JOANNE ALDERTON ECOLOGY

Ecological Impact Assessment

Ref: JA 25-062 (v1)

Date: September 2025

Client Name: Mr N. McMorran
Site Name: 27 Lucks Lane, Buckden

Rev	Description of change	Date	Initials
1	Original draft	04.08.2025	JA

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VALIDITY OF REPORT

It should be noted that the information provided within this report provides details of the Site's current ecological situation. It is recommended that further advice should be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist as to whether the information provided requires updating in light of changing ecological conditions, should a planning application not be submitted within 12 months.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Terms of Instruction

1.1 Nick McMorran commissioned Joanne Alderton Ecology to undertake an ecological assessment of land at 27 Lucks Lane, Buckden ("the Site").

1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of ecological features present within the Site, to identify any ecological constraints and provide appropriate recommendations as to further how to maximise biodiversity within the Site, as part of future development proposals.

Documents Provided

1.3 As background information, the following documentation was provided:

- Existing Site Plan – Binney Sims dwg no. 1297/EP
- Proposed Site Plan – Binney Sims dwg no. 1297/2PP
- Site Location Plan – Binney Sims dwg no. 1297/SPLP

Site Description

1.4 The Site is centred at Ordnance Survey grid reference TL 19235 67451. The assessment covered the whole of the Site, which is approximately 0.014ha in area. The Site comprises a residential property and garden within the village of Buckden, Cambridgeshire. The Site location plan is provided at **Figure 1**.

Proposed Development

1.5 The proposals are to demolish the existing timber shed and part of the kitchen area to the rear of the property and replace it with a single storey extension ("the Proposed Development"), see plans at **Figure 2**.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan (BING Maps 2025)

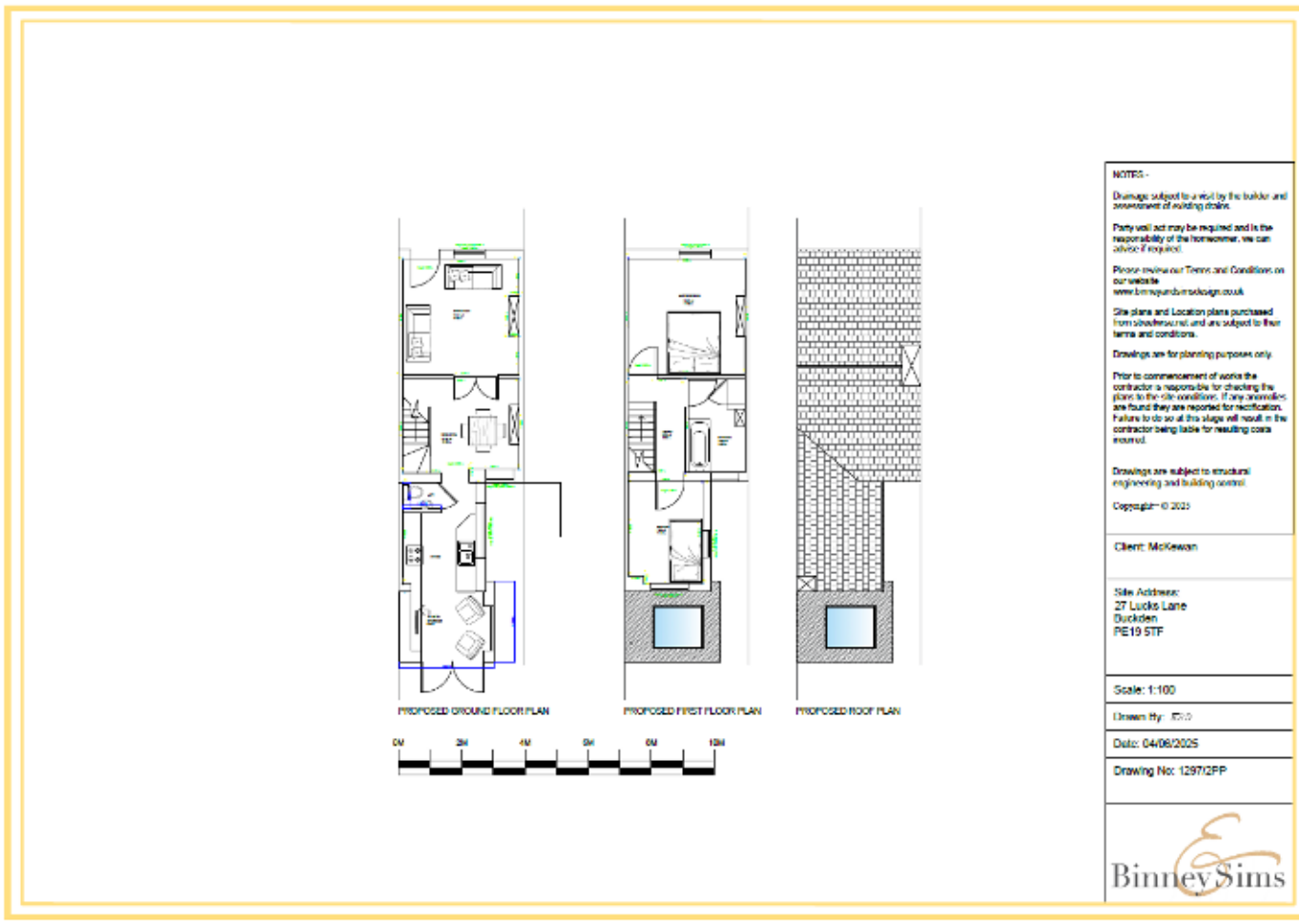


Figure 2: Plans for the Proposed Development

2. LEGISLATION

2.1 A summary of the legislative and planning context which has been used to inform this ecological assessment is provided below.

Legislation

2.2 Several tiers of legislation protect wildlife and habitats within England and Wales, the highest of which being European legislation. A summary of relevant legislation is provided below:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (the WCA).
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC).
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Policy

2.3 The planning policy framework that relates to nature conservation and biodiversity in Huntingdonshire is provided at two levels: nationally through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and locally through policies in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2019-2036.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The methodology for the ecological assessment was split into two parts: a desk study, and a habitat survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

Desk Study

3.2 Existing ecological information on the Site and surrounding area was requested from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC). The purpose of the desk study was to collect baseline information to identify statutory and non-statutory designated sites, legally protected species and species of conservation concern within a 2km radius of the Site in line with CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017).

3.3 A review of online resources, including the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database was also undertaken to establish the ecological context for the Site (accessed 1st September 2025). The MAGIC database was also reviewed to identify any designated sites of European Importance within 2km of the Site.

3.4 The Local Biodiversity Action Plan was reviewed to consider any potential effects to or use of the Site by targeted habitats or species listed. In addition, Ordnance Survey and aerial mapping was reviewed to identify any ponds within 500m of the Site.

UK Habitat Classification Field Survey

3.5 A UK Habitat Classification survey (UK Hab) was undertaken by Joanne Alderton ACIEEM on 22nd August 2025 in good weather conditions (30% cloud cover, Beaufort Scale 0-1, 22°C) to assess the ecological value of the Site and whether further ecological survey effort was required.

3.6 The UK Hab survey was undertaken in accordance with standard methodology (Butcher *et al.*, 2020) utilising the UK Hab Professional edition up to Level 5, where possible, along with essential secondary codes.

3.7 The UK Hab methodology involves the classification of habitat types based on vegetation present. The Site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list provided for each habitat type identified. In addition, invasive plants were also searched for during the survey, as listed on Schedule 9 of the WCA.

3.8 Abundance and area coverage were recorded for all botanical species present. This was determined using the DAFOR scale detailed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: DAFOR Scale

Value	Species Abundance Percentage
D – Dominant	>75%
A – Abundant	51-75%
F – Frequent	26-50%
O – Occasional	11-25%
R - Rare	1-10%

3.9 The information is presented in accordance with the standard UK Hab survey format with habitat descriptions and a habitat map, which is provided at **Appendix 1**.

Principles of Ecological Evaluation

3.10 The evaluation of ecological features and an assessment of likely impacts should be based on available resources and the professional judgement of the ecologist concerned.

Ecological value of features should be undertaken in accordance with the approach outlined in the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018).

3.11 A five-point evaluation scale has been applied to assist with the identification of key features of ecological significance in relation to the proposed development. This is an arbitrary scale based upon characteristics of ecological importance as listed in CIEEM guidelines of 2018, which experience has shown is effective at this level of assessment.

3.12 In evaluating ecological features and resources, geographic frame of reference is considered. The value of an ecological feature is determined within a defined geographical frame of reference as detailed in **Table 2**:

Table 2: Classification of the value of ecological features and resources

Value	Importance	Species	Habitat
Very High	International	A regularly occurring population of an internationally important species, which is threatened or rare in the UK, where the population is a critical part of a wider population or where a species is at a critical phase in its life cycle at this scale.	An internationally designated site including SAC, SPA, Ramsar, or one proposed for designation. Sites supporting areas of priority habitats which are scarce at an international level of where it is needed to maintain the viability of a larger area at that level.
High	National	A regularly occurring population / number of a nationally important species which is threatened, or rare, where the population is a critical part of wider population or where a species is at a critical phase in its life cycle at this scale. A regularly occurring population of a nationally important species on the edge of its natural range. A species assemblage of national significance.	A nationally designated site i.e. SSSI, or one that meets the published criteria. Sites supporting areas of priority habitats which are scarce at a national level or where it is needed to maintain the viability of a larger area at that level.
Medium	Regional / County	A regularly occurring locally significant population of a species listed as being nationally scarce or a county Red Data book or BAP on account of its rarity. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a regionally / county important species or where the population is a critical part of a wider population or where a species is at a critical phase in its life cycle at this scale. A species assemblage of regional or county significance.	Sites supporting a viable area of a priority habitat which is scarce at a regionally or county level or where is needed to maintain the viability of a larger area. A County designated site or one that meets published criteria. Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites / potential Local Wildlife Sites at that level.
Low	Local	A population of a species that is listed in a district BAP because of its rarity in the locality and a species assemblage of local or district significance. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of district importance or where the population is a critical phase in its life cycle at this scale.	Sites / features that are scarce within the local area or district. Areas of habitat considered enriching appreciably the habitat resource within the context of the locality or which buffer those of a more important nature.
Site	Site Only	Species, which are not protected or rare in the local area and are not at a critical phase in its life cycle at this scale.	Habitats of very low importance and rarity but of ecological importance within the Site.

3.13 Ecological features may also be deemed to be of negligible value if they are deemed to be of very low ecological importance and / or rarity.

3.14 All habitats recorded will be considered for their status as a Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) as determined by Maddock (2011) and their S.41 status under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006, as amended).

3.15 Ecological features may be defined as:

- Statutorily protected (Natura 2000, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserves) or locally designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation);
- Sites and features of biodiversity value not designated in this way such as ancient woodland; or
- Species of biodiversity value or other significance, including those protected and controlled by law.

3.16 In addition, all incidental species recorded within the Site during the walkover survey or as part of the desk study will be evaluated for their S.41 status under the NERC Act (2006, as amended).

Faunal Survey

3.17 The Site visit also included specific protected species surveys including the following.

- Building inspection for bats
- Habitat Suitability Index Assessment for Great Crested Newts

Building inspection

3.18 The part of the building to be affected by the Proposed Development within the Site was subject to an external inspection to search for evidence of bat activity.

3.19 The inspection was undertaken to search for any signs of use by bats, such as droppings or staining, and to identify any potential access points. Binoculars and a high-powered torch were used to inspect any inaccessible areas more closely.

3.20 Where no direct or indirect evidence of roosting bats were confirmed, buildings were categorised as being of 'high', 'moderate', 'low', 'negligible' or 'none' suitability to support roosting bats based on the type and number of suitable bat features present, in accordance with best practice guidance.[1]

- High suitability – one or more potential roosting sites present within a structure, that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
- Moderate suitability – one or more potential roosting sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
- Low suitability – one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate condition and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by a larger number of bats.

[1] Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition (2023)

- Negligible suitability – No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats: however; a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparent unsuitable features on occasion.
- No suitability – no habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) for Great Crested Newts (GCN)

3.21 Accessible ponds within 250m of the Site were assessed for their suitability to support great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the methodology and criteria set out by Oldham et al. (2000), which assesses the likely presence of GCN in ponds based on a number of parameters, such as pond size, location, shading, presence of fish and wildfowl and macrophyte cover.

3.22 Data from the field assessment are used to calculate a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI), represented by a number from zero to one, as demonstrated in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Habitat Suitability Assessment Scoring

HSI Score	Pond Suitability for GCN
<0.5	Poor
0.5-0.59	Below Average
0.6-0.69	Average
0.7-0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

Limitations

3.23 The botanical work was undertaken within an acceptable survey period for the habitats present within the Site and, there were no other limitation in terms of survey effort.

4. RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Designated Sites – Statutory Sites

4.1 The Site is not designated, and there are no statutory designated sites within 2km.

4.2 Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a tool developed by Natural England to provide an initial assessment of the potential risks to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The Site is located within the IRZ of Grafham Water SSSI, which lies approximately 2.5km to the west of the Site. However, the type of development proposed does not require any further consultation with Natural England, therefore based on its minor nature, the impact of the Proposed Development is expected to be **neutral** in respect of statutory sites.

Designated Sites – Non-Statutory Sites

4.3 The plan presented at **Figure 3** shows the location of all non-statutory sites within 2km of the Site. There are six County Wildlife Site (CWS) and one protected road verge, within 2km of the Site.

4.4 Settling Bed East of Silver Street CWS is the closest designated site and lies approximately 0.65km to the north-east of the Site. It is designated for its common reed swamp habitat.

4.5 Based on the distance from the Site and the minor nature of the Proposed Development, any impacts on non-statutory sites are expected to be **neutral.**



Figure 3: Summary map of designated sites within 2km of the Site (CPERC, 2025)

Habitats

4.6 There are no records of any priority habitats within the Site or adjacent to it. The location of the habitats below and other features of ecological interest is presented at **Appendix 1**. The habitat descriptions below should be read in conjunction with this plan and any associated target notes.

4.7 Habitats within the Site were as follows:

- u1b5 – buildings
- u1b6 – developed land: sealed surface
- u1 – vegetated garden

4.8 The Site comprised a single residential property accessed directly from Lucks Lane. The garden was mainly laid to lawn to the west of the property with some formal beds on the northern and southern boundaries of the garden area. These beds were planted with ornamental species including *Rudbekia sp. Astilbe sp.* bamboo *Bambusa sp.* and *Buddleia sp.* There was also some native shrub planning of yew *Taxus baccata* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* alongside hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*.

4.9 The lawn was cut to less than <50mm at the time of the survey and likely maintained through regular mowing in the summer months. The grass was dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium* perenne with frequent red fescue *Festuca rubra* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium.* There was also occasional greater plantain *Plantago major*.

4.10 In the far west of the Site was a patio area, which was laid with slabs and there was a semi-mature holly tree, approximately 8m high in the south-western corner, referred to as **T1**.

4.11 The residential property within the Site (B1) was a red brick, two-storey, central terrace building. Adjoining B1 was a timber shed used for storing some gardens materials (B2), this was access via a patio area from the back door of B1. There was a shared access running across the western boundary of B2 which connected into the garden of the neighbouring property, 25 Lucks Lane. Beyond this access was a larger wooden shed, also used for storage of garden paraphernalia (B3).

4.12 These habitats were of **Site only** ecological importance.



Figure 4: Site from the western boundary looking east



Figure 5: Garden area within the Site facing west from B3



Figure 6: Western end of the Site including T1



Figure 7: B1 and B2 looking towards the east



Figure 8: B3 looking west

Species

4.13 Protected species are evaluated in this section to identify any potential ecological constraints based on the results of the desk study records, signs of presence during the walkover survey, their s.41 status, extent and viability of existing habitat and ecological connectivity. This information is summarised in **Table 4** and discussed further below.

Building Inspection

4.14 Only part of B1 will be demolished as part of the Proposed Development, which appears to be an existing extension which is currently used as part of the kitchen. This area was a lean to, brick construction with slate tile roof with plastic guttering. There was no missing mortar within the brickwork, nor were there any slipped or lifted tiles within the roof of this area to B1.

4.15 There was no internal loft area within this area. There was no evidence of any bat droppings, feeding remains or staining around the external areas of this part of B1 and overall, the area of B1 to be impacted by the Proposed Development was considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.

4.16 B2 is a wooden lean to shed on the western end of B1 with a corrugated metal roof. It is used for storing garden materials and tools. Internally there was no evidence of bat use and whilst the door was ajar and may allow access for roosting bats, internally B2 was cobwebbed. Therefore, B2 was considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.



Figure 9: B2 and existing extension on B1



Figure 10: Internal view of B2



Figure 11: Extension to B1 which will be demolished

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) for Great Crested Newts (GCN)

4.17 There was one pond within 250m of the Site, which was within the garden of the neighbouring property, no.25, and a HSI assessment was completed on this waterbody (P1). The location of P1 is presented on the plans presented at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**.

4.18 The HSI score for P1 was 0.56, which is equivalent to 'below average', a copy of the assessment is provided at **Appendix 3**. P1 was a pre-moulded plastic pond within the garden area of 25 Lucks Lane (see **Figure 12** and **Figure 13**). P1 was surrounded by paving and a rockery area, which adjoined the garden of 25 Lucks Lane to the north and west.

4.19 There are no formal records of GCN within P1, although the landowner did provide anecdotal evidence at the time of the survey.

4.20 Given the proximity of P1 to the Site and the potential that it may be used by GCN, despite its HSI score, consideration must be given to the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on GCN.

4.21 The Natural England risk assessment tool has been completed to assess the potential impacts, a copy of this is presented at **Figure 14**. Ultimately there will be a loss of hardstanding habitat (part of B1, all of B2 and some paving slabs), which is not considered suitable for GCN and this will be replaced with the Proposed Development.

4.22 P1 is not likely to be a breeding pond for GCN and whilst this cannot be confirmed, there is not expected to be any damage or loss of this pond as it is outside of the Site boundary. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that there will be any offence as a result of the Proposed Development and non-licensed avoidance measures are recommended within **Section 5**.



Figure 12: P1 within the garden of 25 Lucks Lane



Figure 13: Connectivity between P1 and the Site, looking south.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Figure 14: Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Result

Table 4: Protected Species Results and Evaluation

Species	Desk Study Results	Evidence on Site	Potential to Support Presence on Site	Likely Impact of Proposed Development
Amphibians	Yes – 19 GCN records for sites withing Diddington during 2015 and 2017, approximately 1.5km to the south of the Site. There were no records of any licence returns or European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences within 2km of the Site. There was also several records of common toad *Bufo bufo* with the closest record around 700m to the north-east of the Site.	None	No – the habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for this species, being mainly developed land and vegetated garden. It is possible that P1, which lies adjacent to the Site may hold GCN.	**Neutral** – there will be no loss suitable habitat for GCN or any direct impacts on P1. The Proposed Development will only impact existing areas of building or hardstanding, which are unlikely to be used by GCN.
Badgers	Yes – There were 29l records of badger within 2km of the Site, most connected to road traffic accident sightings on the A1 of the B661 within Buckden.	None	No – the habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for this species, being mainly developed land and vegetated garden.	**Neutral** - there is no potential within the Site.
Bats	Yes – common species including common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and brown-long eared bat *Plecotus auritus,*as well *Myotis* species and *Noctula* species. The closest record was for a pipistrelle species roost in St Mary's Church, around 300m to the north of the Site. There were no records of any European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences within 2km of the Site.	None	No – the habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for this species, being mainly developed land and vegetated garden. The buildings within the Site to be impacted by the Proposed Development are unsuitable for bats.	**Neutral** - there is limited potential within the Site.

Species	Desk Study Results	Evidence on Site	Potential to Support Presence on Site	Likely Impact of Proposed Development
Birds	Yes - common woodland, garden and farmland species. There were also numerous records of waterfowl connected with Buckden Gravel Pits.	Common garden bird species	No – the habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for this species, being mainly developed land and vegetated garden. There was no evidence of birds using the buildings that will be directly impacted by the Proposed Development.	**Neutral** - as there is limited potential within the Site
Reptiles	No	None	No – the habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for this species, being mainly developed land and vegetated garden.	**Neutral** - as there is limited potential within the Site.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

5.1 Recommendations have been provided within this report that will safeguard the existing ecological interest features within the Site. Wherever possible, measures to enhance ecological and biodiversity value have also been set out.

Designated Sites

5.2 The Site is not designated, and the closest designated site is a CWS, 0.65km away. Based on the distance from the Site and the minor nature of the works, the likely impact of the Proposed Development is **neutral** on all designated sites and the therefore no further recommendations are made in this respect.

Habitats

5.3 All of the habitat within the Site was of '**Site only**' ecological importance or lower and none of them were HPIs.

5.4 The majority of the habitat within the Site will be retained, there will be a loss of part of B1, all of B2 and some of the paving area surrounding these buildings.

Species - Further surveys

5.5 Based on the assessment of the potential for SPIs within the Site, no further survey work is considered necessary.

Development Considerations

Before and During Construction

General safeguards

5.6 General construction safeguards should be implemented as a precaution, which will act to protect mammals, such as fox or hedgehog as well as amphibians:

- All contractors and site personnel will be briefed on the potential presence of wildlife within the Site.
- The wooden shed to the rear of the property should be dismantled by hand outside of the hibernation period for amphibians (Nov-Feb). Any common amphibians that may be taking refuge within this area should be safely moved into the garden away form the construction work.
- In the event that a GCN is found all works must stop immediately and a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) must be contacted.
- All building materials must be stored off of the ground to ensure they do not become used for hibernating or resting animals. Pallets should be used where materials cannot be stored in buildings or offsite.
- Any trenches or deep pits within the Site are to be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape should an animal enter. This could simply be in the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface. This is particularly important if the trench fills with water.
- Any trenches will be inspected each morning to ensure no animals have become trapped overnight.
- Food and litter should not be left within the working area overnight.
- Should any animals be encountered during the works, a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) should be contacted for advice.

Lighting

5.7 Night working should be avoided where possible.

5.8 Any exterior lighting installed as part of the Proposed Development should comply with a lighting strategy formulated in accordance with the 'Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note (2023) https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released .

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.9 The Proposed Development is being made under a householder application and therefore is considered exempt under section 5 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

6. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Habitat Survey Map

519190 519200 519210 519220 519230 519240 519250 519260

267480 267470 267460 267450 267440 267430 267420

N

P1

u1b5 (B3) u1b5 (B2) u1b5 (B1)

u1b6

u1

u1b6

T1

0 5 10 15 20 m

Legend:

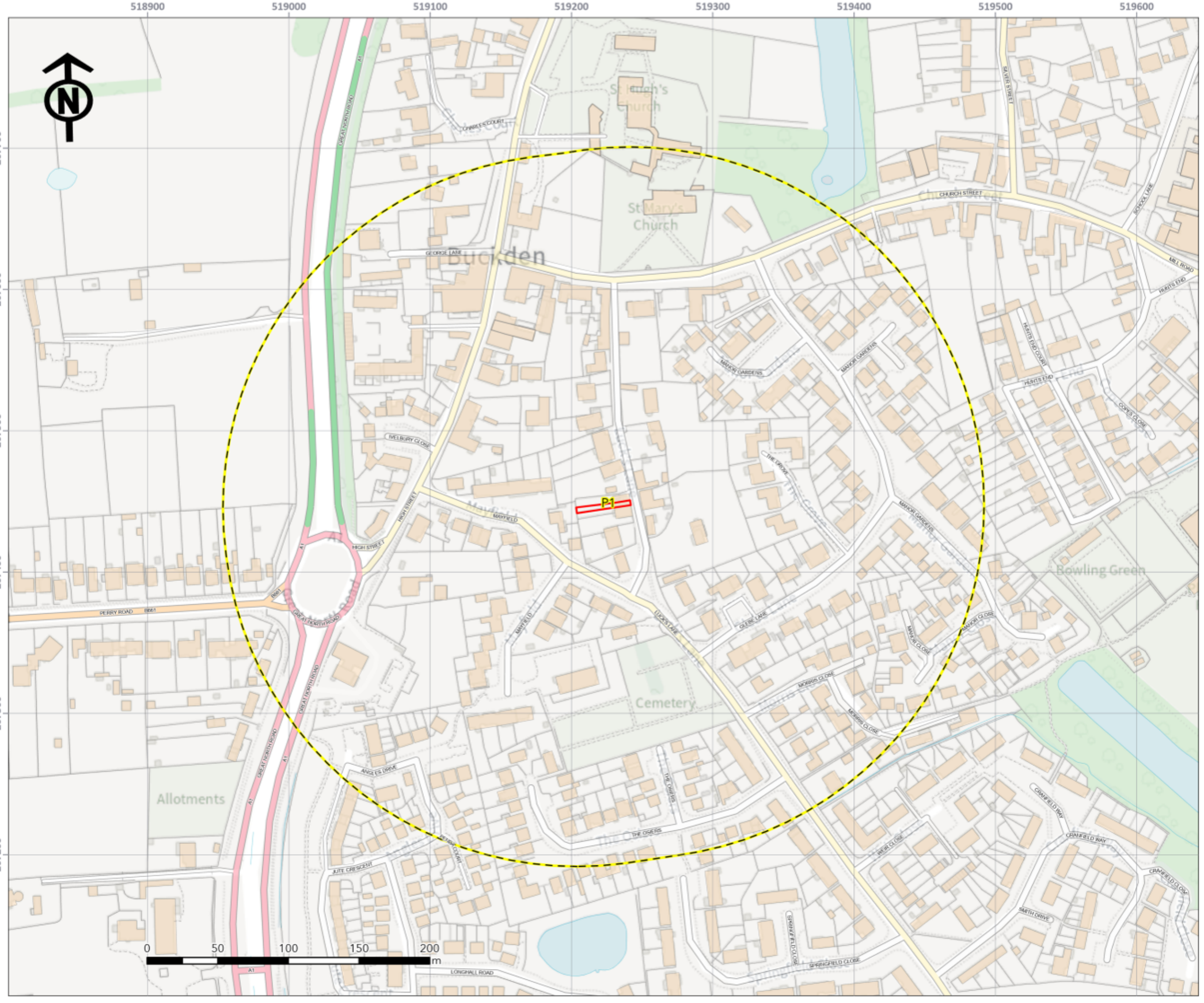
- Site boundary
- Urban: Developed land, sealed surface,u1b6
- Urban: Developed land, sealed surface (Building), u1b5
- Urban: Vegetated garden, u1
- Pond location
- Individual tree

Joanne Alderton Ecology

Title:	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Client Name:	Mr Nick McMorran
Site Name:	27 Lucks Lane, Buckden
Ref:	JAE 25-062 01
Version:	v3
Scale:	1:250 @ A3
Date:	16/09/2025

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Appendix 2: Pond Location Plan



Legend:

- Site boundary
- 250m Site buffer
- Pond location

Joanne Alderton Ecology

Title:	Pond Location Plan
Client Name:	Mr Nick McMorran
Site Name:	27 Lucks Lane, Buckden
Ref:	JAE 25-062 02
Version:	v2
Scale:	1:2,500 @ A3
Date:	16/09/2025

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Appendix 3: HSI Calculation

ARGUK GCN HSI Calculator

	Pond Name	P1
	Grid Ref	
SI No	SI Description	SI Value
1	Geographic location	1
2	Pond area	0.2
3	Pond permanence	0.9
4	Water quality	0.33
5	Shade	1
6	Water fowl effect	1
7	Fish presence	1
8	Pond Density	0.5
9	Terrestrial habitat	0.33
10	Macropyhyte cover	0.3
	HSI Score	**0.56**

Pond suitability (see below)

Categorisation of HSI Score	
HIS Score	**Pond Suitability**
< 0.50	Poor
0.50 - 0.59	Below average
0.60 - 0.69	Average
0.70 - 0.79	Good
> 0.80	Excellent

Based on ARGUK advice note 5 - Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index