



envirotech

**Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors**

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Ashdene



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

Quality and Environmental Assurance

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Author	Andrew Gardner	Date	08.01.2026
Checked by	Andrew Gardner	Date	08.01.2026
Report Version	1		
Field data entered	☐		
Report Reference	10013		

Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
2. INTRODUCTION.....	5
2.1 Background	5
2.2 Objectives	6
3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION.....	7
3.1 Data Search.....	7
3.2 Vegetation and Habitats.....	7
3.3 Timing and Personnel	7
4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY	9
4.1 Amphibian	9
4.2 Badger.....	9
4.3 Bats.....	10
4.4 Birds	10
4.5 Survey limitations	11
5. RESULTS.....	12
5.1 Data Search.....	12
6. UKHabs V2 SURVEY RESULTS	16
6.1 Habitat Results.....	16
6.2 Vegetation	22
6.3 Amphibian	22
6.4 Badger.....	22
6.5 Bats.....	22
6.6 Birds	23
6.7 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites	23
7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS.....	24
7.1 Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement	24
7.2 Amphibians	24
7.3 Badger.....	24
7.4 Bats.....	24
7.5 Birds	25
8. REFERENCES	26

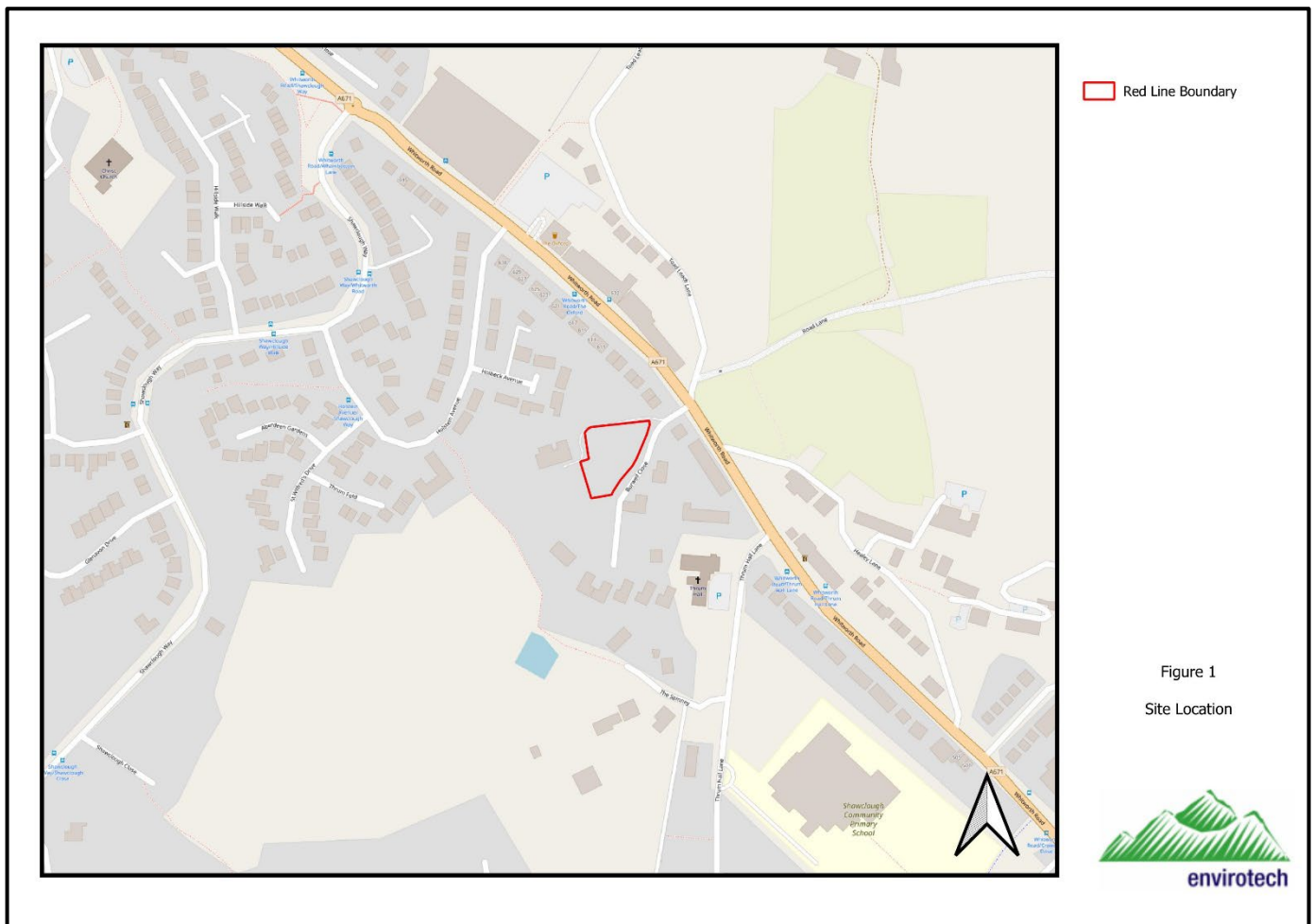
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Ashdene (central grid reference SD889155) in connection with proposals for the construction of a new dwelling. The appraisal was completed to identify ecological constraints, assess the potential presence of protected species and habitats, and inform proportionate mitigation and enhancement measures in accordance with relevant wildlife legislation, planning policy, and best-practice guidance.
- 1.1.2 The assessment comprised a desk study using Envirotech's in-house ecological dataset and publicly available mapping (including MAGIC), together with a UKHab Version 2 habitat survey and site walkover undertaken on 8 January 2026. The survey was carried out by a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist under appropriate winter survey conditions.
- 1.1.3 The site comprises a small, disturbed area of sparsely vegetated ground with extensive bare substrate, three dilapidated timber garages, and a boundary of mature trees dominated by sycamore. Habitats present are of low intrinsic ecological value and are common in the local area. No invasive non-native plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were recorded.
- 1.1.4 No evidence of protected species using the site was identified. In particular:
- No badger setts, runs, or feeding signs were recorded within or adjacent to the site.
 - No suitable breeding ponds or terrestrial habitats for great crested newts or other amphibians were identified.
 - Boundary trees and on-site structures were assessed for bats and were found to have negligible to low roost potential only, with no evidence of roosting bats.
 - The site offers limited value for foraging bats and nesting birds, with better quality habitat present in the wider surrounding area.
 - There are no statutory or non-statutory designated nature conservation sites within the zone of influence of the proposal, and the development would not give rise to direct or indirect effects on designated sites or priority habitats.
- 1.1.5 The appraisal concludes that the proposed development can proceed without significant ecological constraint, subject to the implementation of standard precautionary measures. These include retention and protection of boundary trees, sensitive lighting design, timing of works to avoid unnecessary disturbance to wildlife, and general good practice during construction. Opportunities for ecological enhancement are identified, including native planting, wildflower seeding, and the incorporation of bird and bat nesting features within the scheme.
- 1.1.6 No further protected species surveys are considered necessary at this stage, and no licensing requirements are anticipated, provided the recommendations set out in this report are followed.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Ashdene, central grid reference SD889155 (Figure 1). A site investigation was undertaken and a report compiled which includes recommendations for any future actions and or mitigation required.
- 2.1.2 The survey was requested in connection with the proposed construction of a new house. This is to be a “self build” and as such is exempt from Statutory BNG.



2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 The main objectives of the study were:

- The completion of a UKHabs Version 2 (UKHab Ltd (2023)) survey including the preparation of a vegetation and habitat map of the site and the immediate surrounding area.
- The survey and assessment of all habitats for statutorily protected species.
- An evaluation of the ecological significance of the site.
- The identification of any potential development constraints and the specification of the scope of mitigation and enhancement required in accordance with wildlife legislation, planning policy and other relevant guidance, and;
- The identification of any further surveys or precautionary assessments that may be required prior to the commencement of any development activities.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3.1 Data Search

- 3.1.1 The Envirotech dataset, and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) were searched to establish the presence of any records of statutorily protected, notable or rare species, and any designated sites of international, national, regional or local importance within a 2km radius of the site boundary.
- 3.1.2 The Envirotech dataset is compiled from extensive field surveys from the period 2004-present, as well as records obtained from third parties during this time.
- 3.1.3 Google Earth and Google Street View were consulted to establish the presence of any features of ecological importance within the local area.
- 3.1.4 Due to the scale of development, in accordance with CIEEM guidelines, a data search of the county records centre was not required. The likely presence and impact on protected species could be adequately determined from the level of data search undertaken.

3.2 Vegetation and Habitats

- 3.2.1 A vegetation and habitat map was produced for the site and the immediate surrounding area. The mapping is based on the UKHabs V2 survey and reporting methodology.
- 3.2.2 Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).
- 3.2.3 Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), namely Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) on terrestrial habitat and aquatic species such as floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*).
- 3.2.4 The survey was also informed by questioning the landowner/site agent to ascertain the recent history of the site.
- 3.2.5 Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) were cross referenced with Natural England's inventory against the site boundary and where found ground truthed.

3.3 Timing and Personnel

- 3.3.1 During the visit, weather conditions were suitable for the survey types undertaken being cool and dry in mid winter.

3.3.2 The site and surrounding land was visited on the 8th January 2026 by

- (AG) Mr Andrew Gardner BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS
Natural England Bat Class Licence (Level 2)
Natural England Bat Low Impact Class Licence
Natural England Barn Owl Licence
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence (Level 1)
Natural England Badger Class Licence
Natural England White Clawed Crayfish Licence

4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Amphibian

- 4.1.1 Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981).
- 4.1.2 Water-bodies located within or adjacent to the study area were identified and where access was possible were assessed for their potential to support great crested newts.
- 4.1.3 The criteria used in the assessment are based on those contained in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual and Oldham et al, 2000, and in applying these criteria a precautionary approach was adopted. Following the criteria developed by Oldham et al (2000), the HSI tool developed for use with great crested newts and forming part of Natural England's Licensing process was used to determine the suitability of ponds for great crested newts.
- 4.1.4 The pond assessment was undertaken in order to determine which water-bodies, based on their potential to support great crested newts, should be subject to presence/absence surveys.
- 4.1.5 The site was considered sufficiently low risk for GCN that no further assessments were warranted.

4.2 Badger

- 4.2.1 Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). This legislation arises from animal welfare issues (rather than on the basis of nature conservation grounds) and protects badgers from being killed, injured or disturbed whilst occupying a sett.
- 4.2.2 A disturbance to badgers in their setts may occur as a result of construction operations. Natural England recommends that the use of heavy machinery in proximity of a sett entrance should be avoided, with a 'disturbance free-zone' being established.
- 4.2.3 The degree of disturbance attributed to construction activity is a function of the background level of activity badgers are accustomed to and that which will be attributed to a proposed activity. The "disturbance free zone" is therefore site specific.
- 4.2.4 The survey for badgers comprised an assessment of all suitable habitat within and outside the study area boundary (where this was possible) to a distance of 30m for indications of use by badgers.
- 4.2.5 Signs of badgers which were searched for included:
 - Setts - 'D' shaped entrances at least 25cms wide and wider than they are high with large spoil mounds
 - Discarded bedding at sett entrances (this includes grass and leaves)
 - Scratching posts on shrubs and trees close to a sett entrance

- The presence of badger hairs which are coarse, up to 100mm long with a long black section and a white tip
- Dung pit latrines and footprints
- Habitual runs through vegetation and beneath fences
- Hedgehog carcasses

4.3 Bats

- 4.3.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), and are included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, as a Protected Species. Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:
- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
 - Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
 - Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.
- 4.3.2 The Bat Conservation Trust Collins, J. (ed) (2023) issued guidelines on bat survey methodology, a key feature of their recommendation is for the undertaking of a pre-survey assessment - an initial desk-study and a walkover assessment of the survey area and its surrounding area to identify the relative value of the habitats present for bats and likely commuting routes. This is to be followed by a survey program that is appropriate to the likely level of bat activity within the survey area to be determined by and based on the experience of the surveyor.
- 4.3.3 The potential value of the survey area for foraging bats was assessed through consideration of two main factors: professional knowledge of bat ecology and foraging behaviour in combination with the geographical location, topography and habitats present within the survey area and surrounds.
- 4.3.4 Trees and structures on and within the survey area boundary were assessed for their potential to support roosting or hibernating bats. This comprised a close inspection of all trees and buildings on the site to allow an assessment of their potential to be used by bats to be made by a licensed surveyor.
- 4.3.5 Trees were all assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2023) and categorised as No potential, PRF-I or PRF-M. PRF I is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats. PRF M is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

4.4 Birds

- 4.4.1 All breeding birds, other than pest species, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 when building a nest, rearing young or sitting on eggs. Some bird species, such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), are protected when near an active nest site. Several birds are listed as Species of Principal Importance (SPI).

- 4.4.2 Bird species and behaviour was noted during the other field surveys. All areas are covered equally, in order to avoid the subjective survey of better quality 'bird habitat'.

4.5 *Survey limitations*

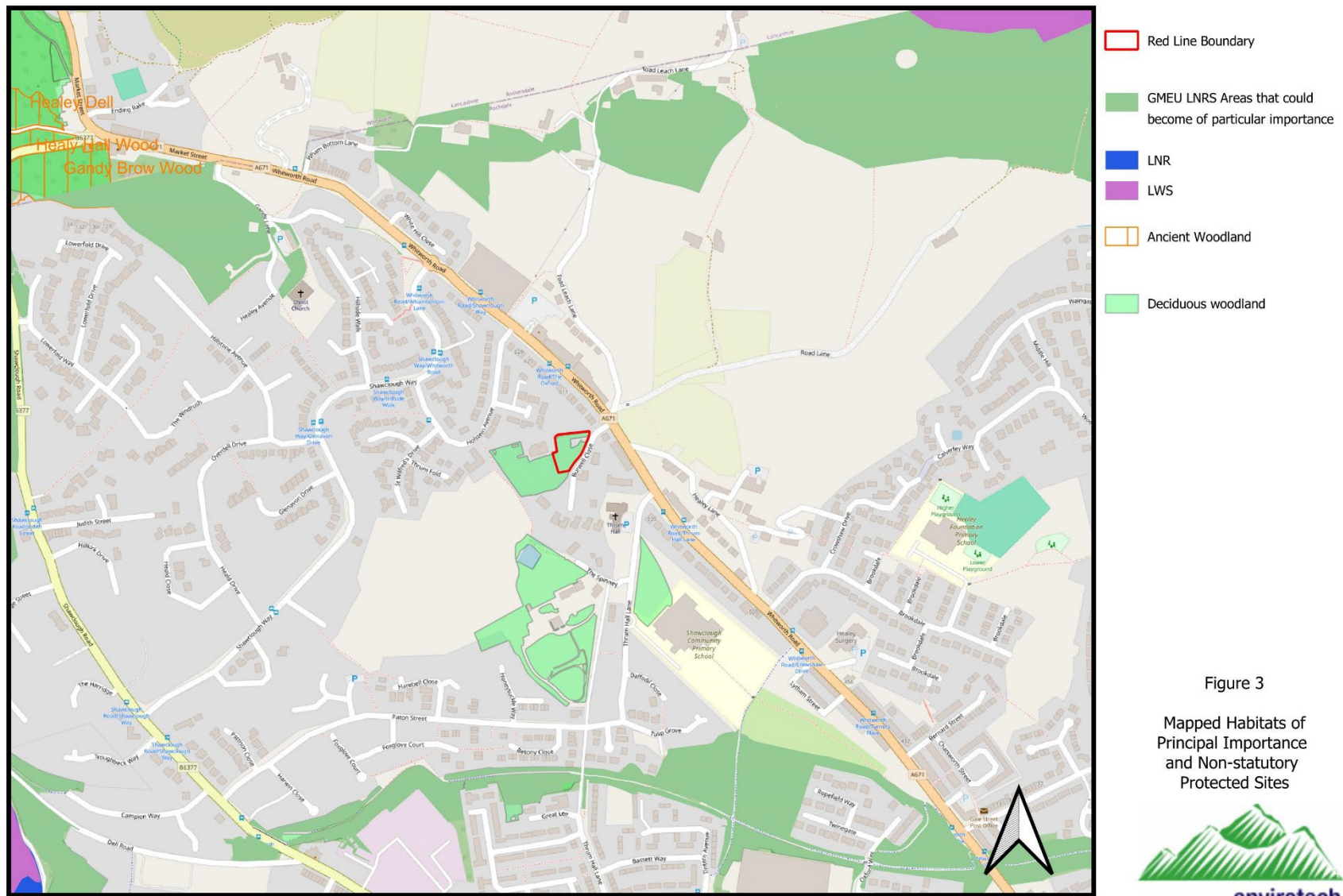
- 4.5.1 The survey was undertaken in winter. At this time of year plant species are less easily identified and the activity of some species is reduced.
- 4.5.2 Due to the habitats present on site there were no significant constraints in respect of identifying the botanical interest of the site.
- 4.5.3 The duration, extent and scope of the surveys were considered sufficient to plan appropriate mitigation and recommend additional precautionary survey work required prior to the commencement of work.
- 4.5.4 No significant survey limitations were encountered.

5. RESULTS

5.1 *Data Search*

- 5.1.1 Envirotech hold no records of protected or notable species for the site. There are however records of protected or notable species within 2km (Figure 2). These are discussed in the relevant sections below.
- 5.1.2 There are no non-statutory protected sites nearby (Figure 3). The site is in mapped priority habitat “deciduous woodland”.
- 5.1.3 There are no statutory protected sites nearby (Figure 4).







- Red Line Boundary
- Local Nature Reserves

Figure 4
Protected Sites
and Habitats



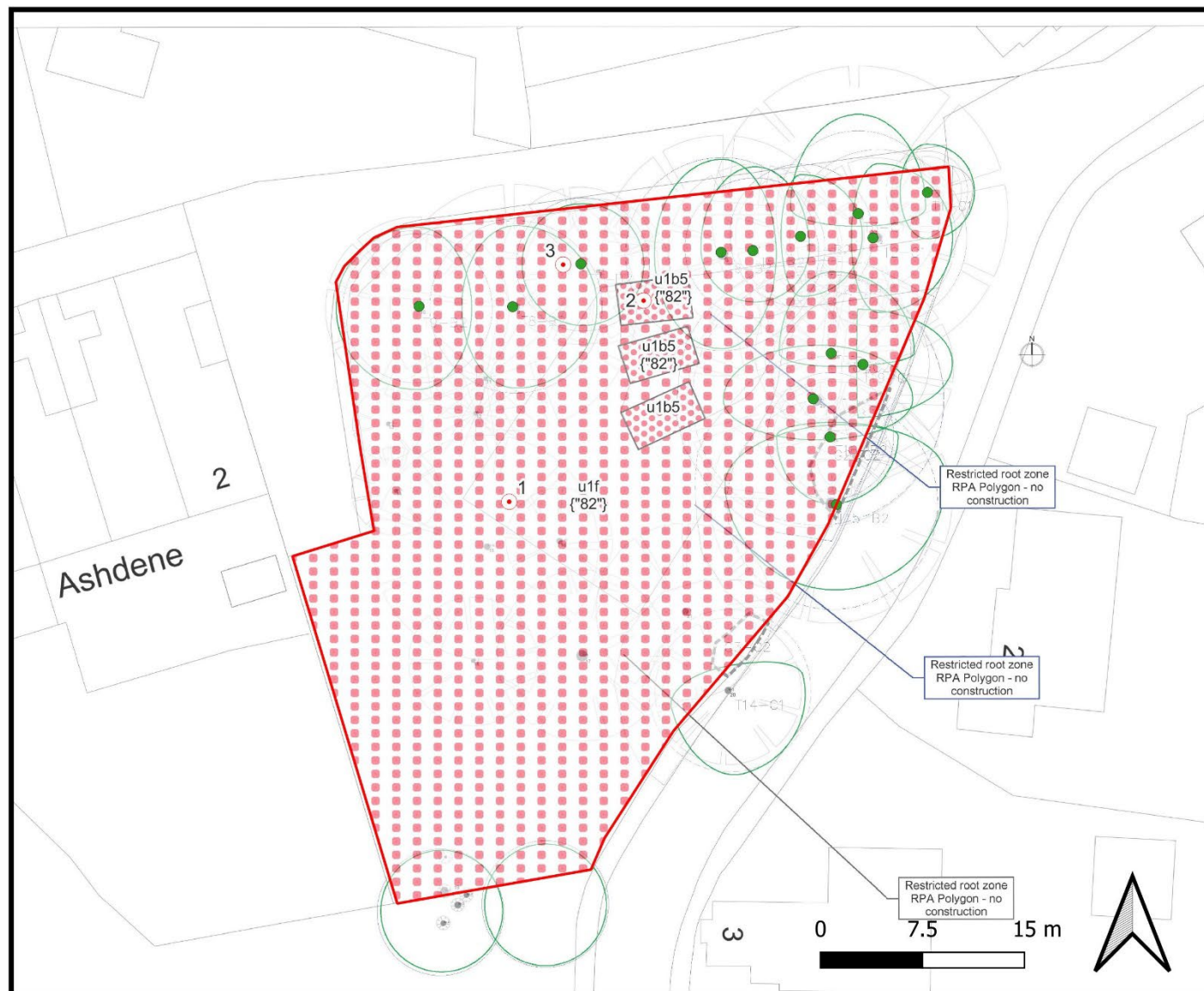
6. UKHabs V2 SURVEY RESULTS

6.1 *Habitat Results*

6.1.1 The site comprises an open and disturbed area of land with individual trees to its boundary.

6.1.2 See Figure 5 for the UK Habs V2 Plan and Table 1 for the descriptive Target Notes.

Target Note	Description	Comment
TN1	Sparsely vegetated land	An open area of land with extensive bare ground with limited vegetation cover. Annual Meadow Grass (<i>Poa annua</i>), Rosebay Willow herb (<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>) and Chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>)
TN2	Buildings	Three timber dilapidated garages
TN3	Trees	A line of mature trees to the site boundary dominated by Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)
Table 1 Details of Target Notes.		



- Red Line Boundary
- ⦿ Target Notes
- Rural Tree
- u1b5 Building
- u1f Sparsley Vegetated Urban Land

Figure 5
UK Habitats Survey
Map





The site comprises and open area
of bare ground



Dilapidated garages



Mature boundary trees above bare ground

Table 2 Photographs

6.2 Vegetation

- 6.2.1 Details of the plant species found on site are included in the target notes. Species recorded are all commonly occurring and undoubtedly occur elsewhere in similar habitats in the local area.
- 6.2.2 The open area of bare ground has a very poor species assemblage.
- 6.2.3 Trees around the site perimeter are mature and appear in good health.
- 6.2.4 There is no evidence of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam on the site. No other invasive or notable weed species listed on Schedule 9 (Section 14) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) was identified within the site or adjacent land.

6.3 Amphibian

- 6.3.1 The core development area has a low value to amphibians being open and exposed.
- 6.3.2 Structural diversity at ground level across the site is very poor. There are no areas with log, rubble piles or compost heaps which would be particularly favourable to amphibians.
- 6.3.3 Amphibians would be unlikely to attempt to cross the site as it comprises an area that is mostly open with uniform length grass. Whilst not a physical barrier to the dispersal of amphibians, the site is regarded as being a potentially hostile environment to them.
- 6.3.4 No suitable breeding ponds were identified in proximity to the site and there is a high degree of fragmentation due to the sites urban location.
- 6.3.5 The proposed development will not result in the permanent loss of or a substantial negative effect on any waterbodies or foraging areas linked to them.

6.4 Badger

- 6.4.1 Badger setts do not occur on site and a lack of feeding signs or runs across the site would suggest that they do not occur within 30m of site boundaries.
- 6.4.2 The proposed development will not impact on any existing badger runs or setts.

6.5 Bats

- 6.5.1 The foraging habitat at the site is very poor for bat species being open and exposed.
- 6.5.2 Despite being poor, the trees on the site boundary offer the best foraging habitat for bats on the site as the remainder of it comprises open and exposed bare ground. Whilst these areas of the site are the most structurally diverse but they are not considered exceptional in the local area. More extensive areas of medium and high quality habitat occur locally, including the gardens, woodland and existing residential dwellings adjacent.

- 6.5.3 It is not considered there would be significant degradation of foraging habitat as a result of the proposal so long as the trees are retained and or their loss is compensated for in any landscaping scheme.
- 6.5.4 All trees around the site perimeter were also assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2023) and assigned a risk category. All of the trees on site were Negligible Risk or PRF-I. PRF I is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
- 6.5.5 No indications of roosting or highly suitable roost sites were located within the trees. All of the trees could be adequately inspected using a ground based assessment and no additional aerial or emergence surveys were considered necessary to confirm risk. We understand all trees will be retained.
- 6.5.6 Garages on the site are all single skin, simple construction, with no enclosed voids or cavities into which bats could roost. They have negligible potential for use by bats.

6.6 *Birds*

- 6.6.1 There were no rot holes or cracks in the trees within the site boundary which would support tree hole nesting species such as woodpeckers.
- 6.6.2 There are no potential for the use of the garages by nesting birds.
- 6.6.3 A risk assessment of the site in respect of its future potential for and value to nesting birds could be adequately made.
- 6.6.4 Precautionary mitigation is considered appropriate.

6.7 *Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites*

Direct Impacts:

- 6.7.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would directly affect the dispersal of species between them or directly impact upon their integrity.
- 6.7.2 The habitats on site do not represent or are linked to those found in any of the statutory or non-statutory sites locally.

Indirect Impacts:

- 6.7.3 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would indirectly affect the dispersal of species between them or indirectly impact upon their integrity.

7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 *Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement*

- 7.1.1 The roots of trees on the site and its boundaries should be adequately protected during work in accordance with industry standards. All trees should as far as possible be retained in the scheme.
- 7.1.2 The landscaping scheme should utilise plants which are native and wildlife friendly. In particular night flowering species would be beneficial to bats. Wildflower seed could be used to plant verges to enhance the ecological value of the site and continuity between the site and the wider area.

7.2 *Amphibians*

- 7.2.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for these species. There are currently no suitable breeding sites on or near the site. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any amphibian activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

7.3 *Badger*

- 7.3.1 Badger setts are likely to occur within 2km of the site. These setts will be undisturbed by work but in order to minimise impacts on badgers passing over the site the following points should also be followed.
- All work must take place during daylight hours as badgers are more likely to be commuting over the site at night and this will ensure the risk to any badgers passing through the site will be minimised.
 - Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered. This will ensure badgers are not trapped during work.
 - All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.
 - Boundary fences/walls should incorporate gaps at their base to facilitate the passage of badgers across the site.

7.4 *Bats*

- 7.4.1 Work at night should be restricted, new planting within the site should enhance structural diversity and light spill onto the boundary trees should be minimised.

7.4.2 New roosting provision for crevice dwelling bats could be incorporated into the buildings on site or bat boxes could be erected in retained trees.

7.4.3 Any trees to be felled should be re-inspected for bats to confirm they remain absent.

7.5 Birds

7.5.1 Nesting by birds within the development area is considered unlikely to occur.

7.5.2 New planting within the site and the retention of trees on the site boundary will maintain the ecological functionality of the site for breeding birds.

7.5.3 Artificial bird nesting sites for swallow could be incorporated into the new buildings under the eaves in suitable locations or nest boxes could be erected in retained trees.

7.5.4 If nesting birds are found at the site all site works shall cease and further ecological advice shall be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

8. REFERENCES

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