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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:
Plot 4, Harvard Industrial Estate, Kimbolton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE280NJ

Client:
The Hill Family Property Ltd

Survey date:
21/04/2026

Project:
This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Huntingdonshire District Council.

This proposal can be described as "Change of use to a self-storage yard (Use Class B8)"

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Executive Summary

The following is work you will need to commission to obtain planning permission and to comply with legislation. Further information, along with opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, are outlined in Tables 1, 3 & 4 of this report.

Key Findings
Precautionary working methods are required for the following species: • Small mammals • Badgers • Reptiles • Birds • Hazel dormice

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Introduction and Context

Introduction

The aim of the PEA was to obtain data on existing ecological conditions, and to conduct a preliminary assessment of the likely significance of ecological impacts on the proposed development.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd on 7th January 2025. This report was conducted within the same red line boundary and found the habitats on site to be comprised of bramble scrub and other developed land. Precautionary working methods were recommended for badgers, reptiles, amphibians, hazel dormice and birds.

Methodology

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.

Limitations

Whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report is a preliminary assessment and does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. Nor does it represent a full botanical assessment. It assesses the likelihood of protected, notable and important habitats and species being present, based on a site and landscape level habitat value-based risk assessment. This is based upon the ecology, biology and known distribution of species as currently understood.

A biological records data search has not been undertaken. However, given the location of the site, the nature of the habitats present and the assessed suitability of the site for protected or notable species, it is not anticipated that the purchase of biological records data will add any significant weight or alter the conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report.

Results, Impacts and Recommendations

Site Location and Landscape Context

Table 1: Site location and landscape context

Site Location
The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 10756 69488 and has an area of approximately 0.29ha. The site sits on lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage and of high fertility and comprises one tree, a large area of bramble scrub and developed land; sealed surface. The wider landscape is mostly arable in character, with small areas of woodland pockets located to the south as well as small industrial and commercial properties surrounding the proposed development site to the south and west. The nearest large water body is Grafham Water, located ~2.59km southeast of the site. Such features likely enhance the area for a variety of species, including bats, amphibians, and reptiles.
Priority Habitats and Designated Sites
Summary of Survey Findings Priority Habitats There are 3 priority habitats located within 2 km of the site. These comprise deciduous woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and ancient woodland. The closest priority habitat comprises deciduous woodland, located ~0.1km north of the site, with all habitats within 2km of the site detailed below:

Priority Habitat Type	Quantity	Distance from site
Priority Habitat Inventory – Deciduous Woodland (England)	17	~0.01km north
Ancient Woodland (England)	1	~1.51km southeast
Priority Habitat Inventory – Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)	1	~1.58km southwest

The site is well connected to nearby arable land, predominantly to the north and east, while a small area of deciduous woodland is located

~0.1km north and separated from the site by additional arable land as well as a concrete disused access road.

Designated Sites
There are no other statutory sites within 2 km of the site.

The site does fall within the impact risk zone for Grafham Water SSSI however, the proposed development type is not listed as possible high risk with regard to this designation.

The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from the local records centre. Whilst some habitats in the wider landscape may host designations, the immediate environs of the site do not host habitats likely to be of designable quality.

Impacts

No direct impacts to any designated sites will occur as a result of the proposed development, due to the small scale and low overall impact of the development from such sites (where known), alongside additional factors such as distance in combination with connectivity disrupting barriers.

Recommendations

No recommendations.

Habitats and Flora

The site survey was undertaken by Adam Walding-Kelly BA (Hons), Graduate Ecologist.

Table 2: Survey weather conditions

Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
21/04/2026	10.7	64	8	26.1	None

Table 3: Habitats and flora

Habitats and Flora: Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations

This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.

Onsite habitats

Summary of Survey Findings

Bramble scrub (h3d) - Scattered trees (32)
The site is dominated by a majority area of bramble scrub, (see photos 1-3) which becomes denser towards the eastern boundary where it reaches ~3m in height. The bramble is sparse in areas towards the western boundary approaching the adjacent road, where the ground coverage is comprised of 6-8 species per square metre as listed. There were no invasive species or bracken coverage observed in this area, bare ground comprised less than <5%.

There is one small Elder *(Sambucus nigra)* on site, identified as the sole species present, which is native to the UK. The overall condition of the tree was assessed as moderate. No specific ecological niches were recorded for this species during the survey. The tree is young or semi-mature (see photo 7).

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Matrix, the tree was assessed to have a moderate condition value.

Target Note 1:
3 piles of rubble and construction waste were located within the area of bramble scrub. These measured ~1m and ~1-2m in width, with varying levels of vegetation growing through and within (see photos 4 & 5).

Species present within this habitat include common nettle (Urtica dioica), creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens), dog roses (Rosa canina), ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), cowslip (Primula veris), cow parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris), creeping thistle (Cirsium arvense), broad-leaved dock (Rumex obtusifolius), blackthorn (Prunus spinosa), cleavers (Galium aparine), ground-ivy (Glechoma hederacea) and great mullein (Verbascum thapsus).

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Matrix, this habitat is not subject to a condition assessment and is automatically assigned a poor condition.

Developed land; sealed surface (u1b) - Scattered scrub (10) - Ruderal or ephemeral (81)

A concrete strip of former access road lies adjacent to the eastern site boundary, running north to south. The area is subject to ruderal vegetation growth through the concrete, as well as overhanging bramble from the adjacent area of scrub (see photo 6).

Species present within this habitat include bramble (Rubus fruticosus), common nettle (Urtica dioica), ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), great mullein (Verbascum thapsus), cow parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris), cleavers (Galium aparine), ground-ivy (Glechoma hederacea) and creeping thistle (Cirsium arvense).

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Matrix, this habitat is not subject to a condition assessment and is automatically assigned a poor condition.

In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Matrix, the ruderal/ephemeral is determined to be good condition due to passing 3 out of 3 criteria.

Impacts

The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub, a single scattered tree and developed land, sealed surface. This is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. However, this could lead to a net loss in biodiversity at the site.

Recommendations

Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution must be implemented during construction. This should include the following measures:

- Remove only the minimum of habitat required to facilitate the development
- Use of Heras or other appropriate fencing to prevent encroachment by contractors onto retained habitats.
- Protect retained turf and soil resource from destruction and compaction using plastic matting and wooden boarding. Do not store skips and other heavy materials on retained turf.
- Grasscrete, cell web or any other porous surface treatment facilitating recovery of vegetation is preferred to hard standing.

The proposed development will require a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, to calculate the value of habitats on site and ensure the delivery of a minimum of 10% measurable biodiversity net gain.

Invasive / Non-native species

Summary of Survey Findings

No non-native invasive or otherwise problematic plants were recorded on site or are considered likely to be on site, but given seasonal limitations and the sites wider context, may be visible at other times of year.

Impacts

None

Recommendations

None.

Fauna

Table 4: Fauna

Fauna: Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations *This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.*
Roosting Bats
Summary of Survey Findings A review of the MAGIC database for European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. 2 EPSL were identified, as detailed below: *Table 4a: EPSL records within 2km of the site - bats*

EPSL reference	Bat species affected	Distance from site	Impacts allowed by licence
2018-33519-EPS-MIT	Common & Soprano pipistrelle	~1.54km north	Destruction of a resting place
2014-4763-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle & Brown long-eared	~1.97km south	Destruction of a resting & breeding place

No buildings or trees were present on site with suitable roosting features for bats to utilise.

Impacts

No impacts on roosting bats are anticipated.

Recommendations

None.

Foraging and Commuting Bats

Summary of Survey Findings

Bramble scrub could be used by local bat populations for foraging and commuting. In addition, the site is well connected to more suitable habitats in the wider landscape such as an area of deciduous woodland located ~0.1km north of the proposed development.

Impacts

The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub and a single tree. Given the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, this is likely to be inconsequential for bats.

The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of lighting on adjacent retained habitats to the south and east of the site.

Recommendations

A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during and post-development, which will be designed to incorporate the measures laid out in the latest (2023) bat lighting guide Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting.

Enhancements

The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development:

- Planting of locally characteristic tree, shrub and hedgerows to increase foraging opportunities.

Amphibians

Summary of Survey Findings

A review of MAGIC database found no granted EPSL for great crested newts (GCN) within 2km of the site.

A check was also completed for great crested newt class survey license returns and historic pond surveys. No records were identified.

No ponds are located on, or adjacent to, the site. There are no ponds within ~500m of the proposed development site.

The bramble scrub on site provides suitable foraging, commuting and refuge habitat for common amphibians. There is an absence of any ponds or watercourses within 500m of the proposed development, which deprives the site of the required suitable aquatic habitat needed to support a population.

Impacts

Due to a lack of ponds or watercourses within 500m of the proposed development site, it is considered unlikely that great crested newts would be present and therefore impacts of the proposed development to amphibians are determined to be acceptably low.

Recommendations

None.

Reptiles

Summary of Survey Findings

The bramble scrub and rubble piles on site provides suitable shelter, hibernation, foraging and basking opportunities for reptiles. The wider landscape offers additional habitat for reptiles in the form of an area of deciduous woodland as well as arable land and concrete roads. As such, the presence of reptiles on site cannot be discounted.

Impacts

The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub, rubble piles and a single tree. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local reptile populations owing to the presence of further suitable habitat adjacent to the southern boundary of the site

in the form of additional scrub. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.

Recommendations

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to reptiles, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures:

- Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the reptile hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible.
- A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any reptiles to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter reptiles from the working area.
- Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent reptiles from utilising these areas.
- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

Enhancements

The site could be enhanced for reptiles post-development with the inclusion of log piles (created from felled materials) and planting of areas of native shrubs, to provide sheltering opportunities.

Birds

Summary of Survey Findings

No evidence of nesting birds was identified on or within the bramble scrub or single tree on site, however the density of the bramble scrub in places meant that some nesting sites may have been missed during the survey. The scrub provides suitable shelter and could be used by common nesting birds, while a single Greater Whitethroat (Curruca communis) was hear and then visually confirmed on site flying above the on site scrub.

The wider landscape provides further suitable habitat in the form of deciduous woodland and arable land, with local populations likely to migrate to the site for refuge or foraging.

Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.

Impacts

Bramble scrub and a single tree will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local bird populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, the proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.

Recommendations

Any vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.

Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests, depending on species present, until the young have fledged.

Badgers

Summary of Survey Findings

The bramble scrub on site offers foraging, commuting and sett excavation opportunities for badgers. No badger setts were noted on site or within a 30m radius of the site, where accessible. No evidence of badgers was found on site. The wider landscape lacks large woodland areas which are likely to host established populations, however a small area of deciduous woodland is located ~0.1km north of the site, as well as arable land within the wider landscape. As such, the presence of foraging, commuting, and sheltering badgers on site cannot be discounted.

Impacts

No works will be undertaken within 30m of a badger sett. The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub and a single tree. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local badger populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of badgers, if present.

Recommendations

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to badgers, further badger surveys are considered to

be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:
• Heras fencing will be erected around the working area to prevent encroachment into retained habitats where badger setts could be present.
• Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
• Any pipework exceeding 150mm will be capped overnight.
• The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers could use.
• Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
• In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Riparian animals

Summary of Survey Findings

There are no riparian habitats on or adjacent to the site.

Impacts

Otters
No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.

Water Vole
No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.

Recommendations

Otters
None.

Water Vole
None.

Hazel dormouse

Summary of Survey Findings

The bramble scrub on site may provide some shelter and foraging opportunities for hazel dormice, however there is a lack of connectivity

between further habitat via connected hedgerows or woodland, with the nearest woodland located ~0.1km north.

The proposed development site does lie within the known area of hazel dormice, and 10 individuals were released at Brampton Wood in 2023 (Beds, Cambs, Northants Wildlife Trust), located ~7.95km east of the site. Given the lack of woodland habitats on, or adjacent to and suitably connected to the site, the presence of hazel dormice is considered unlikely.

Impacts

Bramble scrub and a single scattered tree will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local dormouse populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of dormice, if present.

Recommendations

Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to dormice, further dormouse surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:

- Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the dormouse hibernation season (November to March) insofar as is possible.
- Heras fencing will be erected around the working area to prevent encroachment into retained habitats where dormice could be present.
- A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for dormice.
- In the unlikely event that a dormouse or evidence of dormouse is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Invertebrates

Summary of Survey Findings

The site provides limited habitat value for a variety of commonplace species but is unlikely to support important species and assemblages. In particular, the areas of rubble piles will provide value to lithophilic invertebrates.

Impacts

The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub and a single scattered tree. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local invertebrate populations owing to the presence of more extensive habitat locally.

Recommendations

No further surveys required.

The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for invertebrates:

- Retention of scrub pockets
- Planting of pollinator friendly grassland species
- Installation of insect hotels
- Incorporation of log piles/dead wood
- Incorporation of bee bricks into the fabric of the new building. These should be installed 0.5m above ground level on a south-facing elevation with no obscuring vegetation
- Creation of rock and brash piles

Other e.g. small mammals

Summary of Survey Findings

The scrub on site offers suitable foraging, sheltering and commuting opportunities for small terrestrial mammals such as rabbits and hedgehogs. The site is well connected to further habitats within the wider landscape, including an area of deciduous woodland located ~0.1km north of the site. which are likely to host established populations.

Impacts

The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub and a single scattered tree. The loss of such habitats is unlikely to result in a reduction in small mammal/hedgehog habitat, due to the presence of alternative habitat within the wider landscape. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs or rabbits, if present.

Recommendations

A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:

- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- Any pipework exceeding 100mm will be capped overnight.
- The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- If any small mammals are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

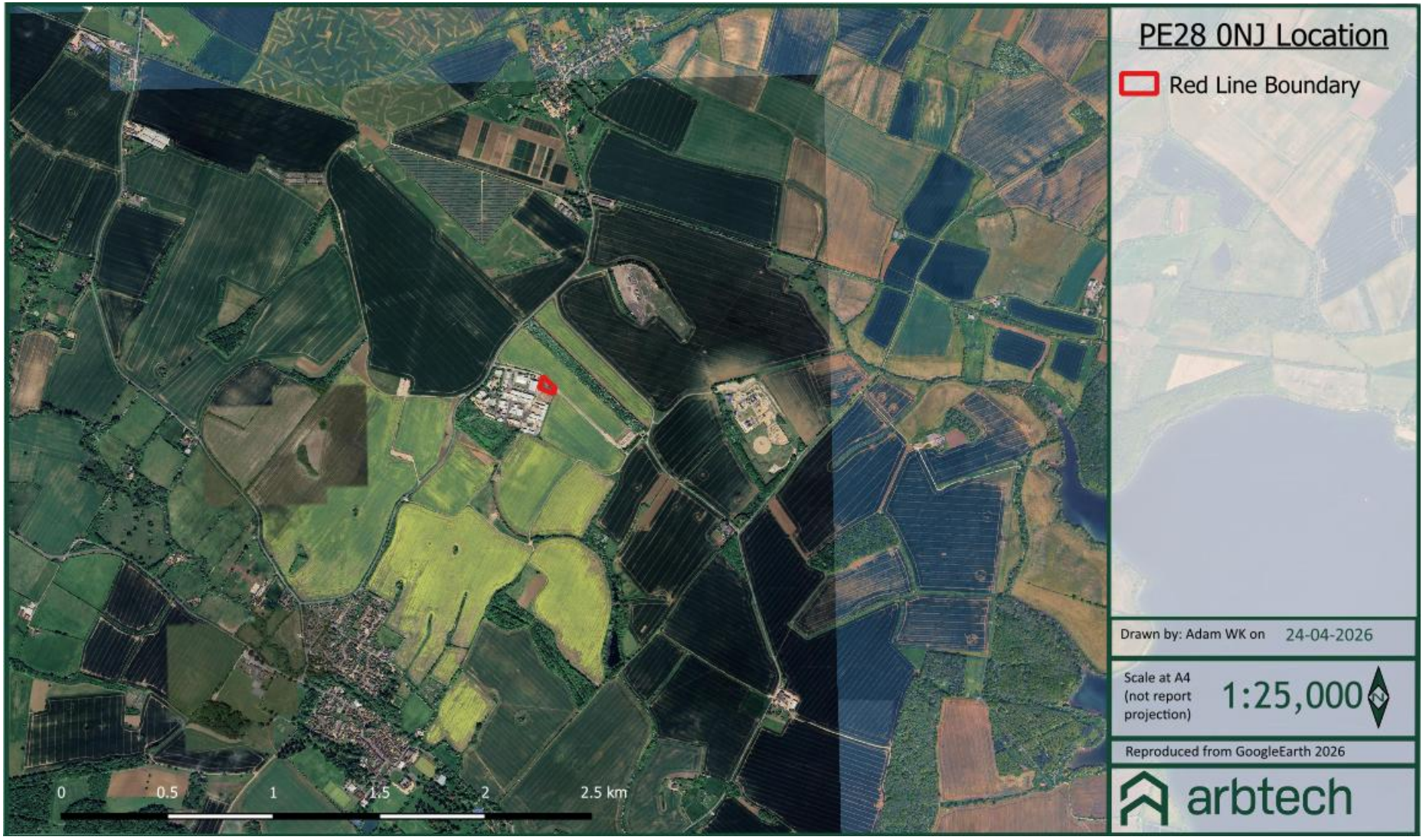
The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs:

- Creation of fence gaps (14cm x 14cm) to enable small mammals to travel freely through the site
- Creation of brash piles
- Installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas.

Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Habitat Survey Plan



Appendix 4: Site Photographs



Photo 1: Bramble scrub



Photo 2: Bramble scrub



Photo 3: Bramble scrub



Photo 4: (Target Note 1) Construction waste pile located adjacent to the western boundary



Photo 5: (Target Note 1) A rubble pile located adjacent to the western boundary



Photo 6: Developed land; sealed surface adjacent to the eastern boundary



Photo 7: Elder (Sambucus nigra)

Appendix 5: Baseline Condition Assessments

Table 6a: Scattered trees condition assessment.

	Criteria Description	Criteria Passed?
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	**Y**
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	**Y**
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	**N**
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	**Y**
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	**N**
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	**Y**
		Total 4/6
	Condition Moderate due to passing 4 of 6 criteria and all essential criteria.	

Table 6b: Ruderal/ephemeral condition assessment.

	Criteria Description	Criteria Passed?
A	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	**Y**
B	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	**Y**
C	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area. **Note – to achieve good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).**	**Y**
		Total 3/3
	Condition Good due to passing 3 of 3 criteria and all essential criteria.	

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Version Control

Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Adam Walding-Kelly BA (Hons), Graduate Ecologist	24/04/2026
Review	0.2	Leah Cook, Consultant Ecologist	29/04/2026
Final	1.0	Adam Walding-Kelly BA (Hons), Graduate Ecologist	29/04/2026