Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Fenland Fisheries, Cambridgeshire

July 2025

Prepared by:

Brown & Co

The Fairways
Wyboston Lakes
Great North Road
Bedfordshire
MK44 3AL

Prepared for:

Ben Newell

Fenland Fisheries
Meadow Drove
Earith
Huntingdon
PE28 3SA

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Principal Author:	Authoriser:
[redacted]	
Assistant Ecologist Megan Carter BSc (Hons) MSc	Senior Ecologist Ryan Clark BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM

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Executive Summary

Site

Location	Land at Fenland Fisheries, Meadow Drove, Earith, Huntingdon, PE28 3SA
Site Context	The Site is a flat parcel of land dominated by modified grassland to the southeast. A building and hardstanding are present to the northwest.
Landscape Context	Habitats within the vicinity of the Site were dominated by agricultural field parcels. Various hedgerows, woodland blocks, waterbodies, and a small urban area was also present.

Project

Proposed works	Proposals for the Site include the establishment of new cabins to the southeast and a new residential dwelling to the northwest.
Ecological Background	No previous ecological assessment is known to have been undertaken on habitats within the Site at the time of writing.

Methods

Objectives	• Outline all recorded ecological constraints associated with the Site with a focus on protected and notable habitats and species. • Provide a baseline of onsite habitats and other ecological features. • Deliver specialist advice to ensure compliance with relevant environmental and wildlife legislation, and current best practice guidelines.
Approach	A desk-based assessment was conducted using readily available online resources and local biological records up to 2 km from the Site boundary obtained from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre A UKHab survey of the Site was conducted by Brown & Co Assistant Ecologist Megan Carter on 25 March 2025. All habitats within the Site were identified, assessed, and the potential of the Site and immediate vicinity to support protected and notable species was estimated.

Results

Habitats	The Site is a flat parcel of land dominated by modified grassland to the southeast. A building and hardstanding are present to the northwest.
Species	Onsite habitats had potential to support roosting birds, great crested newts and foraging hedgehog in the form of grassland.

Recommendations

Further Work & Surveys

- Nesting Birds – clearance/management of any onsite vegetation higher than 300 mm should take place outside of the core nesting bird season (March-August inclusive). If this cannot be achieved, it is recommended that a pre-works check by a suitably qualified ecologist should take place within 48 hrs prior of any works.

Mitigation

- Onsite habitats & local designated Sites – various protection measures to discharge risks to these features.
- Hedgehog – any refugia with potential to be used by hedgehog should be avoided by the works.
- Other taxa – various recommendations to protect and mitigate risks to animals outlined in section 4.2.3.
- Environment – various recommendations to protect and mitigate risks to the environment outlined in section 4.2.4.

Enhancement

- Inclusion of biodiversity enhancement features outlined in section 4.3.1.
- General biodiversity enhancements recommendations are outlined in section 4.3.2.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

Brown & Co was commissioned by Ben Newall in April 2025 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Fenland Fisheries, Meadow Drove, Earith, Huntingdon PE28 3SA (NGR: TL 39339 75927) hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.

This PEA sets out the results of a desk-based study and a survey of the Site undertaken on 11 April 2025.

The Site is a flat parcel of land dominated by modified grassland to the southeast. A building and hardstanding are present to the northwest.

This report has been produced to support a planning application to erect new cabins and a residential dwelling.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 Present Context

The Site was a flat parcel of land at the northern extent of the village of Earith, Cambridgeshire (See Figure 1). The Site is dominated by modified grassland to the southeast and a building and hardstanding is present to the northwest.



Figure 1 – Site location (redline), showing the wider local landscape (© 2025 Microsoft Corporation, © 2025 Maxar, ©CNES (2025) Distribution Airbus DS).

Imagery taken from Aerial Imagery July 2025.

1.2.3 Landscape Context

The Site is situated in the centre of Cambridgeshire, and within the northern extent of the town of Earith. The wider landscape around the Site was dominated by agricultural field parcels, a mixture of arable and pastural with various waterbodies, woodland block, hedgerows and a small urban area is present within the vicinity of the Site.

Multiple public roadways, chiefly associated with the urban areas of Eairth and Colne are present within the local vicinity of the Site. Short Drove lies directly east of the Site.

Old Bedford River, a Statutory Main Rivers lies 220 metres southeast of the Site.

1.2.4 Connectivity

Considering the above outlined contextual features regarding the Site and its surrounding landscape, it is estimated that overland connectivity of the Site to local habitats is moderate owing to several actively farmed agricultural field parcels, public roadways, and urban infrastructure presenting minor dispersal barriers to terrestrial fauna, however, numerous interconnected hedgerows, field margins, and vegetated gardens are also present and are considered to allow facilitate some connectivity for these species.

Six waterbodies are present within 250 m of the Site. This, combined with the overland terrestrial connectivity described above, are considered to leave a moderate potential of semi-aquatic species with terrestrial life phases to commute to/from the Site.

It is further estimated that more mobile, flying species, such as bats, birds, and certain insect taxa, would be more readily able to commute to/from the Site.

2. Methods

All methodology associated with the onsite and desk-based elements of this document have been undertaken with reference to CIEEM (2017a and 2017b) and British Standards (2013) and adapted for the specific context of the Site and project proposals.

2.1 Objectives

The aim of this report is to provide a 1st-stage assessment of the Site and certain aspects of adjacent areas in regard to identifying and discussing any potential ecological constraints associated with the project. Such constrains include statutory designated sites and their associated Impact Risk Zones, protected and notable species and habitats, and invasive non-native species. A plan showing all onsite habitats and important ecological features within the zones of influence will be generated. Recommendations for further work/surveying, appropriate mitigation, and enhancement opportunities will be provided.

With reference to Delahay & Bartlett (2024) and other reviews of evidence-based approaches to ecological consultancy in Britain, this report seeks to critically analyse the methods employed where possible, and to provide full and current literature reviews at available opportunities, with particular focus on recommended outputs. So-called 'best practice guidance', including government and non-governmental organisation produced documents (not including laws and acts), is not assumed to be authoritative scientific advice at any stage of this report. Where more current or empirically robust literature is available on the various ecological and environmental principles, methods, and recommendations outlined in this assessment, these sources are laid-out, discussed and juxtaposed against 'traditional', perhaps alternative, narratives. Professional judgement based on project knowledge and survey observations are occasionally relied upon.

All standards, guidance, and professional opinions within this assessment are subject to ongoing review and scrutiny in the light of newly emerging data and information sources.

2.2 Mitigation Hierarchy

In applying the widely used professional guideline of the mitigation hierarchy (see Figure 2), the following processes for this report was adhered to:

Avoid – ecological features of note, as identified by this report, should be avoided in the first instance. This can be achieved by applying a compensatory design strategy that appropriately buffers said features or shifts the Site footprint.

Minimise – any potential adverse impacts identified in this report should be appropriately mitigated for in the design and project implementation phases.

Compensate – when avoidance and minimising options have been exhausted, impacts can be compensated for via project outcomes. Compensation should seek to provide adequate project and design options that will equal or exceed the impact to be compensated for.

Offset – the project has the opportunity to deliver enhancements to offset and exceed the requirements of avoidance, minimisation, and compensation.

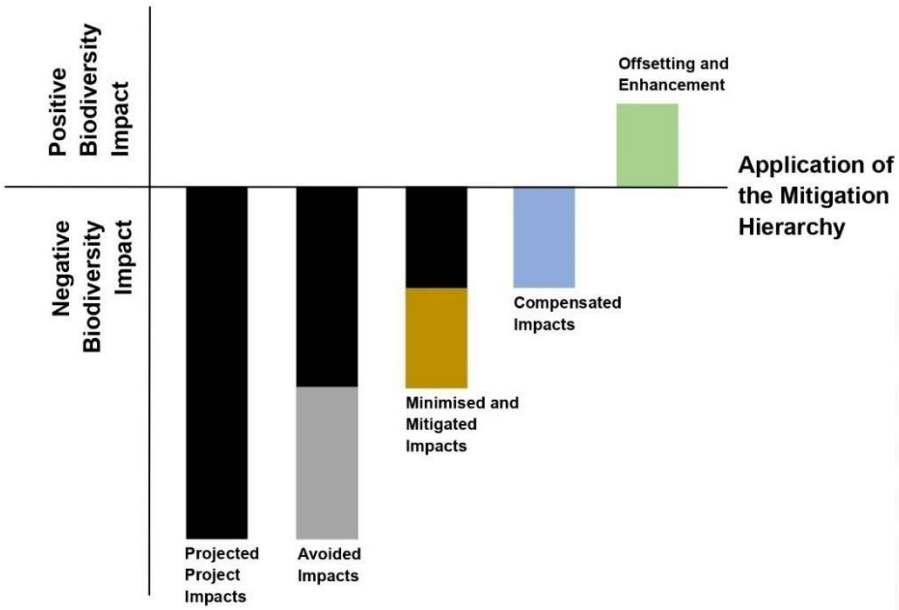


Figure 2 – Summary of the process of applying the mitigation hierarchy adhered to during this assessment.

2.3 Criteria of Importance

Statutory and non-statutory designated sites and habitats within the zones of influence were assessed on the following criteria to allocate their relative importance:

- Type of designation.
- Habitat Rarity.
- Protected, notable and/or threatened species records.
- Biodiversity – quantity of native of widely naturalised animal, plant and fungal species; and genetic diversity within individual species' populations.
- Diversity of habitat type, age, and structure.
- Connectivity on a Site, local vicinity, and landscape level.

2.4 Legislation and Policy

Appendix A sets out the national and local planning policy, as well as environmental and wildlife legislation relevant to the Site. The project must adhere to these documents at all times. The contents of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are written in part to avoid an offence being committed in regard to this policy and legislation.

2.5 Zones of influence

Zones of influence include the Site, any adjacent areas/features that could be impacted by the project (including hydrological and nutrient cycling disruption), and areas/features that could be temporarily impacted by the project, such as access routes and equipment and/or materials storage areas. Current guidance from CIEEM (2018) recommends that all zones of influence are assessed as part of ecological assessments.

Table 2.1 presents the zones of influence employed in this assessment.

Table 2.1 – *Zones of influence investigated during this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*

Ecological Feature	Zone of Influence
European statutory designated sites notified for bat populations	10 km
Statutory designated sites	5 km
Non-statutory designated sites	2 km
Local biological records and granted European Protected Species licences	2 km
Priority habitats (habitats of principle importance to biodiversity conservation in England listed under Section 41 in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 (as amended))—desk-based assessment	1 km
Non-priority habitats assessed at the time of survey	50 m
Badger (*Meles meles*) setts/activity	50 m
Bat suitable habitat – commuting and foraging	2 km
Bat roosting features	30 m
Beaver (*Castor fiber*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), and white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) suitable habitat/signs	100 m
Bird records (direct observations at the time of survey) of species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended)	500 m.
Waterbodies suitable as breeding sites for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)	250 m
Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) suitable habitat/signs	50 m
Reptile (direct observations at the time of survey and hibernacula/shelter searches)	30 m
Roman Snail (*Helix pomatia*) suitable habitat	30 m
Other protected species records (direct observations at the time of survey) listed on Schedules 5 and 8 of the WCA and/or European Protected Species (EPS) listed on the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (CHSR) 2017 (as amended) and suitable habitat	100 m
Priority species records (direct observations at the time of survey) as listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) such as brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*), and polecat (*Mustela putorius*)	50 m.
Other common and widespread species records (direct observations at the time of survey) such as small mammals and insects	10 m

2.3 Desk Study

A desk-based assessment was conducted of the following features:

2.3.1 *Statutory and Non-statutory Designated Sites Notified for Nature Conservation*

A search on Defra's online MAGIC tool was used to identify and assess statutory designated sites within the zone of influence. The local records provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) were used to set out the non-statutory designated sites located within the zone of influence. Descriptions of the sites were given using information set out in the biological records and information published by Natural England, e.g. SSSI citations. Distance (nearest 5 m), direction, connectivity, and any notified protected or notable species were also discussed where relevant. Statutory sites designated for non-conservation purposes, such as geological sites, were excluded from this assessment.

2.3.2 Priority Habitats

Priority Habitats were assessed up to 1 km from the Site boundary. Defra's online MAGIC tool was used to identify these habitats and their extent. The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory was used to search for Priority Trees within the zone of influence. Distance and connectivity were also discussed where relevant.

2.3.3 Protected and Notable Species Records

A combination of local biological records supplied by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) a variety of opensource webpages, and citizen science observations were used to inform an assessment of protected and notable species within the zones of influence. Given that species' distributions, populations, and individual territories change relatively often through time (Bright *et al.* 2006; Matthews *et al.* 2018;

Thaxter *et al.* 2010), species records are only considered relevant to this assessment if they occurred within the last 10 years.

2.3.4 Connectivity

Connectivity is discussed and referred to in multiple sections throughout this report to support the ecological assessment of the Site and proposed works.

While the scientific concept of connectivity has been traditionally hard to define (Crooks 2010) and is potentially a complex of different processes (Fahrig *et al.* 2021), for the purposes this assessment Merriam (1984) and Taylor *et al.* (1993) are lent from in the following definition:

The degree to which isolation of organisms is prevented via biotic and abiotic factors that impact movement and/or dispersal.

With this definition of connectivity, in the context of the Site's connectivity to the various features outlined in this report, this can include physical barriers such as public roadways or watercourses, or behavioural responses such as animals' reactions to disturbance (Tischendorf & Fahrig 2000)—where physical barriers are not present, functional barriers may still exist where species are less able/likely to use certain areas (Crooks 2010).

The permeability of landscapes and habitats is assessed on a taxa, species, and population level as the consequences of dispersal barriers can vary markedly between these groups depending on their ecology. For example, connectivity for flying bats and birds to onsite habitats could be assessed to be higher than that of terrestrial small mammals that need to locomote at ground level.

Different levels of connectivity can impact species in different ways. For example, species that naturally exist in metapopulations—a group of geographically local populations that share occasional migration of individuals and geneflow between them—may be more

negatively impacted by relatively low connectivity than species with less frequent landscape geneflow. At an ecosystem level, reduced connectivity through fragmentation of landscapes (physically or functionally) is considered to have negative biodiversity effects (Rudnick *et al.* 2012). Although, reduced connectivity and fragmentation is often thought to be conflated with habitat loss and may have some positive impacts (Fahrig 2016 & 2017). Nevertheless, less connectivity reduces species' capacity to disperse through landscapes and improving connectivity in mainland Britain fits in with a key output of the Lawton reviews' (2010) 'bigger, better, *more joined up'* recommendation for ecological sites and networks to the then UK Environment Secretary.

This assessment ranks connectivity on the following scale:

High – good connectivity, perhaps with direct linking features and habitats. No major or moderate dispersal barriers present.

Moderate – medium connectivity. Opportunities for dispersal are present, perhaps under certain conditions such as time of day or year, but dispersal barriers are present to some degree and may inhibit species' movement. More permeable corridors and habitats may be preferred.

Low – poor connectivity. At least one major dispersal barrier is present; there is negligible potential for movement to/from the Site.

2.4 Field study

A survey of the site was conducted on 11 April 2025 by Assistant Ecologist Megan Carter BSc (Hons) MSc.

The survey area was defined to include the Site and relevant zones of influence shown in Table 2.1. The survey area was subject to a walkover by the attending ecologist, where in the onsite habitats were identified and assessed in accordance with the UK Habitat

Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd 2023). Flora species lists were compiled for each habitat and assigned positions on the DAFOR (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, or Rare) scale as laid out in Walker *et al*. (2010). Additionally, the Site was assessed for its suitability for protected and notable species. Any evidence of such species, e.g. Badger setts and signs, was recorded and geo-referenced onsite.

An adaptation of Jukes (2021) 'checklist' for considering site suitability for invertebrates in initial scoping was employed in reference to onsite habitats. This method seeks to identify the presence/absence of ecological features that benefit invertebrate abundance and diversity.

2.5 Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index

In England, great crested newt (GCN) have more stringent habitat requirements than other native amphibian species (Wilkinson *et al.* 2011). Thus, to inform the assessment of the Site in regard to this species, a GCN Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was undertaken for all waterbodies present within the Site and within 250 m of the Site boundary.

The HSI is a process-based quantitative method developed by Oldham *et al.* (2000)—amended by Amphibian and Reptile groups UK (2010)—that models breeding suitability for GCN of specific water bodies. This approach generates a numerical value for each waterbody from 0-1 that denotes the relative suitability for GCN (see Table 2.2). Methods involve recording values of 10 biotic and abiotic factors known to influence the potential presence and persistence of GCN within a habitat. While there has been significant criticism of Oldham's "simple model" and its reliability in determining GCN presence/absence (O'Brien *et al.* 2017; Seccombe & Salguero-Gomez 2022), there remains significant empirical evidence that higher HSI scores are correlated with the likelihood of GCN occupancy (Burgess 2020; Buxton et al. 2021), rather than lower HSI

scores predicting GCN absence. It is for this purpose that the HSI has been employed in this assessment—HSI scores below 0.7 will not be used to predict GCN absence.

Table 2.2 – *GCN HSI scoring system*

HSI Score	Waterbody Suitability for Breeding GCN
>0.8	Excellent – near optimal conditions for GCN and a very high chance of presence
0.7-0.79	Good – multiple habitat features suitable for GCN and a high change of presence
0.6-0.69	Average – suitable for GCN but with features that may reduce carrying capacity
0.5-0.59	Below Average – some suitability for GCN but with significant unsuitable features
<0.5	Poor – less suitable conditions for GCN; other waterbodies are likely to be preferred

2.6 Limitations

The survey of the Site was conducted in April 2025, within the optimal botanical assessment period and habitat survey season (April-September inclusive). Thus, it is considered that an accurate baseline ecological condition of the Site was captured at the time of survey.

While searches of opensource aerial imagery are useful resources to provide data on the Site and its surrounding landscape, there are inevitable situations where some features, such as garden ponds, are not detected and other features misidentified. These limitations are considered to be unavoidable when employing such tools, however, this assessment does not provide significant enough weight to the results of these searches that they would impact its findings.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Designated Sites

No European statutory designated sites notified for bats were identified within 10 km, and two statutory designated sites were identified within 5 km of the Site (Table 3.1). One non-statutory designated sites were identified within 2 km of the Site (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 – *statutory designated sites*

Site and Designation	Distance and Direction	Connectivity	Site Description and Ecological Features
Ouse Washes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site.	230 m E	High – No major dispersal barriers	A 2, 403 ha site containing an extensive washland habitat. The capacity of the site to hold wintering and breeding waterfowl and waders is of international significance. Of particular note in the winter are the large numbers of teal (*Anas crecca*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), wigeon (*Anas penelope*), shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), pochard (*Aythya farina)* and Bewick's swan (*Cygnus bewickii*). The grassland communities of the area are characterised by such grasses as reed and floating sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) and (*G.fluitans*), reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) together with a variety of sedges and rushes. Typical herbs include amphibious bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*), water-pepper (*Polygonium hydropiper*) and tubular water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*).
Berry Fen (SSSI)	1, 710 m SW	Low – Lies beyond multiple public roadways	A 18 ha site containing a washland habitat of ornithological value and holding neutral grassland communities of a type now scarce in Britain. The wash grassland is characterised by grasses such as marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). This wet grassland grades into stands of reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) towards the wetter parts of the site, together with clumps of slender-tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*). Other herbs include the purple loosestrife (*Lythrum*

			salicaria) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).

Table 3.2 – non-*statutory designated sites*

Site and Designation	Distance and Direction	Connectivity	Site Description and Ecological Features
Pound Lane Orchard Countryside Wildlife Site CWS	2,000 m NW	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins.	A 2.46 ha site which supports a traditional orchard with 5 or more top fruit trees and over 20% veteran fruit trees in an orchard containing scarce fruit varieties and managed for biodiversity.

3.1.2 Priority and Notable Habitats

Priority Habitats (habitats of Principle Importance to biodiversity Conservation in England as outlined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended)) that were identified within 1 km of the Site on Defra's MAGIC tool are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 – *Priority Habitats*

Habitat	Number, Distance and Direction of Closest Parcel	Connectivity
Lowland Fen	27 parcels; 0 m	High – No major dispersal barriers
Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	4 parcels; 40 m E	High – No major dispersal barriers.
Deciduous Woodland	2 parcels; 104 m NW	Moderate – Lies beyond a public trackway.

No record of ancient and veteran trees was identified within 1 km of the Site.

It is considered that multiple native hedgerows and ponds within 1 km of the Site may meet the criteria of Priority Habitats.

3.1.3 *European Protected Species Licences*

No granted Natural England European Protected Species Application was present within 2 km of the Site.

3.2 Field Study

3.2.1 *UK Habitat Classification Survey*

This section outlines all habitats recorded within the Site on the 12 April 2025. A plan depicting the onsite habitats, their extent and location, and relevant target notes are shown in Appendix B; photographs of the Site are shown in Appendix C.

UKHab habitats identified within the Site:

- Modified grassland – g4 (Secondary codes: 516 – active management).
- Other developed land – u1b6 (Secondary codes: 516 – active management).
- Buildings – u1b5 (Secondary codes: 516 – active management).

3.2.1.1 *Modified Grassland*

The Site was dominated by regularly mowed modified grassland to the southeast of the existing building (Photograph 1). The sward was dominated by perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) with occasional common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Forbs included bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), doves foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*).

While this habitat is identified on MAGIC as Lowland Fen, a Priority Habitat, the onsite survey did not support this determination, with the present grassland displaying nutrient-tolerant assemblages characteristic of improved, and heavily managed habitats. There was

no evidence significant hydrological influence at soil level and no species assembalges that typify base-rich communities. As such, it is considered unlikely that the onsite habitats are lowland fen. Nevertheless, protection measures are appropriate in the context of the local presence of wetland habitats.

3.2.1.2 Other Developed Land

A section of hardstanding is present to the northwest (Photograph 2).

3.2.1.3 Buildings

The Site contained two timber and one brick construction buildings (Photograph 3). These buildings were well sealed with the interior well-lit and regularly disturbed.

3.3 Protected and Notable Species Evaluation

A search of local biological records was conducted by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) up to a distance of 2 km from the Site boundary. Only records within the last 10 were included in this assessment. Certain records were selected in this assessment in reference to their relative relevance to the Site and project proposals. Any records not accurate to 100 m or less are considered to fall below the spatial accuracy threshold for this investigation and are not considered further.

All records of species protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended), and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were included in this assessment, as well as additionally selected notable species records.

3.3.1 Badger

No occurrences of badger were returned from the local records.

While the Site does have suitable habitat to support foraging Badger e.g grassland. This habitat is small and isolated. Additionally, the wider landscape around the Site, i.e. large complexes of agricultural fields, are considered to provide more optimal conditions for viable badger populations.

No signs of badger or their setts were recorded at the time of survey.

Therefore, it is considered that the potential for the Site to support breeding, foraging and resting badger is negligible – no impact from the proposed works to this species are anticipated.

3.3.2 Bat

The Bat species that were returned by the local records are detailed in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 – *bat records*

Species	Number of Records	Location & Direction (Closest Record)	Connectivity (All Records)
Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)	2	100 m NE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins
Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)	2	100 m NE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins

The local records identified bats as locally present and associated with nearby woodland blocks.

No onsite trees or buildings had potential roosting features for bats.

There were no suitable roosting features for bats. The building(s) present on-site were well sealed and had well-lit interiors. They are regularly disturbed.

No signs of roosting bats were identified at the time of the survey.

Therefore, it is considering that potential for the Site to support roosting bats is negligible—no impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

It is estimated that more optimal habitat for foraging bat was present in the local vicinity in the form of more extensive hedgerows, woodland blocks, and river corridors.

3.3.3 Birds

Birds that are protected or are Priority Species (species of Principle Importance to biodiversity Conservation in England as outlined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended)) that were returned by the local records are detailed in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 – *bird records*

Species	Number of Records	Location & Direction (Closest Record)	Connectivity (All Records)
Schedule 1			
Bearded tit (*Panurus biarmicus*)	1	980 m SE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins
Greylag goose (*Anser anser*)	2	1, 040 m SW	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins
Section 41 (Priority Species)			
Lapwing (*Vanellus Vanellus*)	1	980 m SE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins

The online opensource tool Swift Mapper identified no records of swift (*Apus apus*) within 2 km of the Site.

Records of notable and protected birds are present within the zone of influence and opportunities for these species within the Site are present in the form of the on-site grassland.

Therefore, it is considering that nesting birds may be present within the Site and be impacted by the proposed works.

3.3.4 Great Crested Newt

The local records identified no location records of great crested newt (GCN) populations within 2 km of the Site.

No waterbodies were present within the Site. Six freshwater ponds were identified within 250 m of the Site boundary by opensource aerial imagery and mapping.

Habitats within the Site have potential to support great crested newt in their terrestrial phase in the form of grassland as well as marginal vegetation around the nearby waterbodies.

Samples from the six ponds within 250 m were taken at the time of survey and were subject to environmental DNA analysis to determine the presence of breeding GCN. Two ponds returned a result of negative, while four returned inconclusive (ref: GCN_AKFD1DO – PROJ07311 – Great crested newt - Report). While inconclusive results (potentially due to pollution within the waterbodies) do not completely rule out the presence of GCN, given the adjacent results of negative and the relatively short dispersal distance between all surveyed ponds, it is considered that the negative results are likely to be representative of the complex of waterbodies and there is low potential for the Site to support breeding GCN— no impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

3.3.5 *Hazel Dormouse*

No occurrences of hazel dormouse were returned in the local records. There were no on-site treeline or woodland blocks to support viable hazel dormouse populations – this species has a naturally low population density, 1.75-2.5 individuals per ha on average (Bright *et al.* 2006) and therefore generally requires larger blocks of suitable habitat (or connected areas of habitat) to support breeding populations.

Therefore, it is considered that the potential for the Site to support breeding hazel dormouse is negligible—no impacts from the proposed works to this species are anticipated.

3.3.6 *Invertebrates*

No records of an invertebrate Priority Species were returned from the local records.

No other notable invertebrate species were recorded on the Site and the onsite habitats are not deemed suitable to support other notable and protected invertebrates such as Roman snail.

Table 3.6 outlines an adaptation of Jukes (2021) good practice guidance on invertebrate ecology surveying on initial site assessments regarding the results of the Site survey.

Table 3.6 – *Jukes (2021) criteria for good invertebrate sites*

Criteria of Good Invertebrate Habitat	Site Passes Criteria (Y/N)	Rationale
Range of habitat types or features	N	Modified grassland was present to the southwest and building & hardstanding was present to the northwest.
Structural variation within habitats	N	Onsite habitats were relatively uniform.
Variation in topography	N	The Site was a flat parcel of land.

Abundance of flowering plants	N	A poor diversity and abundance of flowering plants was present within the Site.
Availability of sunlight	Y	The Site is largely open with sunlight being readily available.

The Site does not lie within a Buglife Important Invertebrate Area but does lie within a B-line.

Considering the relative lack of extensive resources and habitats for invertebrates within the Site, and the relatively small scale and low impact nature of the proposed works, it is estimated that the potential for the Site to support and impact protected invertebrates is negligible—no impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

3.3.7 Other Mammals

One occurrences of other notable mammals were returned form the local records. This related to one location records of Eurasian hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*). The closest record from 2016 was located 1, 300 m southwest of the Site. The connectivity of this record is estimated to be moderate owning to the presence of multiple biological corridors in the form of agricultural field margins and woodland blocks.

While the Site does not have the large open habitats required to support brown hare, the on-site grassland would be suitable for breeding and foraging hedgehog.

Therefore, it is considering that foraging hedgehog may be present within the Site and be impacted by the proposed works.

3.3.8 Plants

No records of vascular plants listed under Schedule 8 or 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as

amended), or the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended) were returned by the local record search.

No protected, notable, or invasive vascular plant species were recorded onsite at the time of survey.

No impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

3.3.9 Reptiles

The local records returned one records of reptile within 2 km of the Site. This relates to one occurrences of grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) from 2020. This record was located 1, 870 m southwest of the Site. The connectivity is estimated to be moderate owning to the presence of multiple biological corridors in the form of agricultural field margins and woodland blocks.

Habitats within the Site suitable for common and widespread reptiles were present in the form of basking and commuting resources within the onsite grassland. However, the grassland is small, isolated and frequently maintained as an amenity feature, and as such is highly disturbed due to mowing and does not contain shelter habitat that would support significant viable resident reptile populations. Moreover, opportunities for these species are anticipated to be greater in the surrounding landscape, e.g agricultural field margins, that would likely be preferred by reptiles and could support viable populations.

No signs of reptile were recorded onsite at the time of survey.

Therefore, it is considered that the potential for the Site to support reptiles is low—no impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

3.3.10 Watercourse Species

Two records of beaver, fish, otter, water vole, or white-clawed crayfish were returned from the local records search. These are detailed in table 3.7.

Table 3.7 - *watercourse species records*

Species	Number of Records	Location & Direction (Closest Record)	Connectivity (All Records)
European water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)	1	1, 200 m SE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins
Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*)	2	1, 900 m SE	Moderate – Connected via agricultural field margins

There were no watercourses within the Site.

Therefore, it is considered that the potential for the Site to support watercourse species is negligible—no impacts from the proposed works to these species are anticipated.

3.4 Evaluation

Evidenced by the results of this assessment, Table 3.8 outlines the various ecological features associated with the Site and project proposals and determines the need for further actions.

Table 3.8– *ecological feature evaluation*

Ecological Feature	Further consideration	Rationale
Designated sites	Yes	The adjacent Ouse Washes SSSI, SAC and Ramsar is at a relatively short distance from the Site.
Priority Habitats	Yes	As the proposed project does not involve the removal of large areas of habitat or extensive development, no impacts to these habitats are

		anticipated. However, protection measures are appropriate in the context of adjacent areas of Priority Habitat.
Onsite habitats	No	All onsite habitats are common and widespread within Britain.
Badger	No	No signs of badger were recorded at the time of survey. Habitats within the Site are sub-optimal for badger and large areas of more suitable habitat were present in the surrounding landscape.
Bat	No	The onsite habitats and features are considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats. The wider landscape is estimated to have myriad opportunities for foraging and commuting bats.
Birds	Yes	Onsite grassland has potential to support nesting birds.
Great crested newt	No	Six ponds within 250 m of the Site returned negative/inconclusive eDNA results.
Hazel dormouse	No	No stands capable of supporting viable hazel dormouse populations were present within the Site or within adjacent habitats.
Invertebrates	No	Habitats within the Site offer relatively little resources for common and widespread invertebrate species.
Other mammals	Yes	Habitats within the Site may support foraging and sheltering hedgehog. Feature only considered further in regard to hedgehog.
Plants	No	No protected, notable or invasive plants were recorded within the Site.
Reptiles	No	No onsite habitats potential to support basking, commuting, and sheltering behaviour, exposure and disturbance left it unlikely that the Site could support viable reptile populations. It is considered that the wider landscape would be preferred by these species and individuals would not utilise the Site.

Watercourse species	No	There are no watercourses or riparian zone habitats within the Site.

4. Outputs and Opportunities

4.1 Further Work & Surveys

The following recommendations are required regarding protected species within the Site. The outputs will inform more detailed mitigation and potential licencing recommendations in the context of the project proposals.

4.1.1 Priority Habitats & Designated Sites

Areas of lowland Fen and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh are potentially locally present, as well as Ouse Washes SSSI, SAC and Ramsar 230 m east of the Site. A section of the works is within existing hardstanding and artificial surface habitats—the works within this section are not anticipated to impact designated sites or priority habitats.

The section of existing grassland is proposed to host new cabin structures. These works are anticipated to be low-impact and of a relatively small scale. The only habitats impacted will be a small area of heavily managed modified grassland sward with the proposed works anticipated to generate significantly less disturbance that that of the current operation of the recreational fishing facility, and its associated vehicle and foot traffic. Nevertheless, the following prescriptions should be employed to avoid impacts to Priority Habitats and Designated sites:

- Material, vehicle and equipment storage while not in use during construction phases should be solely within existing areas of hardstanding.
- Any materials capable of seepage or leeching into the surrounding environment should be appropriately covered and contained throughout work phases.
- All works should be limited to the footprint of the proposed new buildings.

4.1.2 *Nesting bird*

Clearence/management of any onsite vegetation higher than 300 mm should take place outside of the core nesting bird season (March-August inclusive). If this cannot be achieved, it is recommended that a pre-works check by a suitably qualified ecologist should take place within 48 hrs prior of any works.

Any identified nests may need to be buffered by 5 m, or greater, exclusion zones where no works can take place until the young have fledged or the nest is deemed to be no longer active.

4.2 Mitigation

4.2.1 *Hedgehog*

Any refugia with potential to be used by hedgehog, such as vegetation piles and scrub, should be avoided by the works. If individual hedgehog are encountered within the works area, all works must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist consulted before proceeding.

4.2.2 *General Animal Protection Measures*

The following measures should be adhered to throughout the project to protect local fauna:

- If any potentially protected, notable or vulnerable animals, such as newts, bats, or reptiles, are encountered in the works area or in directly adjacent habitats, all works must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist consulted before proceeding.
- Works ramps should not exceed 45 degrees steepness. Any trenches/excavations to be covered overnight or a means of escape for fauna provided.
- Creation of unintended habitat features that may be used by terrestrial fauna, e.g. spoil piles and brash piles, to be avoided during works where possible.
- No works to take place between sunset and sunrise.

- Avoidance of artificial lighting after dusk to minimise potential impacts to nocturnal fauna—lighting scheme to be in line with guidance set-out in Institution of Lighting Professionals (2023).

4.2.3 General Environmental Protection Measures

The following measures should be adhered to throughout the project to protect the local environment:

- Avoid unnecessary chemicals, herbicides, pesticides, vermicides and creating debris on the Site as these substances could harm wildlife. Liquid chemicals could further drain into the groundwater, causing contamination of the wider landscape.
- Plant, equipment, and/or materials should be stored on areas of hardstanding where possible.
- Fuel considerations to avoid leakage and pollution of the local environment:
    - All equipment, machinery and/or plant used in the scope of the proposed works should be fitted with fuel drip trays where possible.
    - All storing of fuel and re-fuelling of equipment, machinery and/or plant should take place with the use of drip-capture devices.
    - All onsite personnel should have access to spill mitigation devices for other equipment capable of leaking fuel or oil.
- Activities generating dust should be avoided or dampened where possible.

4.3 Enhancement

All enhancements set out in this section seek to uplift biodiversity—the variability within and among living organisms, species and ecosystems—local to the Site. These recommendations will adhere to the principles and guidance set-out in The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England (Defra 2014), the Environmental Improvement Plan (Defra 2023a), Making Space for Nature: A review of

England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network (Lawton *et al.* 2010), and the National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Leveling Up, Houseing & Communities 2023), among other documents, as well as following standing advise from Buglife, Championing the Farmed Environment, the Environment Agency, Farm wildlife, Hedgelink, Natural England, and the People's Trust for Endangered Species.

4.3.1 Taxa-specific Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities

The proposed works have potential to provide taxa-specific enhancements to benefit local biodiversity in the following recommended ways:

- Artificial bird boxes to benefit threatened, protected and notable species. To include features for swift, starling, and barn owl, among other species. Boxes to be affixed to buildings or mature trees.
- Artificial bat boxes to benefit all bat species. Boxes to be affixed to buildings, mature trees, or to be pole mounted.
- Features for invertebrates to provide novel resources for a variety of niches. To include deadwood features, seed sowing and general planting for pollinators, and artificial nesting habitat for solitary bees.

4.3.2 General Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities

The following measures are recommended to provide supplementary enhancements to benefit local biodiversity:

- Proposed new building structures within the project should seek to include biodiverse green rooves to benefit local wildlife, particularly bats, birds, and insects.
- Habitat Aid Woodland Edge Seed Mix (available from: habitataid.co.uk) should be sown on areas of landscaping and bare ground where possible within the scheme.

- Where biological resources are used on Site, such as wood for fences, materials should be sustainable and locally sourced where possible; Forestry Stewardship Council certified for timber resources.
- Avoid transporting offsite soil onto the Site. Where unavoidable, ensure that soil is peat free and suitable for the proposed transplant location. Peat free soil/compost retains water reducing the amount of watering required, it also releases nutrients slowly and has a reduced impact on the environment when compared with compost containing peat.
- Avoid pollutants and general litter/debris which can cause harm to wildlife.
- Naturally occurring vertebrate carcases to be left in situ if deemed not to be a danger to public health. This promotes necrobiome ecology and encourages taxa such as fungi and beetles—keystone species in woodland habitats (Mondor *et al.* 2012).

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APPENDIX A: Planning Policy & Legislation

Relevant Planning Policy

Nat onal Planning Policy Framework 2024

Section 15 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- Protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value.
- Recognising the character and beauty of the countryside and the benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services.
- Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks.
- Preventing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

This section goes on to recommend that plans should:

- Distinguish between international, national and locally designated sites.
- Allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value.
- Maintain and enhance habitats and green infrastructure networks.
- Enhance natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- Give weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including wildlife corridors and stepping stones, and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation.
- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.

Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036

Strategic Policy LP 30 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

All development proposals should:

- be required to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated.

- A proposal that is likely to have an impact, either direct or indirect, on biodiversity or geodiversity will need to be accompanied by an appropriate appraisal, such as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, identifying all individual and cumulative potential impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity. Any further research that is identified as necessary by this appraisal will need to have been carried out and submitted with the proposal. Where a proposal has potential to affect an internationally important site(28) an 'appropriate assessment' in accordance with the Habitats Directive will be required and sufficient information to enable such an assessment to be completed must be submitted with the proposal.

- All possible efforts must be taken to avoid adverse impacts. If it is demonstrated that adverse impacts are unavoidable they must be minimised as far as possible and then mitigated. Only where this process of avoidance, minimisation and then mitigation is insufficient to fully address adverse impacts will consideration be given to compensation measures. Following this process a proposal will only be supported subject to a hierarchy where:

- a. a site of international importance, being a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site would be affected there has to be exceptional overriding reasons of human health, public safety or environmental benefit; b. a site of national importance, such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or National Nature Reserve (NNR) would be affected there has to be exceptional circumstances where the need for, and the benefits of, the proposal significantly outweigh both the potential impacts on the features of the site that make it of national importance and any broader impacts on the national network of such sites; c. a protected species, a priority habitat or species, a site of local or regional importance, the achievement of water body good ecological potential, or the biodiversity value of the proposed development site

as part of the wider network would be affected, the need for and the benefits of the proposal must clearly outweigh the assessed impacts. A proposal will not be supported if potential impacts would lead to the deterioration of water body ecological status/ potential.

- A proposal will ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type and location of development. Large scale development proposals should provide an audit of losses and gains in biodiversity produced according to a recognised methodology. In seeking to provide net gains for biodiversity reference should be had to the Natural Cambridgeshire publication 'Developing with Nature Toolkit' and the proposal should prioritise measures that: d. complement or enhance existing features of biodiversity value within the design and layout of development; e. provide new biodiversity features within the development; f. help reverse the decline of species; assist in achieving local targets for priority habitats and species including those set out in Habitat Action Plans; h. improve public access to nature; i. ensure the effective management of biodiversity or geological features; j. contribute to the provision of multi-functional green infrastructure to enhance ecological networks and the Green Infrastructure Priority Areas k. contribute towards the achievement of good ecological status in water bodies (or not compromise achievement of good ecological potential) in accordance with the Anglian River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) and accompanying catchment action plans; or l. will help species adapt to climate change.

Main Environmental and wildlife Legislation (England)

Environment Act 2021

Schedule 14 of The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for all new developments (with some limited exceptions) to achieve a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of at least 10% by the time the development is completed compared to the pre-development biodiversity value of the

onsite habitat. This percentage may be amended in the future by the Secretary of State.

Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 (as amended).

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (animals) as listed on Schedule 2:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species.
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species.
- Deliberately takes or destroy the eggs of such an animal.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. (*Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute this activity*).

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (plants) as listed on Schedule 5:

- Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a European Protected Species.
- Be in position of or to transport said plant.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (as amended).

Section 40 of Part 3 of this act compels public bodies (local authorities, police, fire and health authorities, and utility companies) with exercisable functions within England to consider actions to be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England—in particular to have regard to the United Nations Environmental Programme Convent on on Biological Diversity of 1992, any relevant local nature recovery strategies, and any relevant species conservation strategy or protected site strategy (prepared by Natural England).

Section 41 of Part 3 of this Act ensures the publishing of a list containing species and habitat types that are of principle importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity in England.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

Under this legislation it is an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with the intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Under this legislation it is an offence to (or intend to, or to be reckless as to whether your actions would have these consequences):

- Wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempts to do so).
- Damage or destroy any part of a badger sett. (*Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities*).
- Obstruct access to a badger sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Part 1 of this act makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird, to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, and/or to take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Part 1 also makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 of the act, and to take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bid included in Schedule ZA1.

Schedule 5 list non-avian species that are afforded various protections under Sections 9.1a, 9.1b, 9.2, 9.4a, 9.4a (Whales), 9.4b, 9.4c, 9.5a and 9.5b.

Schedule 8 lists plant species that are protected from intentionally picking, uprooting or destroying under Section 13.

Schedule 9 lists non-native invasive plants for which it is an offence under Section 14 to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any part of said plants. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).

Other Legislation (England)

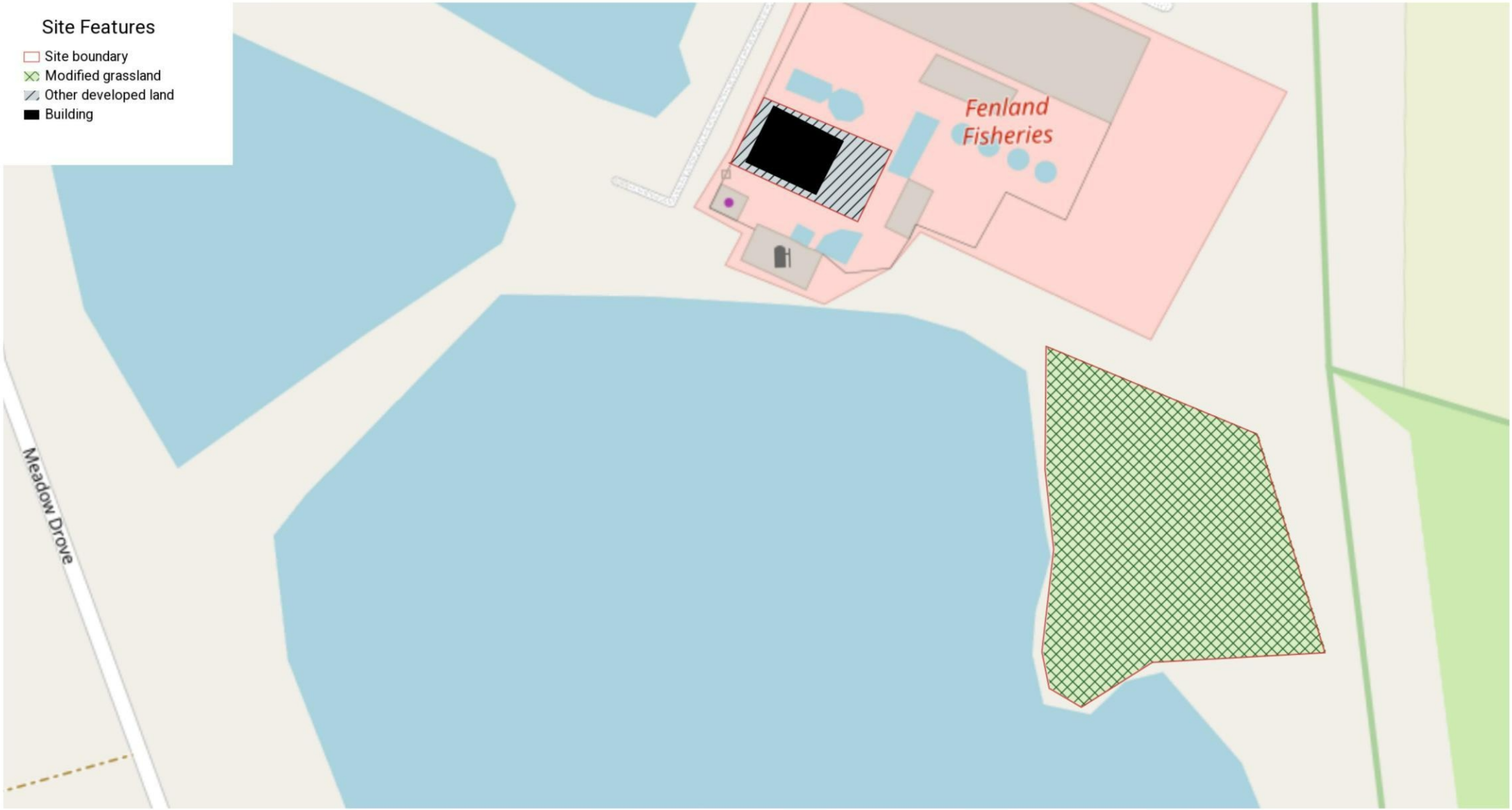
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2017
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (as amended).
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- Hedgerows Regulations 1997.
- Weeds Act 1959.

APPENDIX B: Site Habitat Plan

See overleaf.

Plans are indicative approximations of the layout of onsite habitats and are not drawn to measurable scale.

Baseline Habitats



Produced on Land App, Jul 7, 2025.
© OpenStreetMap contributors

20 m
Scale 1:607 (at A4)

N

APPENDIX C: Photographs



Photograph 1: Modified grassland present to the northwest of the Site



Photograph 2: Hardstanding present to the northwest of the Site



Photgraph 3: Building present to the northwest of the Site.