identified by Mid Sussex District Council. Residential Developments within 7 km of Ashdown Forest will be required to provide financial contribution towards both Suitable

Alternative Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation.

- 3.2.3 There will be no direct land take from any designated or non-designated sites as a result of the proposed development. Designated site habitat management will not be affected by the proposed development. The potential impact of the proposed development on feature species of the European and Ramsar sites (including lighting impacts) and invasive species is considered in Section 3.3 below.
- 3.2.4 The site has been assessed for its potential to include or be part of (BAP) Priority Habitats as listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006 (NERC Act).
- 3.2.5 Section 41 Habitats recorded within 1 km of the site include:
- Ancient or veteran tree
 - Open water
 - Ghyll woodland
 - Traditional orchard
 - Ancient woodland
 - Deciduous woodland
- 3.2.6 The site predominantly comprises areas of sparsely vegetated and bare ground, with no section 41 Habitats. Within the southern section of the site is a hedgerow with associated trees and drainage ditch. A pond lies immediately adjacent to the site, to the east. Other water features include Ardingly Reservoir which lies approximately 450 m to the west of the site, together with a number of other ponds which lie approximately 160 m to the northwest and 420 m to the east. Two areas of traditional orchard have been identified to the north of the site, together with a parcel of deciduous woodland to the east.

3.3 Protected and Controlled Species

3.3.1 *Trees and Hedgerows*

There are two trees present within the site. A mature/over mature oak and a young ash (no signs of Chalara), both form part of the hedgerow which is situated along the site's southern boundary. The hedgerow, which is approximately 30 m in length, predominantly comprises of blackthorn with some bramble present.

It is not thought likely that the proposed development of the site will adversely affect any of the existing trees or hedgerows within the site. The proposed residential dwellings and outbuildings all lie well outside the Root Protection Areas of the existing trees within the site.

No other trees are considered likely to be affected by the proposal. No recommendations have been given in relation to trees or hedgerows in this case.

3.3.2 *Plants*

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) hold records for 26 protected and/ rare flowering plants within 1 km of the site, together with two recorded ferns, five recorded liverworts, four recorded lichens, and 3 moss species.

The site consists of areas of bare ground which has become vegetated by a variety of common pioneer species. Species recorded during the site walkover assessment include willow herb, ragwort, mayweed, and self-heal (amongst others). A small, isolated parcel of grassland was identified along the site's southern boundary, adjacent to the hedgerow with trees. This grassland appeared to be species-poor with a similar composition of flowering plants identified within the main development area.

The main area of the site has formerly been absent of any flowering plants and comprised wholly of hardstanding with multiple agricultural buildings. It is only now that the site has been cleared (understood to be in August 2024) that opportunistic forbs have become established within the development area.

Given the history of the site, its redevelopment, which is to comprise of the provision of a residential dwelling together with a private garden and soft landscaping areas, will result in no significant loss of planting. The isolated area of grassland within the south of the site is to be retained.

No further botanical surveying is recommended in relation to the current proposal.

3.3.3 *Invertebrates*

Large blue butterfly, fisher's estuarine moth and lesser whirlpool ramshorn snail are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017. Other protected invertebrates are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Records held by SxBRC indicate the presence of 39 rare, notable, and protected invertebrate species within 1 km of the site. These include records for stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), purple emperor (*Apatura iris*), and silver-studded blue (*Plebejus argus*), all of which are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Prior to site clearance, the main body of the site proposed for redevelopment had negligible potential for invertebrates. The site, which now predominantly comprises sparsely vegetated and bare ground, is currently of low value to invertebrates, but improving as vegetation becomes established. Some features of greater value, which include the small parcel of grassland together with the adjacent hedgerow and trees present within the southern section of the site, are to be retained.

The proposed development, which is to include the provision of a residential dwelling together with several outbuildings and a private residential garden, is not thought likely to result in any significant loss of invertebrate habitat.

No further surveying is recommended in this case.

3.3.4 *Amphibians*

Great crested newts (GCN) and natterjack toads are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), making them a European Protected Species. It is an offence (amongst other things) to: deliberately capture, disturb, injure, or kill an individual of the species; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a resting or sheltering place. Meaning that both the individual and its habitat are protected.

According to the Mid Sussex District Council: Impact Risk Zones map (produced by Nature Space) the site appears to lie within the green/amber/red zone, indicating that the site lies within an area considered to offer moderately-highly suitable habitat for GCN (however, the mapping at the scale provided is difficult to read).

There are records of common toad, smooth newt and great crested newt within 1 km of the site. These include 12 records for great crested newt from surveying conducted in 2013 and a field observation in 2017, from a site approximately 800 m to the east and 130 m to the north of the site, respectively.

There are no water features within the site; however, there is a single pond immediately adjacent to the east of the site's southeastern boundary. Additionally, there are a number of other water bodies which may have potential to support GCN, common toad, and other amphibian species within 500 m of the site. The closest of these identified features is a pond situated 185 m to the north of the site. It should be noted that there may be additional unmapped garden ponds within the vicinity of the site.

The pond which is situated immediately to the east of the site's southeastern boundary was assessed during the site walkover. A GCN Habitat Suitability Index (HIS) assessment undertaken on this waterbody identified it as having good-excellent habitat suitability to support breeding GCN. Environmental eDNA testing of this waterbody was carried out by PJC Consultancy in May 2021. The results from this assessment were "Negative", which indicated that GCN were considered likely to be absent from the waterbody at the time of testing.

Prior to demolition the main body of the site was considered to have low potential for use by GCN. We understand the site was cleared last season. As existing the site has low, but improving potential as the cleared area becomes vegetated. There is a small residual rubble pile and a separate small pile of earth, both isolated on the cleared ground. Neither are considered likely to offer any significant foraging, shelter or hibernacula potential.

No ponds will be lost or damaged as part of the site's development. The main development area comprises sparsely vegetated and bare ground with some small rubble/earth mounds. In this case, the development is not considered likely to result in the loss of any amphibian habitat, however, precautionary measures should be implemented to further minimise the risk of harm to any individual, as GCN are known to be present within the wider area and therefore could enter the development area prior to or during development works. See section 4.

3.3.5 *Reptiles*

The more widespread reptiles: grass snake, slow-worm, viviparous lizard and adder, are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). It is an offence, amongst other things, to intentionally kill or injure any individual. The more restricted species: sand lizard and smooth snake, are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, making them European Protected Species.

SxBRC hold a total of three records for reptiles within 1 km of the site. These records are for grass snake (only). Of these records, the most recent is from 2017 and is situated approximately 650 m to the south of the site. It is thought that there is suitable habitat for the four more common reptile species, as mentioned above, within the wider area. A lack of records in this case is considered likely to be a result of under recording within the area rather than a lack of presence.

Prior to demolition and site clearance undertaken last season, the main body of the site was considered to have negligible potential for reptiles. The site, as existing, has low, but improving habitat potential, as vegetative cover will expand unless managed. Potential reptile habitat is limited to the southern boundary of the site, which includes a strip of unmanaged grassland, with a vegetated mound at the eastern end, scrub at the western end and a hedgerow with associated drainage ditch. This area is to be retained generally as existing, resulting in no overall loss of habitat, however, there is the potential for harm as reptiles are likely to be present within the wider area and may be put at risk during development works where precautionary protected measures are not implemented as part of the site's redevelopment. See section 4 for recommendations.

3.3.6 *Birds*

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by UK law. It is an offence to take, kill or injure any wild bird, or to take, damage or destroy any nest (whilst being built or in use) or egg of any wild bird under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In addition to this protection, those birds and their young listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) must not be disturbed at or near the nest. Part I birds are protected at all times and Part II during the closed season only.

A summary of the notable bird species recorded within 1 km of the site and their protection status was provided by SxBRC and has been reviewed as part of this assessment.

Prior to demolition the site was considered to be of low ecological value to birds and to have low potential for nesting birds. The site, as existing, is dominated by sparsely vegetated and bare ground also of low value for birds. Nesting features are limited to the hedgerow and trees along the southern boundary of the site which are to be retained.

The proposed development of the site, which is to include the provision of a residential dwelling together with several outbuilding and a private residential garden

area, is considered unlikely to have a significant impact on the local bird population. The two trees, together with the hedgerow within the south of the site, may be used for shelter, foraging, and nesting, and are to be retained under the current development plans for the site. No recommendations in relation to the redevelopment of the site are given in this case, however, standard precautionary measures should be implemented during future maintenance of the hedgerow and trees. See section 4.

3.3.7 *Bats*

All species of bat are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (meaning all species of bat are both UK and European Protected Species).

It is illegal to:

- Kill, injure or capture (take) bats.
- Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not).
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost.

Disturbance is unlawful where bats ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear/nurture their young, hibernate or migrate is impaired or where local distribution or abundance is significantly impacted. This may occur where actions impact their roosts, flight lines or foraging areas.

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre hold records for seven bat species within 1 km of the site. The site is set within an area which offers ideal habitat for bats. Comprising a mixture of agricultural land, woodland parcels and open water, all of which are connected via well-established treelines and hedgerows, the surrounding landscape has high ecological value for bats.

A bat survey conducted in 2023 within the nearby residential property Rocklands, situated approximately 270 m to the northeast of the site, identified both brown long-eared and common pipistrelle bats to be present.

Magic map (provided by Defra) has been used to identify granted European Protected Species Applications for bats within the local area. The closest granted application is for a site situated approximately 800 m to the east of the site.

Surveying for bats within the site has previously been conducted in September 2022 (by PJC Consultancy). The bat survey did not identify any emerging bats from the buildings which were previously present within the site. Bat activity was determined to be moderate with the majority of the activity being recorded within Plot 1, Townhouse Farm which is situated to the south of the site.

It is considered likely that bats, known to be present within the surrounding area, may use features within the southern extent of the site, which include a hedgerow and two trees, to navigate and forage through the local area. The two trees were observed from ground level and did not appear to offer any potential roosting habitat for bats. It is understood that the trees and hedgerow are to be retained under the current development plans for the site and the development will not encroach on the

hedgerow or trees. The proposed development is not considered likely to impact any roosting habitat. The remainder of the site, which comprises sparsely vegetated and bare ground, is thought to offer negligible potential for bats.

The development of the site, including the provision of a single residential dwellings, will involve the total loss of the existing sparsely vegetated and bare ground. All boundary planting within the southern section of the site along with the previously identified trees are to be retained. In this case, it is considered unlikely that the proposed development and future use of the site will have a significant impact on the local bat population, subject to the control of lighting. See recommendations in section 4 below.

3.3.8 *Badgers*

Badgers are protected in the UK under the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992 (as amended). It is an offence, amongst other things, to take, injure or kill a badger, or interfere with a badger sett (this includes intentionally or recklessly disturbing a badger when it is occupying a badger sett). To avoid committing an offence a permit must be obtained to damage, destroy, obstruct or disturb a badger when it is occupying a badger sett.

Records of badgers are restricted for their protection. The area surrounding the site is considered to have high potential for badgers.

A previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for the site (prepared by PJC Consultancy, September 2022) did not identify any setts within the site or within 30 m of the site boundaries.

During the current site walkover assessment, no evidence suggesting the presence of badgers, such as well-worn paths, signs of feeding behaviour (snuffle holes), or faecal waste, was identified within the site. It is not thought likely that badgers use the site or that there are any setts within 30 m of the site. No sett protection measures are indicated in this case.

3.3.9 *Common/Hazel Dormice*

The common (or hazel) dormouse is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, making common dormice a European Protected Species.

SxBRC hold a total of four records for hazel dormice within 1 km of the site. Surveying conducted in 2013 identified a nest approximately 540 m south southeast of the site.

The surrounding area, which consists of parcels of woodland within the vicinity of the site, may offer suitable habitat for dormice. Habitat with the potential to support hazel dormice is limited to the hedgerow and scrub along the southern boundary of the site. This habitat, which is divided from the main body of the site and development area by an access track, is to remain as existing. In this case, the development is to be limited to the current area of sparsely vegetated and bare

ground, not suitable for use by dormice. The development is not considered likely to impact this species. No further recommendations are given in this case.

3.3.10 *Other Protected and Notable Species*

SxBRC hold records for hedgehog, rabbit, and harvest mice within 1 km of the site. There are no other records of notable species considered likely to be impacted by the proposed development within 1 km of the site.

Records held by SxBRC for harvest mice identified this species to be present along the wooded area which flanks Ardingly Reservoir approximately 480 m to the southwest of the site. The development area which comprises predominantly of sparsely vegetated and bare ground does not offer suitable habitat for this species, hedgehog or rabbit. Hedgehog may use the hedgerow along the southern boundary of the site, but the feature is to remain as existing.

The proposed development of the site for a single residential property is not considered likely to impact the species that have been identified above.

3.3.11 *Non-native Invasive Species*

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) lists those non-native species that are established in the wild, but which pose a conservation threat to native biodiversity and habitats. Schedule 9 aims to regulate further release of these species by making it a criminal offence to release them into the wild.

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre hold records for 13 animal and nine plant Schedule 9 species within 1 km of the site. Additionally, a further four animal, four flowering plant and one moss Sussex invasive species have been recorded within 1 km of the site.

Buddleia, a non-native invasive species was identified throughout the site. This is not a Schedule 9 species but should be appropriately dealt with to prevent its further spread. See section 4 below for recommendations.

4. MITIGATION

The preliminary ecological appraisal identified some features of ecological value and habitat types that could support protected species within and adjacent to the site for which mitigation is recommended.

4.1 **Tree and Hedgerows**

The site's ecological value is limited to the hedgerow with associated trees and drainage ditch, together within the adjacent strip of grassland which lies to the south of the existing access track. The existing access track divides the main development area from this habitat, which has the potential to support protected species, as mentioned above.

Where this habitat is excluded from the development zone, which may be achieved through the retention of the existing Haras fencing that has been installed on site, these habitat features may be retained as existing, protecting the ecological value of the site.

4.2 Birds

All existing trees and hedging are to be retained. Any future works on trees and hedging, such as maintenance cutting, should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (February – August inclusive).

Roosting/nesting provision should be included within the site. This may be in the form of nesting boxes provided within the site post development.

4.3 Bats

The proposed development, which is to include the provision of a single residential dwelling, is thought likely to lead to the creation of additional lighting within the site. As a result, a lighting plan to minimise and avoid any light spill onto important features and flight lines (in this case, site boundary vegetation) likely to be used by bats should be agreed with the Council.

4.4 Amphibians and Reptiles

Whilst proposed development is considered unlikely to result in the loss of any significant amphibian and/or reptile habitat, amphibians and reptiles, including GCN are known to be present within the wider area. Following clearance of the site, the available habitat is considered likely to begin to improve for these species. It is therefore recommended that protection measures will be required to avoid impacting any individual during future site preparation and development works.

Protection measures should be agreed with Mid Sussex District Council/Nature Space. Where it is deemed that appropriate protection can be secured to avoid impacting GCN, a licence may not be required. Mitigation measures should include (but not be limited to) the following:

- i. Exclusion of the habitat adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, up to the southern side of the existing access track, from the active development area. This includes the grassland, vegetated mound, emerging scrub, hedgerow and drainage ditch habitat as mentioned in section 4.1 above.
- ii. If development is delayed, the site should be reassessed. To avoid the ecological enhancement of the site for reptiles and amphibians, vegetative growth should be managed / removed, together with the residual rubble and earth mound during the active season.
- iii. Should any amphibians or reptiles be encountered during any stage of the proposed development, work should stop, and advice/assistance should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

- iv. Materials associated with the development should be stored within an appropriate location, avoiding the vegetated boundaries of the site considered to have higher potential for use by amphibians and reptiles.

Where appropriate exclusion and precaution protection measures are not / cannot be implemented, a licence for the potential disturbance to GCN may be required. District Level GCN Licensing is offered by Nature Space within this area. This is likely to be the preferred option where required. Alternatively, further surveying and impact assessment would be required to obtain a licence from Natural England.

Post development site use is considered likely to increase the ecological value of the site for both amphibians and reptiles.

4.5 Non-native Invasive Species

Buddleia has been identified within the site. All non-native invasive species should be appropriately dealt with to restrict their spread into the wild.

4.6 Other Protected and Notable Species

If any new evidence of protected species is discovered whilst construction work is in progress, Natural England should be informed immediately and appropriate advice on how to deal with the situation should be sought from a qualified ecologist.

5. ENHANCEMENT

- 5.1 Some ecological enhancement should be included within the development site to secure biodiversity improvement beyond that of the existing site. The following recommendations are given:
 - i. The planting schedule and ecological enhancements (which include features for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and bats, and other protected species) should be implemented within the site as detailed within the Proposed Landscape Plan (Drawing no. PJC.1322.002) produced by PJC Consultance (October 2024).

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The site comprises part of a farmyard associated with Townhouse Farm. The site, which has previously comprised of multiple agricultural buildings, has largely been cleared of buildings and hardstanding. As existing, the site predominantly consists of sparsely vegetated and bare ground together with some areas of the remaining hard surfacing. The main body of the site is considered to be of low ecological value.
- 6.2 The site's existing ecological value is limited to the existing hedgerow (which is in poor condition) with associated trees and drainage ditch, together with the adjacent strip of grassland with a vegetated mound at the eastern end and developing scrub to the west, all located to the south of an existing access track. The track divides the main body of the development area from this habitat which is to be retained as existing. Where this habitat is excluded from the active development zone, which

may easily be achieved through the retention of the existing Haras fencing, the proposed development is considered unlikely to have any significant impact on the ecological value of the site or protected species. Where habitat enhancement measures, as recommended by PJC are implemented as part of the site's redevelopment, it is considered that the ecological value of the site will be enhanced/improved (i.e. net gain will be achieved).

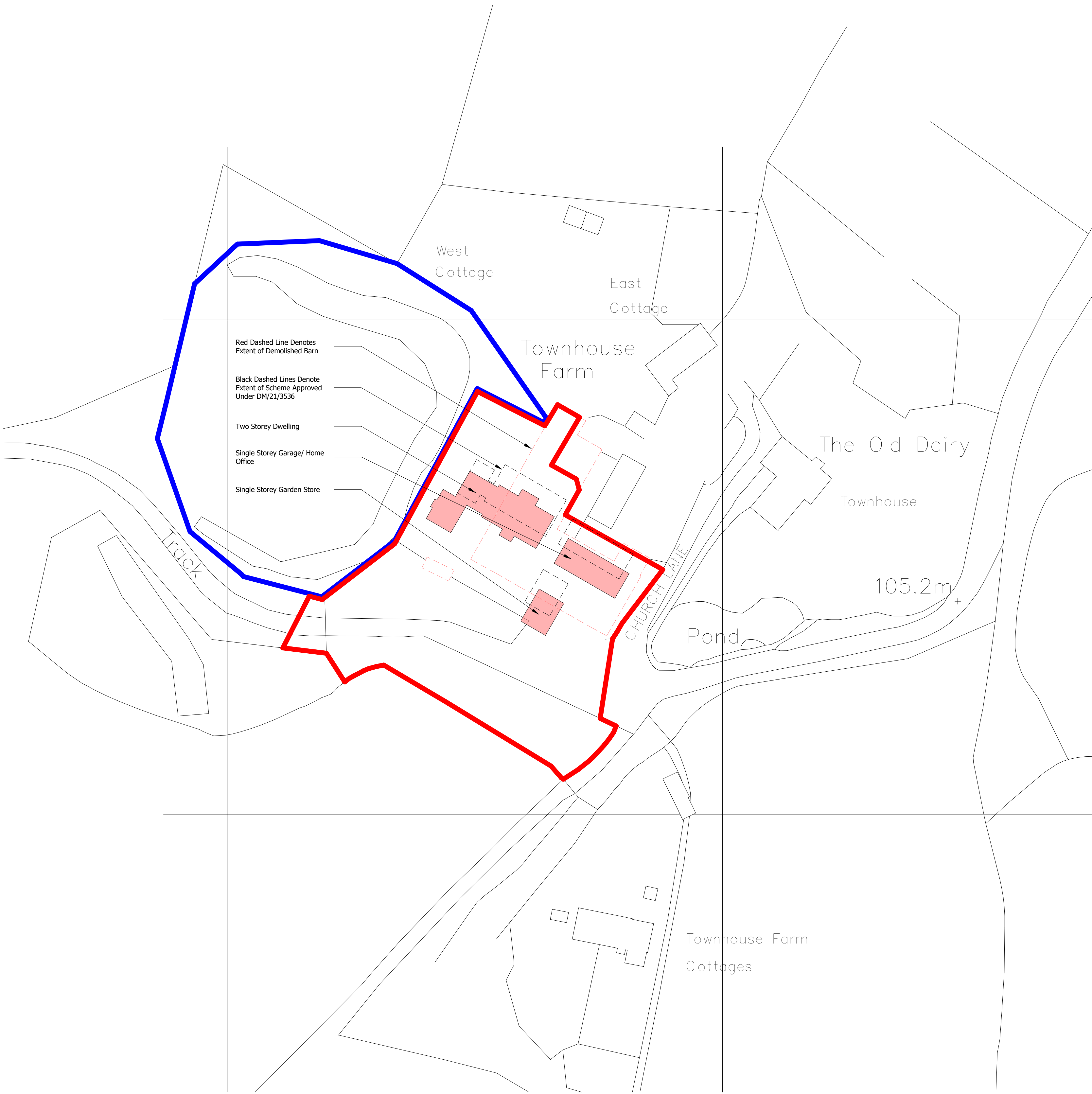
- 6.3 Mitigation recommendations are limited to precautionary protection measures, which have been given in relation to the following species:
- Amphibians – Protection measures required.
 - Reptiles – Protection measures required.
 - Birds – Protection measures required.
 - Bats – Protection measures required.
 - Non-native Invasive Species - Avoidance measures required.
- 6.4 The proposed development is not considered likely to have a significant impact on European (SPA and SAC) or Ramsar sites, or wildlife associated with these sites.
- 6.5 Should any new information come to light at any time, advice should be sought, and this report be updated.
- 6.6 It is noted that planning permission for development does not provide a defence against the prosecution relating to protected species. Should any protected species be identified before, or during the development, all works should cease, and a suitably qualified/experienced ecologist should be contacted for advice.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

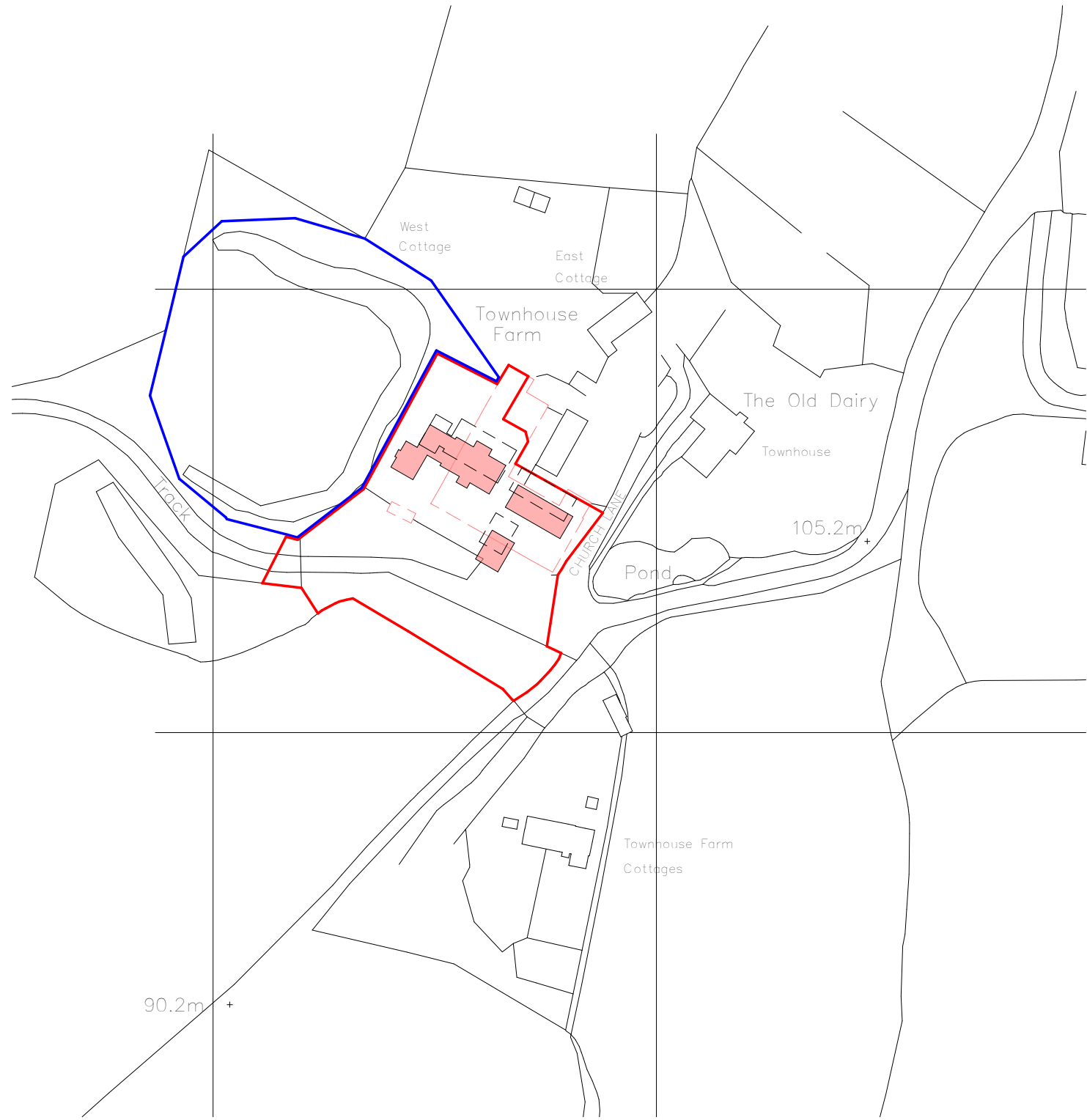
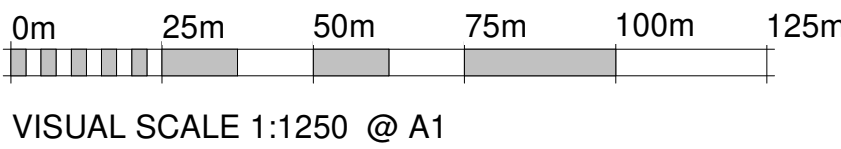
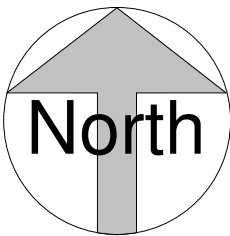
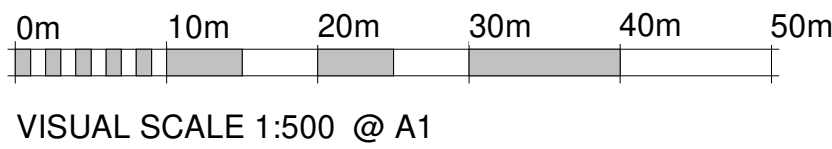
APPENDIX A

Site Location and Existing Site Plans

DRAFT -
REV C
10.10.24



Site Plan
1 : 500



Location Plan
1 : 1250

REV.	DATE.	BY.	AMENDMENT.
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PLANNING

NOTES:
DO NOT SCALE OFF THIS DRAWING UNLESS FOR PLANNING PURPOSES.
CHECK ALL DIMENSIONS ON SITE BEFORE ANY WORK IS COMMENCED.
ALL GOODS MATERIALS AND WORKMANSHIP MUST CONFORM WITH CURRENT BUILDING REGULATIONS, BRITISH STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE.
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Mr A. Dawson - Benjamin Allen
PROJECT.
Plot 2 Townhouse Farm, Church Lane, Ardingly, RH17 6UR

DRAWING.
Site and Location Plan - As Proposed

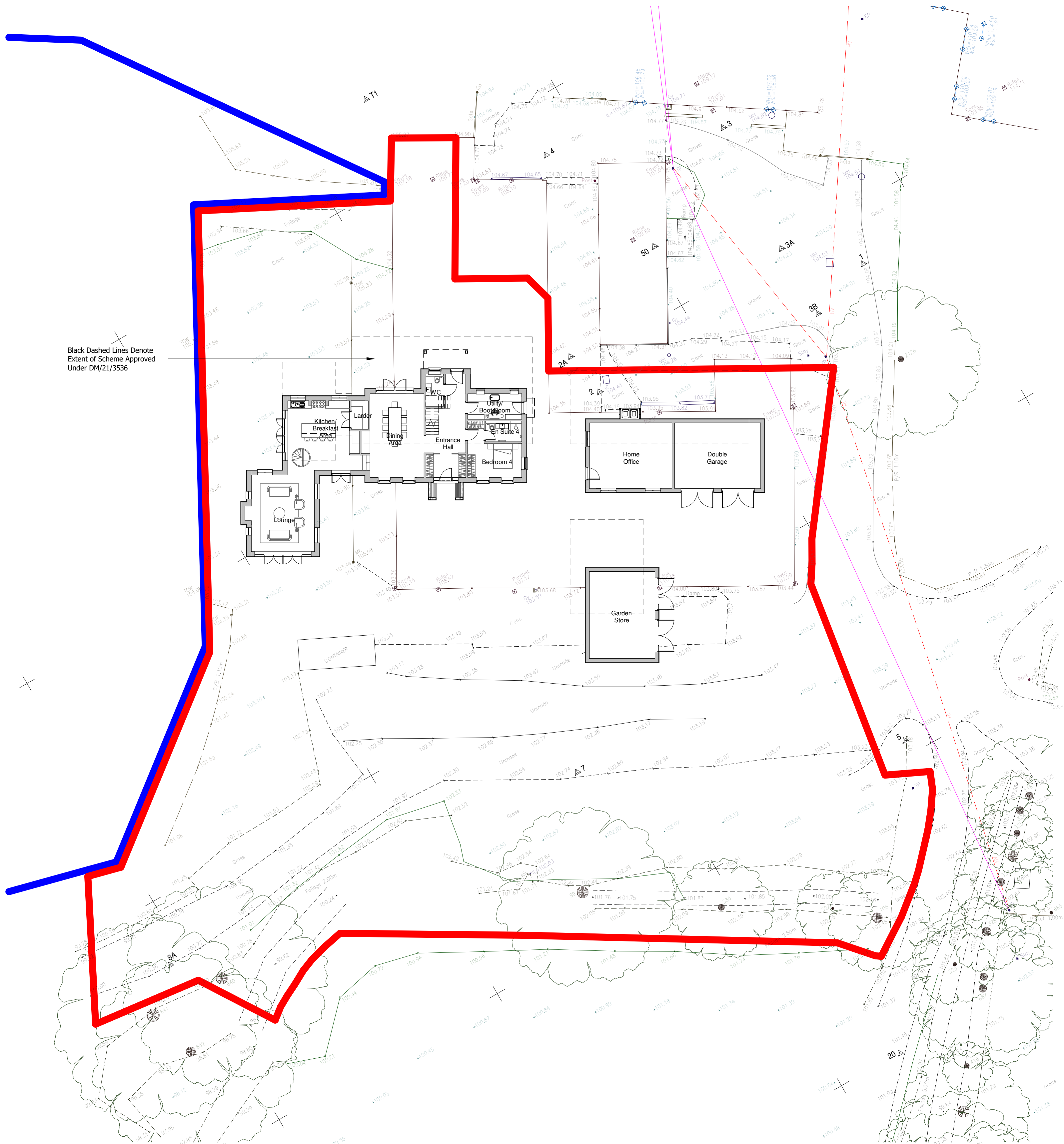
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APPENDIX B

Proposed Site Plans

DRAFT -
REV C
10.10.24



APPENDIX C

Photographs



Photograph 1:

The site has largely been cleared of buildings and hardstanding and now predominantly comprises sparsely vegetated bare ground.



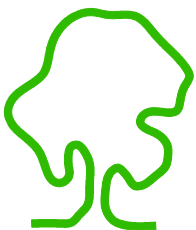
Photograph 2:

Earth/rubble mounds can be found throughout the site.



Photograph 3:

There are no water features within the site; however, there is a single pond immediately adjacent to the east of the site's southeastern boundary.



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