

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Ashworth Valley Scout Camp

Ashworth Valley, Rochdale

February 2026

Prepared for: Ashworth Valley Scout Camp

Report prepared by: Verity Webster BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol CMIEEM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 15th January 2026 a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken on land at Ashworth Valley Scout Camp. The site comprises an area of modified grassland adjacent to the north of Jowkin Wood, an area of Ancient Woodland.

Ashworth Valley SBI

- Reasonable avoidance measures are recommended to take into consideration the proximity of the Site of Biological Interest. In particular precautions will be taken to prevent unnecessary damage to the woodland and accidental run-off of pollutants during works.

Avoidance mitigation for protected species

- Reasonable avoidance measures are recommended to take into consideration the potential presence in the locality of badger, amphibians including great crested newt and common toad, reptiles, nesting birds and hedgehog.
- Avoidance mitigation is proposed to minimise the risk of indirect disturbance to commuting and foraging bats; a 5m buffer between the wooden tents and woodland is proposed, whilst a 2m buffer between the hedgerows and wooden tents is proposed. This will ensure a dark corridor is retained.

Enhancement

- As part of the proposals and to support the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain, an area of woodland will be planted adjacent to the existing Ancient Woodland and SBI. This will provide extension of the habitat as well as a buffer to the campsite and will meet the needs of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- The proposals provide the opportunity to ensure the retention of functionality of the site for nesting birds, roosting bats and hedgehog and recommendations for this have been made including installation of bird and bat boxes. These can be constructed by hand.

Verity Webster

Ecology and Protected Species Consultancy

1 Introduction

1.1 Application Site

- 1.1.1. This report details a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Ashworth Valley Scout Camp, Ashworth Valley, Rochdale, OL11 5UP. Ordnance Survey grid reference (centre of site): SD84811273.
- 1.1.2. Ashworth Valley Scout Camp commissioned Verity Webster Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to inform proposals for the site.

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are to determine:
- The potential for protected species and/or habitats of importance within and surrounding the site.
 - The presence of any designated sites within the surrounding area, or if the site is designated.
 - How the proposed works might impact protected species and/or habitats of importance.
 - How the proposed works might impact designated sites within the surrounding area.
 - How any impacts might be avoided, mitigated and/or ameliorated, including recommendations for further survey work if required.
 - Potential for enhancement of the site for protected species, habitats of conservation interest and overall biodiversity.

1.3 Proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposals comprise the construction of four wooden tents and a round house on an area of modified grassland.

1.4 Ecologist

- 1.4.1 The Ecological Assessment was undertaken by Verity Webster. Verity is a Chartered Ecologist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. She has botanical skills FISC Level 4, Class 2 bat licence and Class 1 great crested newt licence.
- 1.4.2 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant for over 19 years. She has undertaken Ecological Assessments and protected species surveys for a large variety of projects and schemes, producing the required impact assessment and subsequent mitigation schemes and method statements when necessary.

2 Site Location and Description

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The survey site is located in Ashworth Valley, approximately 900m north of Hooley Bridge on the northern outskirts of Heywood, Rochdale. Bury and Rochdale Old Road runs east to west approximately 660m to the south. Woodland is extensive in the area, running north up Ashworth Valley, splitting into a 'V' along two waterway corridors; Norden Brook, which runs roughly north to south, and Cheesden Brook, which weaves northwest to southeast. The rivers run through steep-sided valleys of woodland. The River Roch weaves east to west approximately 800m to the south and these waterways discharge into the river.
- 2.1.2 Ashworth Road runs north between the woodland plots and lies approximately 200m east of the survey site. Between the areas of woodland in the centre of the 'V' and either side there is open landscape composed largely of grazed pasture.
- 2.1.3 Ashworth Valley lies adjacent to the north of the arm of woodland through which Cheesden Brook runs.
- 2.1.4 The adjacent woodland and the plots of woodland connected through a wider area of the valley and along the River Roch is classified as Ancient Woodland.
- 2.1.5 The survey site is in an area with high suitability for wildlife. See Figures 1 and 2.

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The survey site is part of the wider Ashworth Valley Scout Camp. The land encompasses a roughly rectangular plot of modified grassland adjacent to an area of ancient woodland that slopes south to Cheesden Brook. The site is continuous with open, managed modified grassland to the east. The north and western boundaries are bounded by hedgerows.
- 2.2.2 There is an area of bare ground, previously disturbed adjacent to the woodland with two small ash and one medium oak present.
- 2.2.3 See UK Habitat Classification Plan, Figure 4.



Looking north across the survey site

Figure 1: Ordnance survey map showing the location of the Survey Site

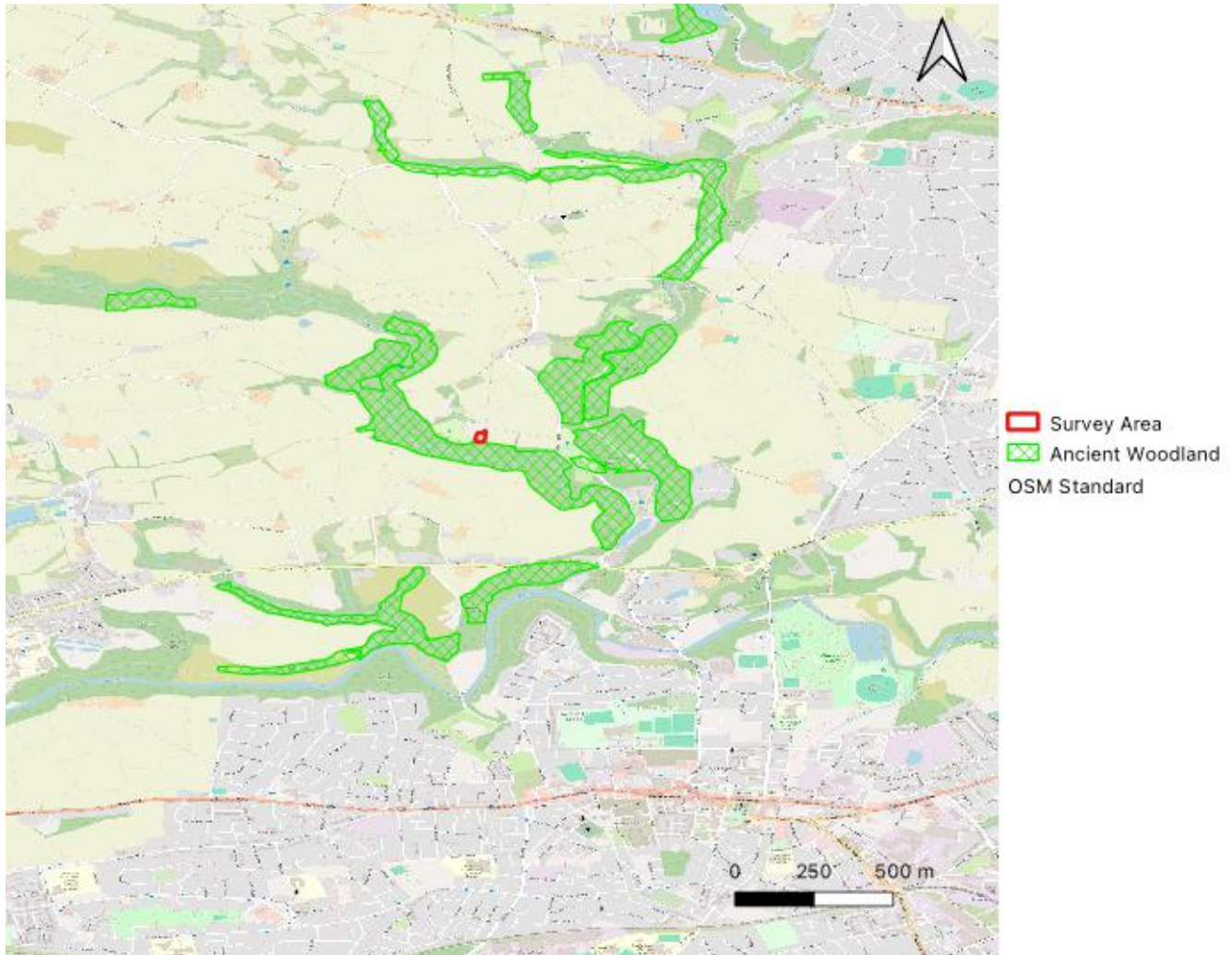
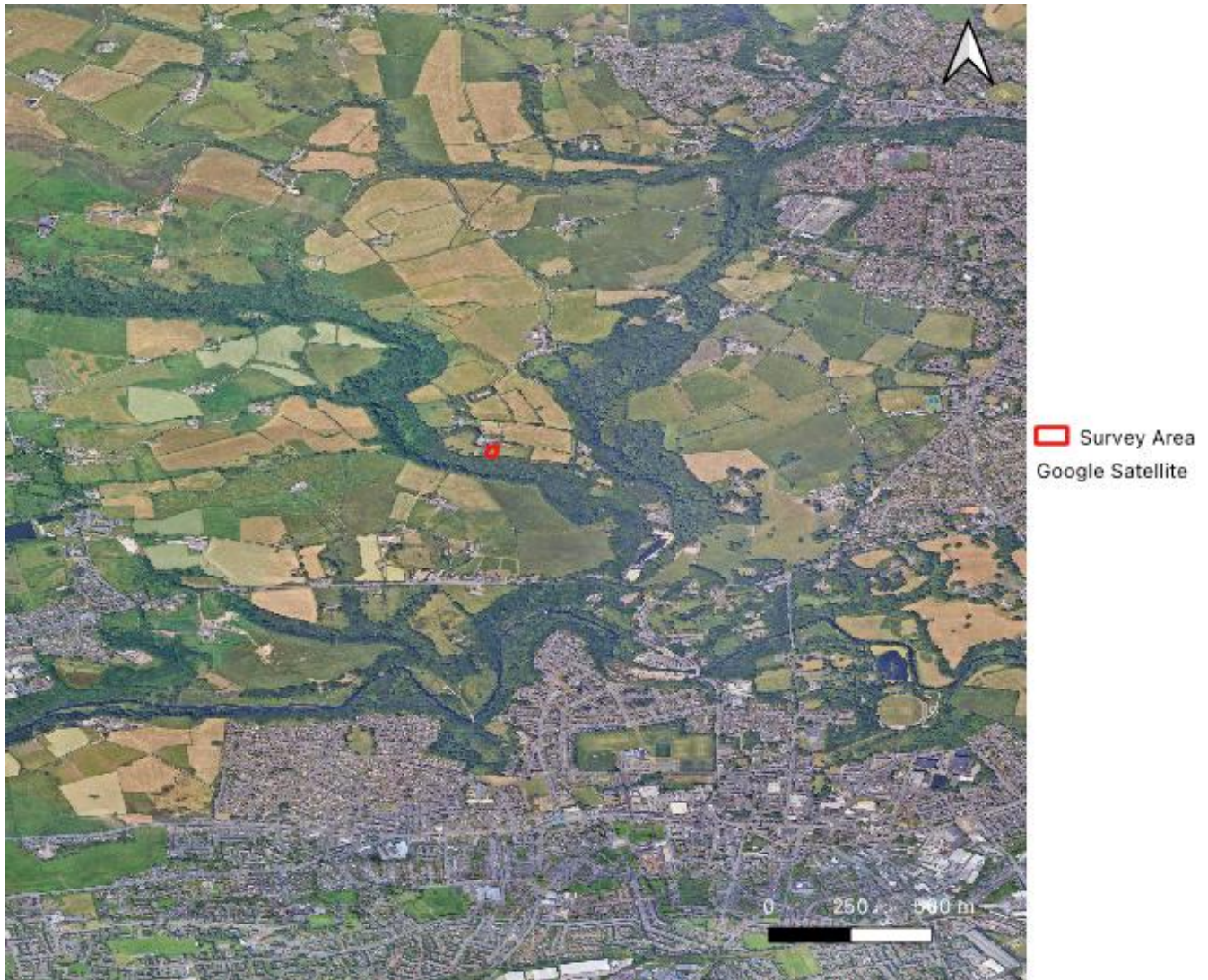


Figure 2: Aerial image showing the Survey Site and immediate surroundings



3 Legislation

Relevant legislation is listed here. For full details, refer to Appendix A.

3.1 Bats

3.1.1 All UK bats receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are also protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regs).

3.1.2 This makes it an offence to:

- Capture, injure or kill any bat,
- Disturb a bat of any species,
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat (ie. The roost)
- Possess any bat, or part of a bat
- Offer for sale or trade any bat, or part of a bat

3.2 Badger

3.2.1 Under the Badger Act 1992, it is an offence to:

- Take, injure or kill a badger, or attempt to do so
- Cruelly ill-treat a badger
- Interfere with a badger sett including:
 - Damaging a badger sett or any part of it
 - Destroying a sett
 - Obstructing access to, or entry to a sett
 - Causing a dog to enter a sett; or
 - Disturbing a badger whilst it is occupying a sett.

3.3 Reptiles

3.3.1 Smooth snake and sand lizard receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are also protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regs).

3.3.2 This makes it an offence to:

- Capture, injure or kill one of these species,
- Disturb these species,
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of these species.
- Possess one of these species, or part of one
- Offer for sale or trade one of these species, or part of one

3.3.3 Common lizard, adder, grass snake and slow-worm are partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This makes it an offence to:

- Kill or injure one of these species.
- Offer for sale or trade one of these species, or part of these animals.

3.4 Amphibians

3.4.1 Great crested newts receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are also protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regs).

3.4.2 This makes it an offence to:

- Capture, injure or kill one of these species,
- Disturb these species,
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of these species.

- Possess a great crested newt, or part of this animal
- Offer for sale or trade a great crested newt, or part of this animal.

3.4.3 Common lizard, adder, grass snake and slow-worm are partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This makes it an offence to:

- Kill or injure one of these species.
- Offer for sale or trade one of these species, or part of these animals.

3.4.4 Common toad, common frog, palmate newt and smooth newt are protected from sale or trade only.

3.5 Barn Owl

3.5.1 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive) in Great Britain (NB Council Directive 79/409/EEC has now been replaced by Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version)).

3.5.2 The Act makes it an offence (with exception to species listed in Schedule 2) to intentionally:

- kill, injure, or take any wild bird,
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built (also [take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird included in Schedule ZA1] under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 Birds

3.5.3 In addition to the above, special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1. Barn owl is included on this schedule.

3.5.4 It is an offence to disturb any Schedule 1 bird at the nest, or to disturb their dependent young.

3.6 Section 41 Habitats and Species of Principal Importance

3.6.1 Section 41 Habitats and Species of Principal Importance (NERC Act 2006) are a material consideration for planners. The list is derived from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list and supports species and habitats of conservation concern.

3.6.2 Species relevant to this report include hedgehog and common toad.

3.7 Designated Sites

3.7.1 Sites of conservation interest can be designated on a statutory or non-statutory basis.

3.7.2 Statutory sites can be designated under UK legislation (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), European Law (the Habitats Regulations 2017) or International law (Ramsar Convention).

3.7.3 Non-statutory sites can be designated by the Local Planning Authority, and different counties have different ways of designating local wildlife sites. Examples are Local Wildlife Sites and Biological Heritage Sites.

3.8 Planning Policy and Legislation

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.8.1 In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This is referred to as biodiversity net gain in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.
- 3.8.2 Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective. This objective is to deliver at least a 10% increase in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of the development granted permission. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits (Gov.Uk Biodiversity Net Gain, 2023).

The NERC Act, 2006

- 3.8.3 Under the NERC Act 2006, planning authorities are obliged to make sure that they have all the information on the presence of protected species on site before they make a decision on the planning permission.
- 3.8.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) encourages Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This was updated in December 2023.

Chapter 15, Para 180 of NPPF states: *"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) ***protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils....***
- d) ***minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures"***.

Para 181 states: *"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."*

Para 185 identifies that plans should do the following to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity:

- a) ***"Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and***
- b) ***Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and peruse opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."***

Para 186 states that *"when determining planning applications, local authorities should apply the following principles:*

- a) ***if significant harm to biodiversity from a development cannot be avoided...,adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused"***

- 3.8.5 The local planning authority has a responsibility, therefore, to obtain all information regarding the potential for protected species on a site prior to making a decision about a proposal.

4 Survey Methodology

4.1 Desk Study

- 4.1.1 The following data sources used to establish background information about protected species and their likely presence in the locality:
- Magic Map, Natural England (2018)
 - Bing Maps (2019)
 - Biological Records Data from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) (2026)
- 4.1.2 Online mapping facilities, including MAGIC (Defra 2015), Google earth (for aerial mapping) and Ordnance Survey maps for the area were consulted to assess the site in relation to the surrounding landscape and any statutory and non-statutory designated sites.
- 4.1.3 Records data from GMEU includes records of protected species and habitats of conservation interest within 1km of the survey site.

4.2 Site Survey

- 4.2.1 The survey site was walked in daylight 15th January 2026, and during the visits the habitat was assessed for potential for protected species. The surveyor searched for signs of the presence of protected species where appropriate, including pathways, burrows / nests / resting places, scratch markings, footprints and droppings etc. The presence of all animals and birds, if seen or heard, was recorded.
- 4.2.2 Habitats on site were assessed and described in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UK Hab Ltd, 2023) and a list of conspicuous species recorded.
- 4.2.3 Consideration is also given to the surrounding landscape with respect to protected species including badger, bats, birds, amphibians and reptiles.

Ground Level Tree Assessment

- 4.2.4 As part of the daytime bat walkover a ground level assessment of the trees to record Potential Roost Features (PRFs) was undertaken if the trees have been identified as likely to be impacted by the proposals.

4.3 Survey Limitations

- 4.3.1 The survey work was undertaken in January 2026. At this time of year species such as bats, reptiles and amphibians are in hibernation or dormant, although an assessment of the likelihood of presence is based upon the habitat present and not sightings of animals.
- 4.3.2 A proportion of higher plants are visible in January, but some species are more conspicuous or only present at certain times of the year, and some species may have been missed. The species list constructed is not comprehensive, but given the habitat types expected, is sufficient to inform the appropriate habitat categorisation and recommendations for mitigation in this case.

5 Findings: Surrounding Designated Sites

- 5.0.1 Sites of conservation interest can be designated on a statutory or non-statutory basis.
- 5.0.2 The protection over European designated sites (or Natura 2000) sites and Ramsar sites require any potential direct and indirect impacts are assessed within at least a 5km radius of the survey site.
- 5.0.3 The protection over UK statutory sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves) requires that any potential direct and indirect impacts from a development are assessed within at least a 2km radius of the survey site.
- 5.0.4 Any potential direct or indirect impacts upon non-statutory sites are assessed within 1km of the survey site.

5.1 Statutory Sites

- 5.1.1 The protection over UK statutory sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) requires that any potential direct and indirect impacts from a development are assessed within at least a 2km radius of the survey site, whilst the protection over European designated sites (or Natura 2000) sites and Ramsar sites require any potential direct and indirect impacts are assessed within at least a 5km radius of the survey site.

- 5.1.2 There is one EU Statutory designated sites within 5km:

- **Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**, also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Rochdale Canal is located approximately 4km southeast of the survey site.

The Rochdale Canal SAC is designated for the presence of one Annex II species; floating water-plantain (*Luronium natans*).

The SSSI citation describes a diverse aquatic flora including a notable assemblage of pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) as well as other flora. The invertebrate assemblage is also notable including a scarce water beetle and the pea mussel (*Pisidium pulchellum*).

- 5.1.3 There are no UK statutory designated sites within 2km.

5.2 Non-Statutory Sites

5.2.1 There are two non-statutory Sites of Biological Importance within the 1km search area.

- **Naden Brook SBI:** This comprises the arm of the woodland running north along Naden Brook, approximately 250m to the east of the survey site at the closest point.

Naden brook is an area of broadleaved semi-natural woodland with some scrub, acid grassland and neutral grassland, and of course, the brook.

- **Ashworth Valley SBI:** This site encompasses the western arm of the wooded valley following the path of Cheesden Brook and adjacent to the south of the survey site.

Ashworth Valley is an area of broadleaved semi-natural woodland with Cheesden Brook. The composition, as surveyed within 100m of the survey site is sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), birch (*Betula* sp.) and occasional beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) with understorey of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and sparse bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). The ground flora is sparse with fern (*Dryopteris* spp.), wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) and creeping soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*) and mats of the moss *Thuidium tamariscinum*. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is likely present, though not conspicuous at this time of year.

5.3 Assessment of Impact

Statutory Designated Sites

5.3.1 The Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI is 4km away from the survey site and is not directly connected by the waterways. Any direct or indirect impact is considered highly unlikely. No further survey work or mitigation is considered necessary.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

5.3.2 Ashworth Valley SBI, the Ancient Woodland lies adjacent to the south of the survey site.

5.3.3 No direct impacts are anticipated. However, reasonable avoidance measures will be undertaken to prevent accidental damage such as run-off of pollutants and damage by construction vehicles.

5.3.4 There is no risk of permanent alteration to water quality of Cheesden Brook as the wooden tents and roundhouse do not require additional wastewater discharge.

5.3.5 Enhancement measures will comprise planting of woodland in an area to the south of the proposed development zone on the boundary of the woodland, extending the area of the woodland providing a buffer from the camp site that will filter noise and excess rainwater from the field.

5.3.6 This will support the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) measures for

Jawkin wood and adjacent habitat, which include to:

- Safeguard, restore and build resilience in woodlands, hedgerows trees and scrub
- Expand existing woodland, scrub and fringe habitat.

- 5.3.7 The Naden Brook SBI is sufficiently distanced from the survey site that any indirect impacts are negligible.

Statutory Site Designations

Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Special Areas of Conservation are areas of land designated under the EU's Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. The sites are designated on the basis of the presence of Annex I and II habitats or species of conservation interest.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the land notified as an SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), as amended. SSSI are designated for wildlife and natural features (including geological features) in England. They support characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features.

Non-Statutory Sites Designations

Sites of Biological Importance (SBI): Sites of Biological Importance are 'Local Wildlife Sites' in Greater Manchester. They are identified within the county using a set of published guidelines. Their selection is based on the most important, distinctive and threatened species and habitats within a national, regional and local context. Local Wildlife Sites are locally valuable areas and are often corridors for wildlife forming key components of ecological networks. They are non-statutory designations, but are a material consideration within the planning process.

Figure 3: The Survey Site in relation to Ashworth Valley SBI

6 Findings: Habitat Survey

6.1 Habitat Assessment

Data Search

- 6.1.1 Data from GMLRC does not include any records of plant species. This does not mean that species of conservation interest are not present in the area, but is a reflection of the absence of recorders in the locality. The citation Ashworth Valley SBI includes records for bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). Bluebell is Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. It is associated with woodlands and hedgerows and is likely to be present within adjacent woodland, but not expected within the survey site.

Survey Site

- 6.1.2 The site comprises a roughly rectangular area of regularly mown modified grassland adjacent to the north of broadleaved woodland. There is an area of bare, disturbed ground adjacent to the woodland and three individual trees.
- 6.1.3 The UK Habitat classifications are as follows:
- g4 108 Modified grassland; regularly mown.
 - g4 16 Tall forb
 - g4 510 524 Bare ground with invasive non-native species
 - w1 200 Individual rural trees
- 6.1.4 Refer to the UK Habitat Classification Plan (Figure 4) below.
- 6.1.5 Hedgerows are present along the north and west boundary but are outside the red line boundary for purposes of Biodiversity Net Gain.

Modified grassland g4 108

- 6.1.6 The grassland is regularly mown and as a result is species poor. The stand comprises rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) with Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and rare creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

Tall Forb g4 16

- 6.1.7 There is a small patch of tall forb so the south comprising Yorkshire fog and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) with creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), sparse bramble and creeping buttercup. The mosses *Eurinchium praelongum* and *Brachythecium rutabulum* are present but sparse.

Bare ground with invasive non-native species w1 510 524

- 6.1.8 This area is adjacent to the woodland and slopes down a bank from the mown grassland. It has been used to store removed vegetation. The ground is bare, but the stems of Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens grandiflora*) are evident, and this species is likely to grow up in spring.

Individual trees w1 200

- 6.1.9 Although close to the woodland, three trees are present within the area of bare ground and outside the fence line that denotes the woodland boundary. These comprise two small ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and one medium sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*).

Assessment

- 6.1.10 The habitat on site is common and widespread and is not considered to be of conservation value.
- 6.1.11 Overall, the proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant negative impacts upon flora in the locality .



Bare ground covered in debris and stems of Himalayan balsam and showing the small individual rural trees



Small area of tall forb



Regularly mown modified grassland

Figure 4: The Survey Site – UK Habitat Classification Plan



7 Findings: Protected Species

Mammals

7.1 Bats

Potential for Bats

- 7.1.1.1 At a landscape level, the area surrounding the survey site is very good for bats. Refer to Figure 2.
- 7.1.1.2 The surrounding habitat including grazed pasture, woodland, waterways and waterbodies will support a variety of bat species including widespread species such as common and soprano pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* respectively). Species that favour open habitats such as Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) would also be expected. Species that favour wooded habitat, such as brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) and Brandt's bat (*Myotis brandtii*) are also likely to be present as there is extensive woodland in the vicinity.
- 7.1.1.3 Linear features such as hedgerows along roadsides, brooks and field boundaries will act as habitat corridors, facilitating the movement of bats through the landscape.

Data Search

- 7.1.1.4 Data from GMEU include records of just two species of bats 1km of the survey site:
- Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
 - Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- 7.1.1.5 There are records of just one roost within 1km of the site. This lack of records is likely a reflection of the low level of surveyor effort in the area rather than a reflection of the absence of species or roost sites.

The Conservation Status of Bats in the Area

7.1.1.6 The conservation status of bats in the area is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *The Conservation Status of Bats in the area at a Local, County and Regional Level*

<i>Species</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Regional</i>
<i>Common pipistrelle</i>	<i>Likely to be common in the area. There are records of this species in the area (10km).</i>	<i>Common and widespread Frequently recorded.</i>	<i>Common and widespread Frequently recorded across the Northwest</i>
<i>Soprano pipistrelle</i>	<i>Likely to be present due to the presence of riparian habitat.</i>	<i>Widespread. Frequently recorded.</i>	<i>Common and widespread Frequently recorded across the Northwest</i>
<i>Nathusius's pipistrelle</i>	<i>Likely to be rare in the area.</i>	<i>Infrequently recorded, but this may be due to low survey effort. Not yet recorded breeding in the county.</i>	<i>Rare across the northwest. A migratory species.</i>
<i>Brown long-eared bat</i>	<i>Likely to be in the area. There is a recent record of this species within 10km of the site.</i>	<i>Common and widespread Frequently recorded.</i>	<i>Common and widespread Frequently recorded across the Northwest.</i>
<i>Natterer's bat</i>	<i>Likely to be in the area, although this species favours woodland habitat, which is infrequent in the landscape.</i>	<i>Frequently recorded</i>	<i>Widespread and scattered across the Northwest.</i>
<i>Noctule</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Widespread and frequently recorded.</i>	<i>Common and widespread. Frequently recorded in the Northwest.</i>
<i>Whiskered bat</i>	<i>Present but likely rare</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Widespread.</i>
<i>Brandt's bat</i>	<i>Rare / absent</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Widespread.</i>
<i>Alcathoe's bat</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Widespread. Likely under-recorded.</i>
<i>Daubenton's</i>	<i>Presence is likely due to the riparian habitat present.</i>	<i>Widespread, frequently recorded near water.</i>	<i>Widespread</i>
<i>Serotine</i>	<i>Rare / absent</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Restricted to south and southwest Britain, rarely recorded in the northwest.</i>
<i>Leislars</i>	<i>Rare</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Rare, but widespread in Britain. Present in the northwest.</i>
<i>Barbastelle</i>	<i>Unlikely to be present in the area. This species is a woodland-specialist and there is a lack of this habitat present.</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Present south of a line from North Wales to the Wash.</i>

Ground Level Roost Assessment: Trees

- 7.1.1.7 The trees within the survey area, comprising two small ash and a medium sessile oak do not contain any potential roost features (PRFs), such as split limbs, rot holes, knot holes or flaking bark.
- 7.1.1.8 Trees in the adjacent woodland are likely to support PRFs but these will not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals.

Foraging and commuting bats

- 7.1.1.1 The woodland and woodland edge habitat is likely to provide a valuable commuting corridor and foraging habitat for a variety of bat species. Similarly, the hedgerows also provide potential habitat corridors for commuting bats.
- 7.1.1.2 The modified grassland, however, is likely to provide suboptimal foraging habitat.
- 7.1.1.3 No significant negative impact is considered likely due to the loss of the grassland utilised for installation of the wooden tents, access and roundhouse.
- 7.1.1.4 **However, avoidance measures are proposed to ensure the protection long-term of the woodland edge habitat by situating the wooden tents at least 5m away from this boundary. This will ensure a dark corridor remains.**
- 7.1.1.5 **No lighting is proposed so any indirect disturbance to commuting and foraging bats is considered negligible.**

7.2 Badger

Survey and Assessment

- 7.2.1 The habitat within and adjacent to the survey site has high suitability for badger, which are likely to be present in the area.
- 7.2.2 During the survey, the survey site and adjacent woodland within 100m of the site was searched for signs of badger.
- 7.2.3 No evidence of use of the site by badger, including setts, latrines, tracks and snuffle holes were found. A single mammal hole was found on site in the area of bare ground. This is considered to be a fox den.
- 7.2.4 Nevertheless, due to the high likelihood of their present in the surroundings, the potential for badger to cross the site upon occasion cannot be ruled out.
- 7.2.5 **Due to the fact that no ground works will take place to ensure installation of the wooden tents and roundhouse, no further survey work or mitigation for badger is considered necessary.**

7.3 Hedgehog

Data Search

- 7.3.1 Data from GMEU do not include any records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within 1km of the survey site.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.3.2 Hedgehog are a Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act, 2006.
- 7.3.3 The habitat within and adjacent to the survey site, including grassland, hedgerows and woodland has high suitability for foraging and sheltering hedgehog. This species is considered highly likely to be present.
- 7.3.4 **The proposals are unlikely to have a significant negative impact upon populations of this species, but reasonable avoidance measures to ensure the protection of hedgehog during works are proposed.**

7.4 Brown Hare

Data Search

- 7.4.1 Data from GMEU include numerous records of brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) within 1km of the survey site.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.4.2 Brown hare are a Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act, 2006.
- 7.4.3 The survey site, supporting mown, modified grassland, is suboptimal for brown hare, which favour tussocky grassland for cover. This species is likely to be present in the wider landscape, but is not expected with any regularity within the survey site.
- 7.4.4 **The proposals are unlikely to have a significant negative impact upon populations of this species and no further survey work or mitigation is considered necessary.**

7.5 Reptiles

Data Search

- 7.5.1 The data from GMEU includes records of common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) within 1km of the survey site.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.5.2 The records for reptiles in the northwest are generally low. Reptiles are of very low distribution and found at low density even in ideal habitats such as rough grassland with scrub.
- 7.5.3 The habitat within the survey site comprising regularly mown modified grassland is suboptimal for common reptiles such as slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*).
- 7.5.4 Reptiles are unlikely to be present on site. However, surrounding habitat, including longer rough grassland and woodland provide potential refuge for reptiles and the possibility that individual animals will move onto site cannot be ruled out.
- 7.5.5 **No further survey work is considered necessary, but Reasonable Avoidance Measures are proposed to minimise the risk of harm to individual animals during works.**

7.6 Amphibians

Great crested newt

Data Search

- 7.6.1 The data from GMEU do not include any records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) within 1km of the survey site.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.6.2 Great crested newt, which have the highest protection of all amphibians under UK and EU law, favour still water bodies, such as ponds with good vegetation. They breed in ponds, but spend much of the year terrestrially, within habitat such as rough grassland and woodland, which provides good foraging and hibernacula. Great crested newts are known to travel, usually, within a 250m radius of breeding ponds, but can travel up to 500m.
- 7.6.3 According to the relevant Ordnance Survey and aerial maps there are two waterbodies within 500m of the site. See Figure 5.
- WB1 located approximately 180m to the northwest
 - WB2 located approximately 495m to the south
- 7.6.4 Waterbody WB1 is over 500m from WB2, which is also divided from the site by Cheesden Brook, which provides a significant barrier to the movement of great crested newts, and located

approximately 430m southwest of the nearest alternative waterbody to the north. WB1 is, therefore very isolated. This significantly reduces the likelihood that it would support great crested newt.

- 7.6.5 The habitat within the survey site, comprising regularly mown modified grassland is suboptimal for great crested newt, but the adjacent woodland and longer areas of grassland around the hedgerows do provide suitable potential foraging habitat and hibernacula.
- 7.6.6 Assessment of the risk to great crested newts is based upon knowledge of potential risks to great crested newts as a result of the proposed development procedures, reflecting the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment (Natural England, 2000). The following factors are considered:
- The degree of impact upon breeding ponds
 - The degree of impact upon suitable terrestrial habitat within 250m of breeding ponds.
 - Risk of harm to individual great crested newts during works.
 - Potential indirect risk on individual animals following development (eg potholes, increased traffic or creating a barrier to dispersal).

- 7.6.7 In the knowledge that great crested newt are present in the locality, the following applies:

The degree of impact upon breeding ponds

- 7.6.8 No waterbodies will be impacted as a result of the proposals.

The degree of impact upon suitable terrestrial habitat within 250m of the breeding ponds

- 7.6.9 The proposed development will take place within the area modified grassland that is suboptimal for great crested newt. There will be a loss of under 0.1ha of grassland.
- 7.6.10 The Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment (Natural England, 2000) indicates that loss of up to 0.5ha of land within 100-250m of a breeding pond is 'highly unlikely' to result in an offence if the ponds are not impacted.

Risk of harm to individual great crested newts during works

- 7.6.11 Works will take place with Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) in place to minimise the risk of harm to individual animals.

Potential indirect risk on individual animals following development (eg potholes, increased traffic or creating a barrier to dispersal).

- 7.6.12 No potential indirect negative impacts are anticipated. The proposed development will not result in any long-term alteration to the accessibility of the surrounding landscape to great crested newt.
- 7.6.13 **The proposed development works are considered unlikely to have a significant impact upon**

the viability of populations of great crested newt in the locality. The likelihood of impact upon foraging or resting individuals of this species is considered to be very low and can be reduced to negligible if an appropriate Reasonable Avoidance Measures are employed during works. Further survey work in this instance, due to the known presence of the species, is not considered necessary.

Common Toad

Data Search

- 7.1.1 Data from GMEU does not include records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*) within 1km of the survey site.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.1.2 Common toad are a Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act, 2006.
- 7.1.3 The habitat on site is potentially good for common toad, providing vegetation and cover for foraging and sheltering animals. Common toad is a mobile species and will regularly travel long distances to reach breeding ponds; they may travel across the site regularly.
- 7.1.4 **The proposals for the site are not expected to impact upon populations of this species, but reasonable avoidance measures are proposed during works to avoid unnecessary harm to individual animals.**

7.2 Nesting Birds

Data Search

- 7.1.1 Data from GMEU includes records of three bird species that are recorded on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981; Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).
- 7.1.2 It is highly unlikely that these species would breed on site as there is no suitable habitat. Barn owl may forage across the site and surrounding land, however.
- 7.1.3 The data also include records of bird species listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act, 2006, and on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) that may nest on adjacent trees or forage on site, including house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) and song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

Survey and Assessment

Habitat

- 7.1.4 Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) were recorded passing over the site during the survey. Blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), great tit (*Parus major*), wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) and jackdaw (*Coloeus monedula*) were recorded in the adjacent woodland.
- 7.1.5 The grassland, given that it is regularly mown, is unlikely to support birds nesting in the spring and summer months, but a range of species are likely to nest in surrounding hedgerows and the adjacent woodland in the spring and summer.
- 7.1.6 **Reasonable avoidance measures are proposed during works to reduce to negligible the potential impacts upon breeding birds.**
- 7.1.7 The loss of the grassland is unlikely to be of significance to bird populations in the locality, whilst the creation of additional woodland will be of long-term benefit.

7.3 Invertebrates

Data Search

- 7.3.1 Data from GMEU includes records of two invertebrate species within 1km of the site; white-letter hairstreak butterfly (*Satrium w-album*) and cinnabar moth (*Senecio jacobaea*). This is a low number of species and is likely to reflect the absence of recording of invertebrates in the area rather than the absence of species.
- 7.3.2 The white-letter hairstreak butterfly previously recorded is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and on Schedule 41 of the NERC Act, 2006 as a species of Principal Importance. This species is associated with elm (*Ulmus*) species and is not expected within the survey site.
- 7.3.3 Cinnabar moth is associated with ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*). Ragwort is found in disturbed areas and rough grassland.

Survey and Assessment

- 7.3.4 The habitat within the survey site (modified grassland) is common and widespread, and for this reason is likely to support a range of common and widespread invertebrates. No invertebrates that are rare or protected are expected. It is possible that ragwort is present on site, but this would only be present in small numbers and is unlikely to support a viable population of cinnabar moth.
- 7.3.5 **The proposals are considered unlikely to have a significant impact upon populations of invertebrates in the area. No further survey work or mitigation is recommended.**

7.4 Other protected species and habitats.

- 7.4.1 Other protected species, including red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*) are not expected on or near the site as the site is either out of the species' natural range (red squirrel), or there is no suitable habitat in close proximity (otter).

8 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The land at Ashworth Scout Camp comprises an area of regularly mown modified grassland.
- 8.1.2 The survey area lies adjacent to Ashworth Valley Site of Biological Importance. Avoidance mitigation is necessary to prevent accidental damage to this designated area. Planting of additional woodland will meet Local Nature Recovery Strategy recommendations for this area.
- 8.1.3 The site and adjacent habitat may support species of Principal Importance, hedgehog and common toad. Due to the high quality of surrounding habitat, the presence of badger, common reptiles, nesting birds and great crested newt cannot be entirely ruled out.
- 8.1.4 Reasonable avoidance measures are recommended with regard to commuting bats, nesting birds, badger, hedgehog reptiles, and amphibians, including common toad and great crested newt.
- 8.1.5 Himalayan balsam is likely present along the southern boundary of the site. Measures to control and prevent the spread of this species must be employed during works.
- 8.1.6 Planting to compensate for the loss of vegetation on site will enhance the site for wildlife including nesting birds and bats.

9 Recommendations

9.1 Ashworth Valley SBI and Cheesden Brook

9.1.1 Measures must be put in place to minimise damage to the woodland condition, flora and to Cheesden Brook located downhill from the site.

9.1.2 Care must be taken to minimise damage in the following ways:

Reasonable Avoidance Measures

- Fencing must be used to denote the boundary of the works site to minimise the risk of unnecessary damage to adjacent habitat.
- Machinery must not be left running on site without attendance.
- Precautions to prevent accidental pollution including run off must be undertaken, including retention of plant nappies on site for spills.

9.2 Bats

9.2.1 Bats are likely to utilise the woodland edge and hedgerows adjacent to the site to forage and commute in the spring, summer and autumn. In order to avoid any indirect impact on foraging and commuting bats, the following is recommended:

- A 5m buffer is retained between the woodland edge and the wooden tents in order to retain a dark corridor.
- The wooden tents are kept at least 2m from adjacent hedgerows to retain a dark corridor.
- If lighting is required on site this should be minimised by utilising LED bulbs. These emit low UV and will not attract as many insects. Lighting should be on a timer if required, to minimise light spill. Lighting must be directed or baffles used to prevent light spill into the woodland edge, onto trees and onto hedgerows.

9.3 Badger

9.3.1 There is potential for badger to cross the site upon occasion and for this reason, the following is recommended to prevent harm to individual animals during works:

- Any holes or ditches created during works are covered over-night to prevent badger and other animals falling into them.

- If this is not possible, a plank or other can be placed in the hole/ditch to enable animals to climb out.
- If holes that might be setts are found on site or on the site boundary during clearance work, an ecologist must be contacted for advice.

9.4 Amphibians, Reptiles and Hedgehog

9.1.1 In order to reduce the risk of harm to individual reptiles, amphibians (including common toad and great crested newt) and hedgehog during works, the following Reasonable Avoidance Measures must be followed:

- A toolbox talk on Great Crested Newts is delivered to the site workers prior to the start of works (see Appendix B).
- Vegetation works are undertaken with care. The grassland on site must be maintained at a short length throughout the period of works.
- Topsoil clearance and clearance of debris at the site boundary must take place care whilst checking for animals.
- If animals such as hedgehog or common toad are found during works they can be moved by hand to a protected area or off site in suitable habitat.
- Materials on site are stored on pallets on hard standing to prevent reptiles and amphibians hiding in them.

9.5 Nesting Birds

9.5.1 Birds may nest in the vegetation on site in the spring and summer months. In order to prevent disturbance and/or harm to nesting birds, is recommended that:

- Initial construction works are timed to avoid the bird breeding season (breeding season: March – September).
- If this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist should check the vegetation on site to determine the presence / absence of nesting birds prior to the start of any work.
- If birds are found actively nesting on site, the nest and immediate surrounds (5m) must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.
- Machinery utilised on site within the breeding season must be kept at least 5m from adjacent hedgerows and woodland/trees.

9.6 Himalayan Balsam

9.6.1 Himalayan balsam is present on site.

9.6.2 In order to ensure the prevention of accidental spread of these species, the following is recommended:

- All soil within approximately 15m of the southern boundary must either be treated as contaminated waste or retained on site.
- Any soil removed from the southern 15m of the site must be treated as contaminated waste.
- All machinery and operatives working on site must use bio-control to prevent the spread of the seeds of this species; they must wash down machinery and boots/clothing with water on site, prior to leaving site.
- Operatives on site should be informed of the presence of this species and the Toolbox Talk (Appendix C) delivered to all persons working on site.
- Management of the Himalayan balsam on site should form part of the site management plan to assist with long-term eradication and prevention of spread of the species. This will include the following:
 - The Himalayan balsam is removed by hand by pulling up the individual plants, or cutting the plants prior to their setting seed. This species sets seed following flowering in July.

Himalayan balsam spreads by seed (each plant releases approximately 3000 seeds). Although the plant grows annually, some of the seeds from previous years will lay dormant in the soil.

9.7 Enhancement for Biodiversity

- 9.7.1 The proposals provide the opportunity to enhance the site for some elements of biodiversity. .

Habitat Enhancement

- 9.7.2 Habitat enhancement will be provided to compensate for the loss of the grassland and to meet Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements.

Woodland creation

- 9.7.3 What is currently an area of bare ground with vegetated debris and Himalayan balsam adjacent to the woodland at the south of the site will be planted with trees and understorey shrubs to create an extension of the woodland.
- 9.7.4 Species planted will include those that complement the existing woodland structure; sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), pendulous birch (*Betula pendula*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and smaller understorey species including rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

Individual trees

- 9.7.5 A small number of individual rural trees will also be planted to meet Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. These trees will provide additional structure in the immediate landscape and will be native species such as pendulous birch, oak, rowan and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*).

Provision of Bat Boxes

- 9.7.6 It is recommended that:
- At least five crevice-roost sites for roosting bats are installed on in the newly constructed structures or installed on trees along the site boundary. The Kent Bat Box design has been proven very successful and can be constructed by hand out of untreated timber. See Appendix D.
 - The boxes should be installed as high as possible; direction is not important in dense wooded cover, but north should be avoided.

Provision of Bird Boxes

- 9.7.7 To retain the existing functionality of the site for nesting birds and to improve this, it is recommended that:
- At least five bird boxes are integrated installed on the new structures or on trees around the site boundary. These can be installed on the same trees as bat boxes because this discourages use of bat boxes by birds and vice versa. The boxes can be constructed by hand. Details of how to construct bird boxes can be found on the RSPB website: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/build-a-birdbox>

10 References

- Bing Maps (Accessed 2025) <https://www.bing.com/maps/>
- Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023). UK Habitat Classification V2.0 – Advance publication of selected Habitat Definitions at <http://ukhab.org>
- CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6
- Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, N.J., Brown, A., Hearn, R.D., Lock, L., Musgrove, A.J., Noble, D.G., Stroud, D.A., & Gregory, R.D. (2015). Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. *British Birds*, 108: 708-746.
- E2S (2022) Guide to audible signals from E2S). <https://www.e2s.com/product-advice/advice-alarm-sounders>
- European Commission (2000). Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Gillings, S. & Fuller, R. J. (1999) winter ecology of golden plovers and lapwings: A review and consideration of extensive survey methods. *British Trust for Ornithology*.
- Google maps (Accessed 2025) <https://www.google.co.uk/maps>
- Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2026). (Accessed 2026) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/what-does-our-plan-for-nature-cover/>
- Lowen, J., Liley, D., Underhill-Day, J. & Whitehouse, A.T. (2008) Access and Nature Conservation Reconciliation: supplementary guidance for England.
- Liley, D., Cruickshanks, K., Waldon, J. & Fearnley, H. (2011). Exe Estuary Disturbance Study. Footprint Ecology
- MAGIC Map (Accessed 2025) <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>. DEFRA.
- Natural England (Accessed 2000) Method Statement Template for Great Crested Newt Mitigation Licence. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>
- NBN (2019) National Biodiversity Network.

- Oldham, R. S. Keeble, J., Swan, M. J. S. and Jeffcote, M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal, vol. 10, pp. 143-155.
- UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)
- Saunders, C., Selwyn, J., Richardson, S., May, V. & Heeps, C. (2000) A Review of the Effects of Recreational Interactions within UK European Marine Sites. UK CEED & Bournemouth University
- The ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations & Their Impact Within the Planning System details the requirements of the local authority with regard to the Habitats Regulations.
- Tyldesley, D. & Chapman, C. (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, July 2013 edition UK. DTA Publications Limited.
- Underhill-Day, J.C. (2005) A Literature Review of Urban Effects on Lowland Heaths and Their Wildlife. English Nature, Peterborough.

• APPENDIX A: Wildlife Legislation and Planning Policy

1.0 UK AND EU LEGISLATION

KEY LEGISLATION

- In the UK, the following legislation relates to wildlife and habitats:
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW), 2000
 - The Badger Act 1992
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006)
 - Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations (2017)
 - The Hedgerow Regulations (1997)

1.1 WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 (AS AMENDED)

- 1.1.1 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive) in Great Britain (NB Council Directive 79/409/EEC has now been replaced by Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version)).

BIRDS

- 1.1.2 The Act makes it an offence (with exception to species listed in Schedule 2) to intentionally:

- kill, injure, or take any wild bird,
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built (also [take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird included in Schedule ZA1] under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 birds

- 1.1.3 Special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1, for which there are additional offences of disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young, for example Barn Owl and Red Kite.

Areas of Special Protection for Birds

- 1.1.4 The Secretary of State may also designate Areas of Special Protection (subject to exceptions) to provide further protection to birds.

Other offences

- 1.1.5 The Act also prohibits certain methods of killing, injuring, or taking birds, restricts the sale and possession of captive bred birds, and sets standards for keeping birds in captivity.

OTHER ANIMALS

- 1.1.6 The Act makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to intentionally ([or recklessly] - only under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004) kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places. The Act also prohibits certain methods of killing, injuring, or taking wild animals.

- 1.1.7 For animals listed in Schedule 5 of the act, it is an offence under:

- Section 9(1) to kill, injure or take the animal by any method
- Section 9(2) to possess or control a dead or live animal (or part of derivative).
- Section 9(4)(a) to cause damage to, destruction of, obstruction of access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection.
- Section 9(4)(b) to disturb any animal on the schedule occupying such as structure or place.
- Section 9(4)(c) to obstruct access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection.

- Section 9(5)(a) to sell, offer or expose for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead wild animal, or part or derivative of an animal included in Schedule 5.
- Section 9(5)(b) to publish or cause to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell, any of those things.

Species that receive FULL PROTECTION under the act:

- All UK bats
- Otter
- Water vole
- Dormouse
- Red squirrel
- Wildcat
- Reptiles – Smooth snake and sand lizard
- Amphibians – Great crested newt, Natterjack toad, Pool frog
- Invertebrates – some including, but not restricted to Swallowtail butterfly, Marsh fritillary butterfly, Large copper butterfly, Heath fritillary butterfly, Large blue butterfly, Barberry carpet moth, Rainbow leaf beetle, Violet click beetle, Medicinal leech.

Species that protected from intentional KILLING, INJURY and SALE only:

- Reptiles – widespread species; Common lizard, Slow-worm, Grass snake and Adder.

Species protected from TAKING and SALE only:

- Atlantic stream (white-clawed) crayfish

Species protected from SALE only:

- Common toad
- Common frog
- Palmate newt
- Smooth newt
- Invertebrates – Some including 18 butterflies such as Chalk hill blue butterfly, Adonis blue butterfly, Large tortoiseshell butterfly.

Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, Lichens and Fungi (PLANTS)

1.1.8 For any vascular plant, bryophyte, lichen or fungi listed in Schedule 8 of the Act, it makes it an offence under:

- Section 13(1)(a) to Intentionally pick, uproot or destroy plants in Schedule 8.
- Section 13(1)(b) to undertake unauthorised intentional uprooting of any wild plant not included in Schedule 8.
- Section 13(2)(a) to sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale any plant (live or dead, part or derivatives) on Schedule 8.
- Section 13(2)(b) to publish or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell, any of those things.

1.1.9 Species with protection under Schedule 8 include, but are not restricted to:

- 1.1.10 Bluebell, Wood calamint, Rock cinquefoil, Early spider orchid, Spring gentian, Stinking goosefoot, Small hare's-ear, Alpine copper moss (*Mielichhoferia mielichoferi*), Goblin lights lichen (*Catolechia wahlenbergii*).

Non-Native Species

1.1.11 Species listed in Schedule 9 of the Act are non-native species, which the establishment of in the wild may be detrimental to native wildlife. Species listed in Schedule 9 include Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant hogweed.

1.1.12 For species listed in Schedule 9 of the act it is an offence:

- Under Section 14(1) if any person releases or allows to escape into the wild any animal which—

(a) is of a kind which is not ordinarily resident in and is not a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state; or

(b) is included in Part I of Schedule 9,

- Under Section 14ZA (1) to sell, offers or exposes for sale, or has in his possession or transports for the purposes of sale an animal or plant to which this section 14 applies, or anything from which such an animal or plant can be reproduced or propagated.

- Under Section 14ZA (2) to publish or cause to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell an animal or plant to which this section applies, or anything from which such an animal or plant can be reproduced or propagated.

1.1.13 Section 14ZB gives the Secretary of State the power to issue codes of practice, or approve a code of practice issued by others, relating to non-native animal and plant species. It is intended that the codes will be used to provide recommendations, advice and information on how to stop the damage caused by non-native animals and plants.

1.2 SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs) AND OTHER PROTECTED AREAS

1.2.1 Sections 28 to 33 of Part 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act detail the law regarding SSSIs.. Sections 34 to 53 deal with other protected areas within Great Britain.

- The Act provides for the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – these sites are identified for their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features – by the country conservation bodies in England (Natural England) and Wales (Natural Resources Wales).
- The Act also contains measures for the protection and management of SSSIs.
- The Act provides for the making of Limestone Pavement Orders, which prohibit the disturbance and removal of limestone from such designated areas
- The Act provides means for the designation of Marine Nature Reserves.
- The Act prohibits the undertaking of agricultural or forestry operations on land within National Parks which has been either moor or heath for 20 years, without consent from the relevant planning authority.

1.3 THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY (CROW) ACT 2000

1.3.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 strengthened the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in the following ways:

Schedule 12

1.3.2 Schedule 12 of the Act amends the species provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and strengthens the legal protection of species by:

- Providing provisions to make certain offences 'arrestable'
- Changing the term 'intentional' to 'reckless' with regard to disturbance offences, such that ignorance of the law is no longer a defence.
- Conferring greater powers to police and wildlife inspectors for entering premises and obtaining wildlife tissue samples for DNA analysis, and;
- Enabling heavier penalties on conviction of wildlife offences.

Schedule 9

1.3.3 Schedule 9 of the Act amends SSSI provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, including provision to change SSSIs and providing increased powers for their protection and management, placement of a duty on public bodies to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs and increases in penalties on convictions where the provisions are breached.

1.4 THE BADGER ACT 1992

1.4.1 Under the Badger Act 1992, it is an offence to:

- Section 1 – Take, injure or kill a badger, or attempt to do so
- Section 2 – Cruelly ill-treat a badger, inclusive of digging for a badger
- Section 3 – Interfere with a badger sett. A person is guilty of an offence if, except as permitted by or under this Act, he interferes with a badger sett by doing any of the following things—

(a)damaging a badger sett or any part of it;

(b)destroying a badger sett;

(c)obstructing access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett;

(d)causing a dog to enter a badger sett; or

(e)disturbing a badger when it is occupying a badger sett,

- Section 4 – To sell or possess a live badger.
- Section 5 – To mark or ring a badger unless under licence to do so.

1.5 THE HEDGEROWS REGULATIONS, 1997

1.5.1 The Hedgerows Regulations, 1997 ensure the protection from damage or destruction of 'important' hedgerows. Criteria within the regulations determine the importance.

1.6 THE CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES AND PLANNING (VARIOUS AMENDMENTS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2017

1.6.1 In addition to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1984, certain species have additional protection under European Law.

1.6.2 The Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018 (the Habitats Regs) consolidate the amendments made to the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 in England and Wales. The Regulations transpose the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive) into UK law.

1.6.3 The Habitats Regulations 2010 provide protection for 'European Protected Species' and protection and designation for 'European Protected Sites'.

Schedule 2: European Protected Species of Animals

- All UK bats
- Dormice
- Otter
- Large blue butterfly
- Wild cat
- Sand lizard
- Smooth snake
- Great crested newt
- Natterjack toad
- Fishers estuarine moth
- Lesser whirlpool ram's horn snail
- Sturgeon
- Marine turtles
- All dolphins, porpoises and whales.

1.6.4 For species listed in Schedule 2, Under Part 3 Regulation 41(1) it is an offence to

- (a) deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species,
- (b) deliberately disturb a wild animal of any such species,
- (c) deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or
- (d) damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,

1.6.5 Under Part 3 Regulation 41 (2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b), disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely—

- (a) to impair their ability—
 - (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
 - (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
- (b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Under Part 3 Regulation 41.(3) It is an offence for any person—

- (a) to be in possession of, or to control,
- (b) to transport,
- (c) to sell or exchange, or
- (d) to offer for sale or exchange any animal in Schedule 2.

Schedule 5: European Protected Species of Plants

- Shore dock
- Killarney Fern

- Early Gentian
- Lady's-slipper
- Creeping marshwort
- Slender naiad
- Fen orchid
- Floating-leaved water plantain
- Yellow-marsh saxifrage.

1.6.6 For species listed in Schedule 2, Under Part 3 Regulation 45(1) It is an offence deliberately to pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a European protected species.

1.6.7 Under Part 3 Regulation 45(1) (2) It is an offence for any person

- (a) to be in possession of, or to control,
- (b) to transport,
- (c) to sell or exchange, or
- (d) to offer for sale or exchange any plant in Schedule 5

European Designated Sites

1.6.8 These include:

- Special Protection Areas – SPAs are classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory species
- Special Areas of Conservation – SACs are classified in accordance with Article 3 of the EC Habitats Directive. SACs are designated to establish a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive (as amended).

1.6.9 Natura 2000 is the name of the European Union-wide network of nature conservation sites established under the EC Habitats and Birds Directives. This network will comprise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Marine Natura 2000 sites contribute to our ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas.

1.7 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES (NERC) ACT 2006

Planning Authorities: A Duty to Conserve Biodiversity

1.7.1 Under this legislation, planning authorities are obliged to make sure that they have all the information on the presence of protected species on site *before* they make a decision on the planning permission.

1.7.2 Part 2, Section 40 confers on the planning authorities a duty to conserve biodiversity and states:

"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of biodiversity"

Species of Principal Importance

1.7.3 Part 3, Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to "*publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of **principal importance** for the purpose of conserving biodiversity*".

1.7.4 This requirement lead to production of a list of species and habitats of Principal Importance, which should be a material consideration during the planning process.

1.8 DESIGNATED SITES OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

1.8.1 Sites of conservation interest can be designated on a statutory or non-statutory basis.

Statutory Sites

1.8.2 Statutory sites can be designated under UK legislation (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), European Law (the Habitats Regulations 2010) or International law (Ramsar Convention).

1.8.3 The designated sites are referred to under the relevant legislation above.

1.8.4 UK designated sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

1.8.5 European designated sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

1.8.6 Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, agreed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971.

1.8.7 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs): Under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 LNRs may be declared by local authorities after consultation with the relevant statutory nature conservation agency. LNRs are declared and managed for nature conservation, and provide opportunities for research and education, or simply enjoying and having contact with nature.

1.8.8 National Nature Reserves (NNRs): are declared by the statutory country conservation agencies under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Non-Statutory Sites

1.8.9 Local authorities for any given area may designate certain areas as being of local conservation interest. The criteria for inclusion, and the level of protection provided, if any, may vary between areas. Most individual counties have a similar scheme, although they do vary.

1.8.10 These sites, which may be given various titles such as 'Listed Wildlife Sites' (LWS), 'Local Nature Conservation Sites' (LNCS), 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINCs), 'Biological Heritage Sites' (BHS) or 'Sites of Nature Conservation Importance' (SNCIs), together with statutory designations, are defined in local and structure plans under the Town and Country Planning system and are a material consideration when planning applications are being determined.

2.0 Plans and Policies

In the UK, the following plans and policies relate to wildlife and habitats:

- o National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021)
- o The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature'
- o Biodiversity – The UK Action Plan (1994, and subsequent revisions)
- o Local Biodiversity Action Plans where applicable
- o Neighbourhood plans where applicable

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 In March 2012 the Government introduced the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was revised in December 2023.

Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Chapter 15, Para 180 of NPPF states: *"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- b) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils....*
- e) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures".*

Para 181 states: *"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."*

Para 185 identifies that plans should do the following to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity:

- c) "Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
- d) Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and peruse opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."*

Para 186 states that *"when determining planning applications, local authorities should apply the following principles:*

- b) if significant harm to biodiversity from a development cannot be avoided...,adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused"*

- c) **Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted.** The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- d) **Development result in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland or ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensatory strategy exists; and**
- e) **Development whos primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.**

Para 188 states "the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment because of its potential impact on a habitats site is being planned or determined."

2.2 ODPM CIRCULAR 06/2005: BIODIVERSITY AND GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

- 2.2.1 This document, to be read in conjunction with NPPF provides administrative guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England. It makes it clear that it is the intention of the government that local authorities and developers consider protected species at the earliest possible stage in the planning process. Any planning application that is likely to affect protected species should come with details of the surveys which have been undertaken and should include, if necessary, recommendations for mitigation. Applications which do not include sufficient data should be rejected.

2.3 The Natural Environment White paper

- 2.3.1 The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature' states that 'We want to create a resilient and coherent ecological network at national and local levels across England... To make this happen the government will put in place a clear institutional framework to support nature restoration. This means: establishing Local Nature Partnerships... Creating new Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) and strengthening support though the planning system.'

Biodiversity Offsetting

- 2.3.2 Biodiversity offsetting is described in the Natural Environment White Paper as 'conservation activities designed to deliver biodiversity benefits in compensation for losses in a measurable way. Good developments incorporate biodiversity considerations in their design but are still likely to result in some biodiversity loss. One way to compensate for this loss is by offsetting: the developer secures compensatory habitats elsewhere.'
- 2.3.3 The level of biodiversity offsetting required could be determine by means of assessments undertaken in accordance with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) metric contained in Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots published in March 2012 as applied in the Defra offsetting pilot projects. Biodiversity offsetting could be delivered by developers in partnership with various partners including conservation organisations, local landowners and the borough council.

2.4 Biodiversity Action Plan (Local or UK)

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.4.1 Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan outlines how the UK plans to address biodiversity conservation in response to the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). In 2004 a UK Biodiversity Steering Group was formed and discussions resulted in the publication of 'Biodiveristy: the UK Steering Group Report – meeting the Rio challenge', which established a framework and criteria for identifying species and habitats of conservation concern. From this list, action plans for 391 species and 45 broad habitat types were prepared. In 2007, the UK List of Priority Species and Habitats was reviewd and the revised list identifies 1149 species and 65 habitats requiring conservation action.
- 2.4.2 These species are now listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act, 2006 and referred to as Habitats and Species of Principal Importance (HPI or SPI).

- 2.4.3 Outcome 3 of the Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy (DEFRA, 2011) contains an ambition to ensure that *"By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species"*. Protecting and enhancing England's Species and Habitats of Principal Importance is key to delivering this outcome.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

- 2.4.4 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are a means for delivering UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets at a local level. LBAPs were launched in 1997 by a partnership of conservation groups, government agencies and local authorities. They set out a framework for nature conservation in the specified area. This framework includes priority species and habitats and sets targets to maintain and enhance their conservation status.

2.5 Other Species Lists of Species of Conservation Concern

- 2.5.1 Species lists of Species of Conservation Concern also considered within this assessment are as follows:
- Birds of Conservation Concern: Based on an assessment of the conservation status of British birds. Following an assessment of data on population and trends against established criteria, there are red, amber and green lists of BoCC. The latest review was BOCC 4 (Eaton et al, 2015)
 - Red Data Book Species: In 1999 the Species Status Assessment project (JNCC) assigned conservation status to the UK flora and fauna using the internationally approved IUCN Red Data Book criteria and categories. The reviews were published in a series of data sheets and assigned a conservation status to each species.

- **APPENDIX B:**

Toolbox Talk: Great Crested Newts

What are Great Crested Newts?

Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are amphibians native to Europe. They are found across the UK.

Being amphibious, they breed in water (ponds), but spend the majority of their life cycle on land. They are found in lowland areas where there is a network of water bodies.

The terrestrial habitat they like includes grassland, woodland and scrub.

They are nocturnal and so move around at night.

They hibernate in the winter months in cracks and crevices in the ground, including places like under paving slabs and grass hummocks.

Why do we need to do this?

Great crested newts are our most strictly protected amphibian. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which is UK law, and are also protected under the Habitats Regulations 2017, which is European law.

They are protected because they have undergone considerable decline in the last century across Europe. The UK is a strong hold for this species, which is why so many people are surprised to find that they seem to be 'everywhere' but this is all the more reason to protect them.

The reason they are declining is because of:

- Destruction of ponds
- Pond loss through natural succession (poor management)
- Chemical pollution and nitrification of breeding sites
- Loss of terrestrial habitat
- Habitat fragmentation (or creation of barriers)
- Habitat management that renders the environment unsuitable for this species.

To counter these factors, there is a need to conserve and enhance great crested newt populations.

How do we identify great crested newts?

There are three species of newts in the UK:

Smooth newt



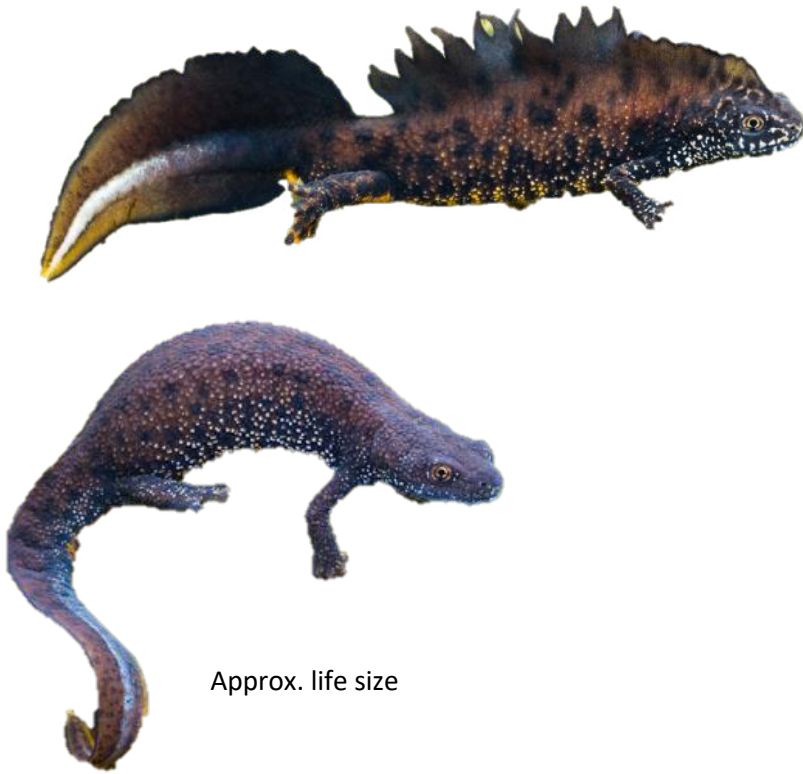
Approx. life size

Palmate newt (usually found near woodland)



Approx. life size

Great crested newt



Approx. life size



How do we undertake the work to minimise the risk of harm?

The aim is to minimise the risk of harm to amphibians.

The easiest way to minimise harm is to have all operatives aware of the species and to ensure the majority of works are undertaken by hand.

Use of machinery should be avoided if at all possible.

Areas of vegetation not subject to works must be protected from accidental damage.

What do I do if I find a great crested newt or another animal?

Leave it alone if you can, let it move into cover of its own volition – if it is in an area that you will no longer be working in.

If it doesn't move, or there is risk you will disturb the animal again, you can move it by hand into a suitable location out of the way of the works.

A suitable area would be long grass with some scrub and some cover / protection.

Always contact an ecologist if you are concerned that you have found a great crested newt.

- **APPENDIX C:**

Himalayan Balsam Toolbox Talk

Himalayan balsam is listed on the Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) making it an offence to spread it, or to cause it to grow in the wild.



About (Ecology)

Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens grandiflora*) is non-native plant now regularly seen along watercourses across the UK. It often forms continuous stands along streams and rivers. Due to its rapid growth, it shades out most of our native species, resulting in damage to natural habitats.

Himalayan balsam is pretty, and produces big, pink-purple flowers. Each plant produces about 2,500 seeds, which fall to the ground.

The soil within at least 7m of a stand of this plant is likely to contain seeds.

Where you might find it

Widespread throughout the UK, this plant is most commonly found along waterways (streams and rivers) and in damp areas, such as wet woodlands, marshes and mires.

Identification

Individual plants reach 2m in height, have translucent fleshy stems, pink-purple slipper-shaped flowers and large oval pointed leaves with obvious teeth around their edges. The midrib of the leaves can be tinged with red, which can help with identification early in the growing season.



Showing the pink flowers and seed pods of Himalayan balsam

The plant produces seed pods in late-summer that explode when touched, releasing 100s of seeds.



Showing the leaves of Himalayan balsam

Biosecurity

If working in an area supporting Himalayan balsam, you should either avoid disturbing it and create a 7m buffer around the stand, or employ appropriate methods of treatment and biosecurity to prevent spread off site. This will include washing down equipment, machinery and clothing prior to leaving the site in case the seeds are transferred.

Any soil that may be contaminated by Himalayan balsam seeds must be treated as contaminated waste.

• APPENDIX D:

The Kent bat box

Simple to construct, self-cleaning and low maintenance.

The only critical measurement is the width of the crevices—these should be no larger than suggested. Other measurements are approximate.

Materials and construction

Box to be made from untreated rough-sawn timbers
Timber should be c.20mm thick
The box should be rainproof and draught-free
Crevices can be between 15 and 25 mm wide
Fixing may be by use of brackets, durable bands or wires

Location

Boxes are best fixed as high as possible in a sheltered wind-free position, exposed to the sun for part of the day.

They can be fitted to walls, other flat surfaces or trees

A clear flight line to the entrance is important

