ACP

Balancing Growth with Green

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

John Souter
Sycamore Cottage, Hamerton, PE28 5QT

March 2025

Project Information

Title	**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**
Project No.	31790
Sector	Environment
Report	EC
Client	John Souter
Revision	A
Status	Final
Date of Issue	28th March 2025

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Summary

Purpose	• ACP Consultants Ltd. Was instructed by the client (John Souter) to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to support a planning application at Sycamore Cottages, Hamerton, PE28 5QT. • The proposed work is a double storey extension to the existing residential dwelling, replacing a pergola.
Work Undertaken	• A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken, including a Defra (2025) based desktop study and a site visit conducted in March 2025. • PEA guidelines from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2013 have been adhered to, and habitats have been classified using UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at https://www/ukhab.org).
Recommendations	• Due to the nature of the proposal (no roof proposals alteration) and proposed developments being restricted to existing hardstanding ground, no further surveys are recommended (unless vegetation clearance takes place within the bird nesting season).
Conclusions	• The proposed development is not considered to conflict with any national, regional or local planning policies and will not have any significant or adverse impacts on protected species and their habitats. • This report is valid for a period of 18 months from the survey date

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

John Souter ('the client') is seeking consent for a proposed development at Sycamore Cottage, Hamerton, PE28 5QT (thereafter referred to as the 'potential development site'), which is within **the Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC).**

ACP Consultants Ltd. was instructed by the client to produce a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal to accompany the planning application to the HDC for consent to undertake the proposed works. Relevant planning policy and legislation can be found in Appendix C.

The proposal is for a double storey extension to the rear of the existing house, removing the pergola and replacing it with a hardstanding brick extension.

A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal has been prepared to assess the site's feasibility for this proposed development and identify need for any further consideration.

Local Authorities are tasked with determining new development and local planning applications against a wide range of social, economic, and environmental criteria. The purpose of this report is to assess whether the development proposal is compliant with the relevant local policies in terms of ecological impact as a result of the proposed commercial development.

This assessment has been carried out in accordance with good practice guidelines, including the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and applicable local supplementary guidance.

The remainder of this report is presented in the following order:

- Section 2: Methodology;
- Section 3: Baseline Ecological Conditions;
- Section 4: Results and Evaluation;
- Section 5: Discussion and Recommendations;
- Section 6: Conclusions.

1.2 Objectives

- To survey and determine the ecological value of the site according to the UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at https://www/ukhab.org)
- To identify how protected species are / may be using the site in order to assess its functionality to the local populations;
- To consider impacts to all habitats immediately adjacent to the site;
- To consider potential impacts to local statutory and non-statutory site either within 2km or for European level designations, a buffer deemed as appropriate by the relevant Planning Authority; and
- To assess the suitability of the proposed development site in terms of existing ecological factors.

2 Methodology

To achieve the objectives outlined in Section 1.2, a desktop study was completed followed by a site visit undertaken by Ayan Chakravartty.

2.1 Desktop Study

The desk study was undertaken by referring to the following data sources:

- Defra (2025). Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)

2.2 UKHab Site Survey

On the 25th of March 2025, the field survey was completed at the site in order to obtain detailed baseline information regarding the habitats and possibility of protected species present.

The assessment identifies sites, habitats, species and other ecological features that are of value based on factors such as legal protection, statutory or local site designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Based upon this, recommendations for further, more detailed surveys are made as appropriate to confirm presence / absence of a protected species.

A UKHab Survey involved identifying and mapping the dominant habitat types within the site boundary. The survey and identification of habitats was undertaken in accordance with the UKHab Ltd (2023) methodology. UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (https://www.ukhab.org).

During the survey, a note was made of any field signs indicating the presence of protected species and the location of these signs was mapped. A record was also made of any other animal species identified within the site or adjacent areas during the survey. The results of the habitat survey are shown on UKHab Map, Appendix A.

2.3 Limitations

The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by ACP Consultants Ltd. are representative at the time of surveying.

This document does not contain a comprehensive list of botanical species on site. Only plant species characteristics of each habitat and incidental observations of notable plant species were recorded. In addition, many plant species are only evident at certain times of year and so some plant species may have gone undetected.

Any third party and external data sources used may vary due to the quality and scale, the supporting information used to define locations/boundaries and sensitivity of the data itself. ACP Consultants Ltd. cannot take responsibility for the accuracy of external data sources and as such discrepancies and inaccuracies may occur.

3 Existing Baseline

3.1 Overview

The following section sets out the existing conditions in relation to ecology for the proposed development. Relevant ecological information is available from several sources including local, regional, and national ecological reports and websites. For the purpose of this assessment, some data has been obtained from Defra provided geographical sources[1].

3.2 Site Location

Data obtained from Defra shows the proposed development is not located on any type of protected land. Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are located 2.7km and 4.8km north-east of the development site. No Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or Special Protected Area (SPA) are within 5km of the site.

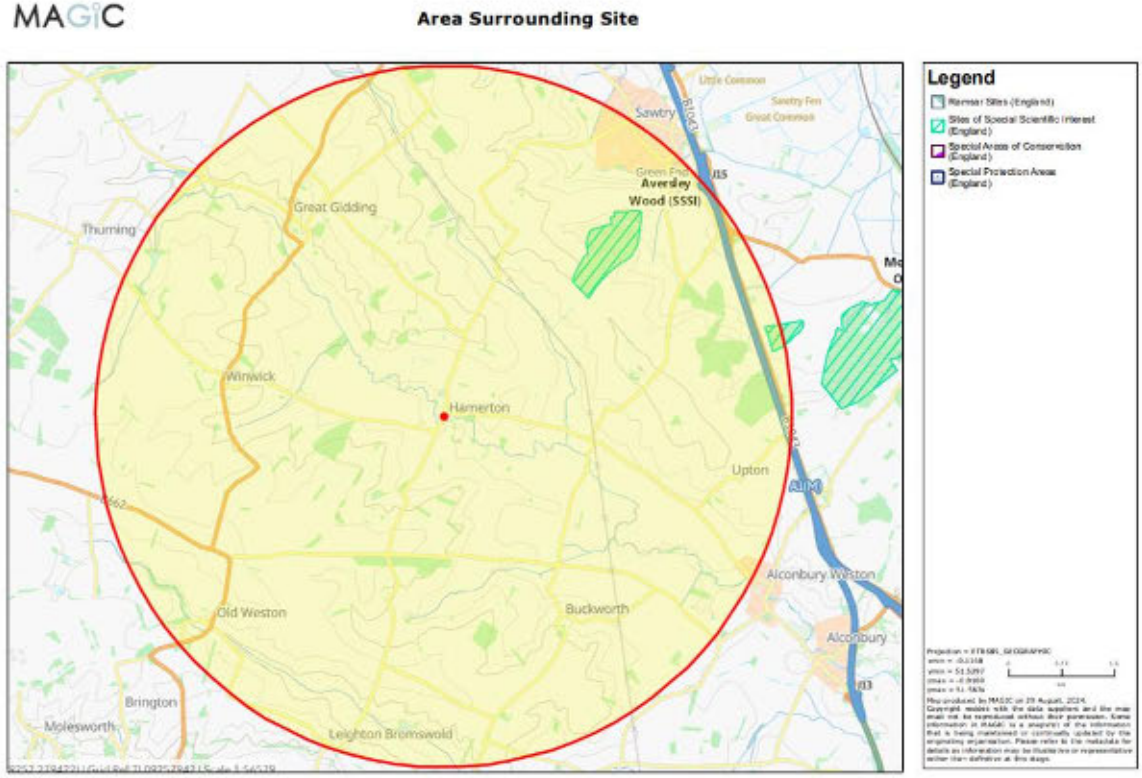


Figure 3.1 - Designations surrounding potential development site (highlighted in red) (Source: Defra)

[1]Figure 3.1 Area surrounding potential development site (highlighted in red) (Source: Defra). Defra (2025). Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)

3.3 Existing Baseline Conditions from Desktop Study

The development site, highlighted in red, is situated in Hamerton. The site is immediately adjacent to a small number of residential buildings and farmland. There are a number of small areas of broadleaved and coniferous woodland surrounding the site. The closest large areas of Broadleaved woodland are present 0.3km, 0.5km, and 0.9km south-east. There are also areas of broadleaved woodland 1.2km, 1.5km, 1.9km, and 1.8km north-west of the site. An area of broadleaved ancient woodland is located 1.3km north-west. Six areas of coniferous woodland are located 0.9km south-east, 1.4km, 1km, 1.2km, 1.1km, and 1.5km south-west of the development.

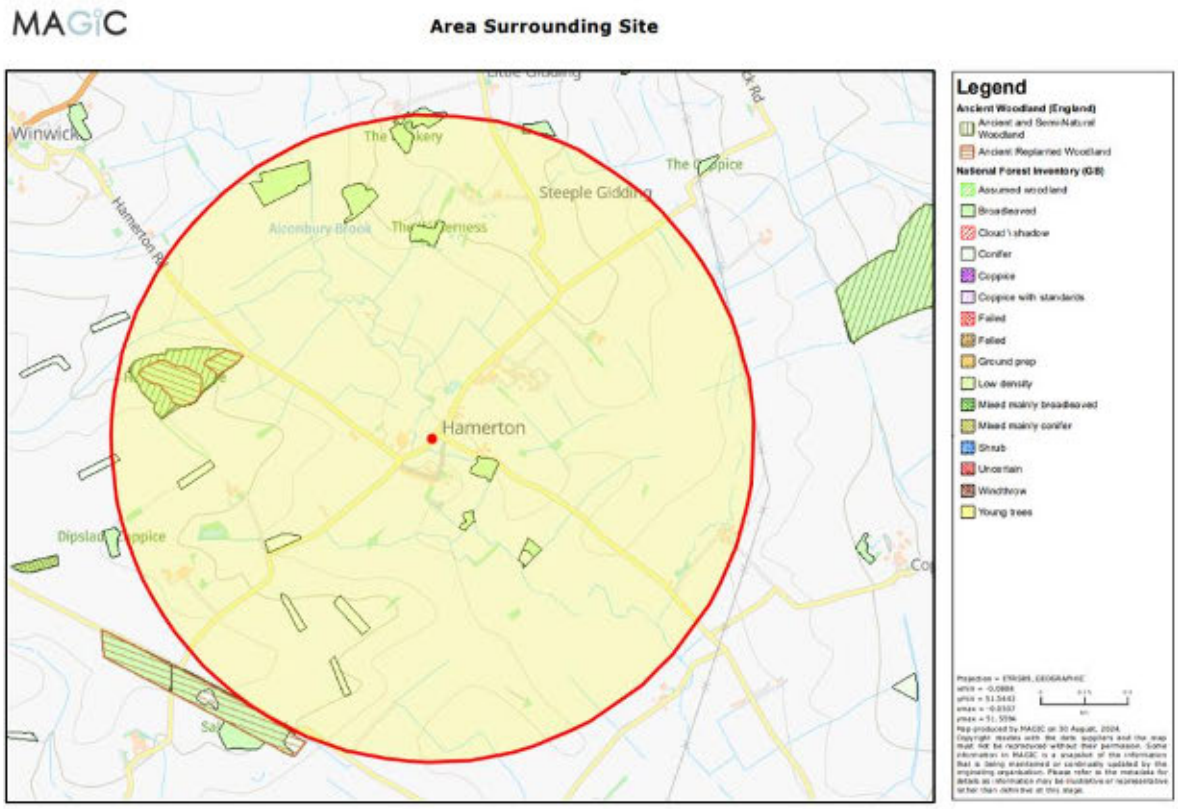


Figure 3.2 - Area surrounding potential development site (highlighted in red) (Source: Defra)

3.3.1 Protected Species

Figure 4.3 shows that there have been recordings of protected species present within 2km of the potential development site. There are no Granted European Protected Species Applications within 2km. No Great Crested Newt Pond Surveys were conducted within 2km of the site.

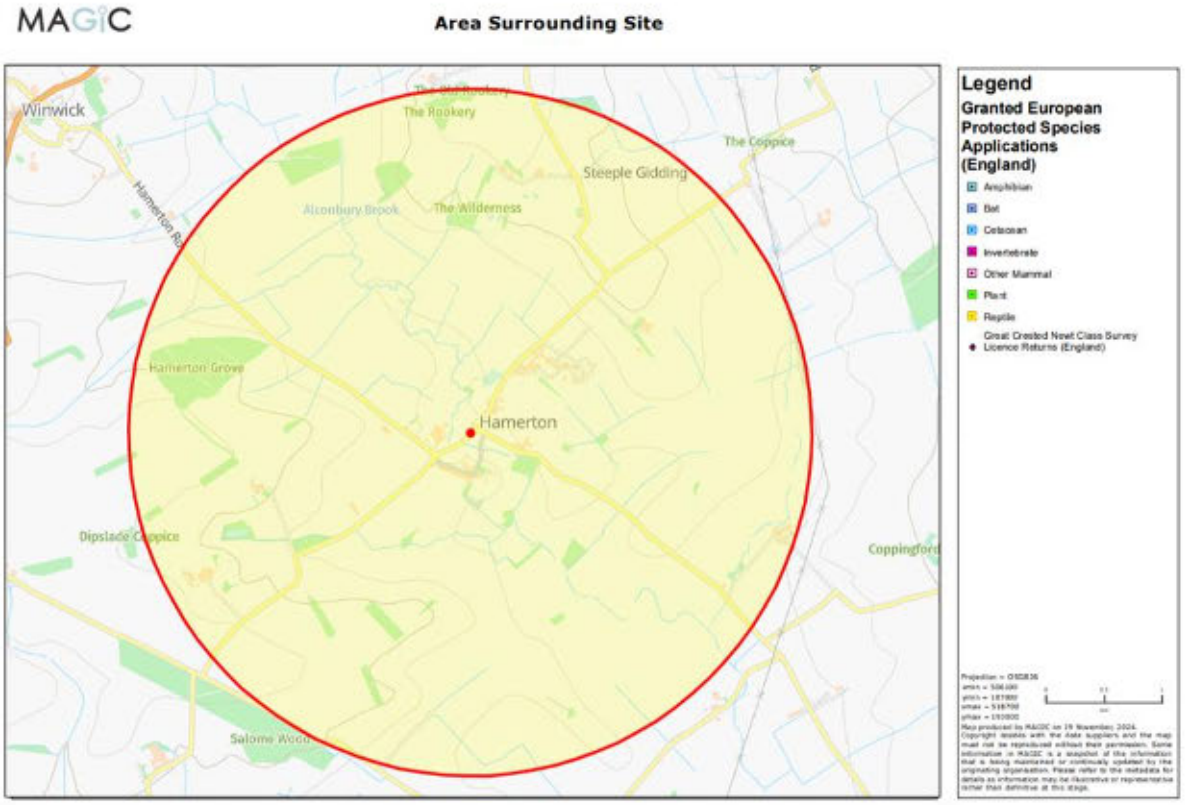


Figure 3.3 - Protected Species within 2km of the potential development site (Source: Defra).

3.4 Habitats on site

The habitats on site should be read alongside the UKHab Map (Figure 1, Appendix A). The site comprises of one residential Building (ub15), two sheds (ub15), Other Developed Land (ub16), Vegetated Garden (u828), Native Hedgerow (h2a), and Trees (u200).

3.5 Protected Species

3.5.1 Bats

No presence or evidence of bats were recorded during the survey. Existing trees and buildings could provide suitable living habitats for bats.

3.5.2 Great Crested Newts

No presence of Great Crested Newts was recorded during the survey. The site provides no suitable living habitats for amphibians on site. There are two ponds 0.1km northeast of the site and a watercourse 0.02km southwest of the site, although these could provide suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts, there are no records/granted licenses, and these are not expected to be impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, no further Great Crested Newt Surveys are recommended.

3.5.3 Reptiles

No presence of reptiles was recorded during the survey. The site does provide potential living habitat for reptiles due to the woodland and grassland to the south of the site. However, the proposed development only impacts hardstanding/concrete land. Therefore no potential reptile habitat is to be disturbed or damaged and no further reptile surveys are deemed necessary.

3.5.4 Water Vole

No presence of water vole was recorded during the survey. The site provides no suitable living habitats for water voles.

3.5.5 Otter

No presence of otter was recorded during the survey. The site provides no suitable living habitats for otter.

3.5.6 Birds

No presence of nesting birds was recorded during the survey. Trees and bordering introduced shrubs could provide suitable living habitats for nesting birds.

3.5.7 Badger

No presence of badger was recorded during the survey. The site provides no suitable living habitats for badger.

3.5.8 Amphibians

No presence of amphibians was recorded during the survey. The site provides no suitable living habitat for amphibians. There are two ponds 0.1km northeast of the site and a watercourse 0.02km southwest of the site. These are not expected to be impacted by the proposed development and no further amphibian surveys are recommended.

3.6 Baseline Summary

Based on the data obtained from Defra and the UKHab survey, the proposed development does not seem to be negatively affecting any Special Sites of Scientific Interest. Protected species potentially could be present on site.

4 Results and Evaluation

4.1 Survey Conditions

Table 1: Summary of conditions during survey

Abiotic Factor	Survey 1
Survey type	PEA
Date completed	25.03.25
Temperature	13 degrees Celsius
Precipitation	0
Weather Conditions	Overcast

4.2 UKHab Survey

The site comprises of one residential Building (ub15), two sheds (ub15), Other Developed Land (ub16), Vegetated Garden (u828), Native Hedgerow (h2a), and Trees (u200).

Habitat types detailed below are listed in order of the UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (*https://www.ukhab.org*)*. The species list provided in this report reflect only those taxa observed during the survey.

4.2.1 Buildings (u1b5) and Other Developed Land (u1b6)

Figures 4.1 - 4.4 show the existing areas of developed land on-site. This includes a multi-storey residential dwelling comprising of brick walls and tile roof. It is worth noting that raised/missing tiles were present on the exterior cladding (which may present opportunities for roosting bats). Other developed land present on-site included paved pathways and patio areas. There are also two sheds, shown in Figures 4.5 and 4.6.



Figure 4.1 – ub15 Building (ACP, 2025)



Figure 4.2 – ub15 Building (ACP, 2025)





Figure 4.3 and 4.4 – ub16 Other Developed Land (ACP, 2025)





Figure 4.5 and 4.6 – ub16 Other Developed Land (ACP, 2025)

4.2.2 Vegetated Garden (u828) and Native Hedgerow (h2a)

There are large areas of vegetated garden present on-site as shown in Figures 4.7-4.10. These areas generally comprised modified grassland (regularly mown) (Figures 4.7 and 4.10), bordering introduced shrubs (Figure 4.8), ground level planters (Figure 4.7).





Figure 4.7 and 4.8 – u828 Vegetated Garden and h2a Native Hedgerow (ACP, 2025)





Figure 4.9 and 4.10 – u828 Vegetated Garden and h2a Native Hedgerow (ACP, 2025)

4.2.3 Trees (u200) and Broadleaved and Mixed Woodland (w1)

Several deciduous tree species exist on-site in various locations, primarily at the boundaries/edges of vegetated garden areas (Figures 4.13 and 4.14). It is understood that all of these trees are currently proposed to be retained however are in close proximity to the proposed development plans. Therefore, additional aboricultural considerations are required.

Towards the south side of the garden there is an area of woodland that comprises of mostly broadleaved trees (Figures 4.14 and 4.14), and it is understood that this is to be retained and is not near the proposed development. Therefore, additional aboricultural considerations are not required for this area of woodland.





Figure 4.11 and 4.12 – w1 Broadleaved and Mixed Woodland (ACP, 2025)





Figure 4.13 and 4.14– u200 Trees (ACP, 2025)

4.3 Protected Species

Species/Group	Desk Study Record	Potential Habitat	Other Relevant Factors	Potential Constraint?
Bats	No Granted European Protected Species Applications within 2km.	The existing trees and building could provide suitable living habitats for bats.	No signs of bats were found on site.	Possible
Badger	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of badger were found on site.	No
Reptiles	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of reptiles were found on site.	No
Great Crested Newt (GCN)	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of Great Crested newts were found on site.	No
Water Vole	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of water vole were found on site.	No
Otter	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of otter were found on site.	No
Birds	None within search parameters.	Shrubs and trees could provide suitable nesting habitat.	No signs of nesting birds were found on site.	Possible
Amphibians	None within search parameters.	No suitable habitat on site.	No signs of amphibians were found on site.	Possible

5 Discussions and Recommendations

5.1 Potential Constraints

The following habitats and species have been identified as possible constraints to the proposed development:

- General nesting birds

5.2 Further Surveys and Mitigation

5.2.1 Further Surveys

Due to the previously stated findings regarding nesting bird habitat, it is recommended that any shrub or standing trees being removed or modified on site, should be surveyed for nesting birds prior to removal. It is worth noting that surveying for nesting birds is only required if vegetation clearance takes place within the breeding season (March – August inclusive).

These works can be carried out as part of a planning condition. It is worth noting that results and further recommendations made are based on what was present on-site at the time of survey only.

5.2.2 Habitat Protection

It should be noted that external lighting could affect nocturnal species such as bats, therefore, a sensitive lighting scheme is recommended.

During construction and operation of the site, all relevant waste components should be stored securely with a waste management strategy in place to prevent spills and leaks into the wider environment.

In order to minimise the risk of harm to animals using the site it is recommended that preventative measures are in place during construction. These precautions are:

- Keep all fuel and other harmful substances in a locked area;
- Ensure any spillages are treated;
- Mammal ladders (such as a plank) or earth ramps to be placed in any open excavations at the end of each day;
- Cap off any open pipes at the end of each day; and
- Cover any open holes or install mammal ladders or earth ramps in any open excavations at the end of each day to prevent animals from becoming trapped.

5.2.3 Protected Species

If works take place within the breeding season (March – August inclusive), any vegetation that is to be modified or removed should be further checked for signs of nesting birds by a qualified surveyor.

6 Conclusions

This report provides an assessment of the following potential key impacts associated with the construction and operational phases of the proposed development at the Sycamore Cottages, Hamerton, PE28 5QT. The aims were:

- To survey and determine the ecological value of the site according to the UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (*https://www.ukhab.org*)*;
- To consider impacts to all habitats immediately adjacent to the site;
- To identify how protected species are / may be using the site in order to assess its functionality to the local populations;
- To consider potential impacts to local statutory and non-statutory site either within 2km or for European level designations, a buffer deemed as appropriate by the relevant Planning Authority; and
- To assess the suitability of the proposed development site in terms of existing ecological factors.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a UKHab survey of possible ecological affects has been undertaken for the proposed development.

It has been recommended further surveys involving nesting birds be carried out. Further surveys involving nesting birds should be carried out if works take place within the breeding season (March – August inclusive).

It can, therefore, be concluded that the proposed development is not considered to conflict with any national, regional or local planning policies and will not have any significant or adverse impacts on protected species and their habitats, providing that no site work takes place without the surveys detailed in sections 6.2 being completed and if necessary, mitigation measures being implemented before construction.

Appendices

Appendix A: UKHab Map

Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Site Plans

Appendix C: Planning Policy & Legislation

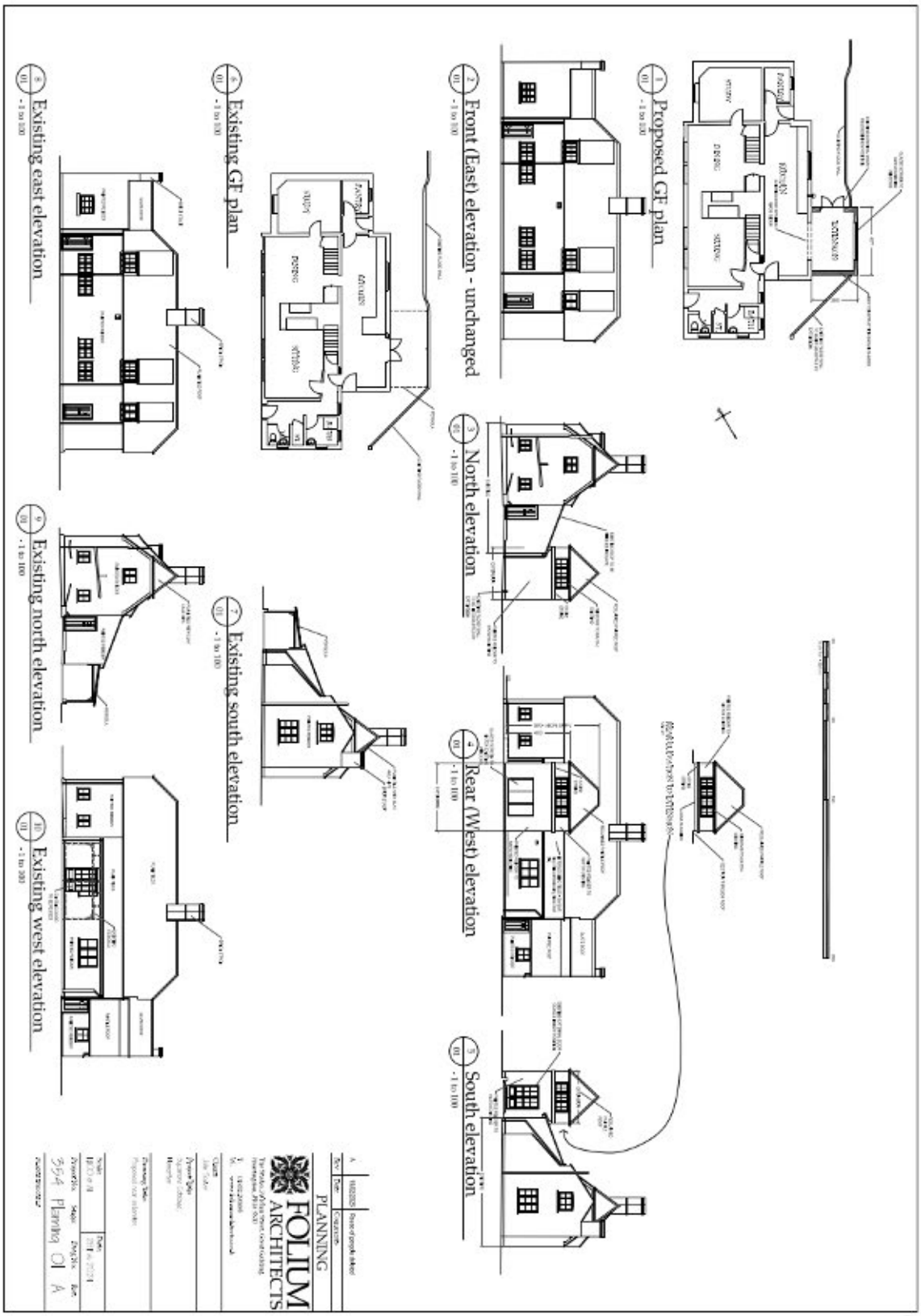
Appendix A: UKHab Map

MAGIC

UKHab Map



Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Site Plans



Appendix C: Planning Policy & Legislation

This section summarises the relevant National and Local legislative and policy background, statutory and non-statutory guidelines relevant to the potential commercial development.

National Policy

National Planning Policy (December 2024)

The principal national planning policy guidance with respect to the potential development is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The most recent update of the NPPF was published in December 2024 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This guidance sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. Three dimensions to sustainable development have been identified in the NPPF: economic, social, and environmental.

The NPPF Section 187 states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing 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, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."

Section 188 states that:

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

Section 189 states that:

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads[63]. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

Section 190 states that:

"When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development[64] other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated."

Section 192 states that:

"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and steppingstones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."

Section 193 states that:

"When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

Section 194 states that:

"The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."

6.1.1 Relevant National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG, 2016)

NPPG is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

The guidance note on 'Natural Environment' explains key issues in implementing policy to protect and enhance the natural environment, including local requirements. This has been referred to when preparing this report. It states that:

"Planning authorities need to consider the potential impacts of development on protected and priority species, and the scope to avoid or mitigate any impacts when considering site allocations or planning applications. Guidance on the law affecting Habitats Sites, protected species and SSSIs.

Natural England has issued standing advice on protected species. A protected species mitigation licence from Natural England may be required before any work can start."

The PPG also states that:

"Information on biodiversity and geodiversity impacts and opportunities needs to inform all stages of development (including site selection and design, pre-application consultation and the application itself). An ecological survey will be necessary in advance of a planning application if the type and location of development could have a significant impact on biodiversity and existing information is lacking or inadequate. Pre-application discussions can help to scope whether this is the case and, if so, the survey work required.

Even where an Environmental Impact Assessment is not needed, it might still be appropriate to undertake an ecological survey, for example, where protected species may be present or where biodiverse habitats may be lost.

As with other supporting information, local planning authorities should require ecological surveys only where clearly justified. Assessments should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the likely impact on biodiversity. Further guidance on information requirements is set out in making an application."

Biodiversity net gain is mentioned in the PPG and states that:

"The National Planning Policy Framework encourages net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. It may help local authorities to meet their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006."

Species and Habitats Legislation

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) consolidates all various amendments made to The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994, in respect of England and Wales. The 1994 Regulations transposed the EC Habitats Directive 1992 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) into national law.

Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive list (respectively) habitats and species for which member states are required to establish and monitor SACs. The EC Birds Directive provides a similar network of sites (SPAs) for all rare or vulnerable species listed in Annex I and all regularly occurring migratory species, with particular focus on wetlands of international importance.

Together with SACs, SPAs form a network of pan-European protected areas known as 'NATURA 2000' sites.

The Habitats Regulations also make it an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade on the animals listed in Schedule 2, or pick, cut, uproot, destroy or trade in the plants listed in Schedule 4.

This legislation was amended in January 2021: The main changes to the 2017 Regulations are:

- "the creation of a national site network within the UK territory comprising the protected sites already designated under the Nature Directives, and any further sites designated under these Regulations
- the establishment of management objectives for the national site network (the 'network objectives')
- a duty for appropriate authorities to manage and where necessary adapt the national site network as a whole to achieve the network objectives
- an amended process for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- arrangements for reporting on the implementation of the Regulations, given that the UK no longer provides reports to the European Commission
- arrangements replacing the European Commission's functions with regard to the imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) test where a plan or project affects a priority habitat or species
- arrangements for amending the schedules to the Regulations and the annexes to the Nature *Directives that apply to the UK."*

The Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1979)

The Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1979) aims to ensure conservation and protection of all wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats (listed in Appendices I and II of the Convention), to increase cooperation between contracting parties, and to afford special protection to the most vulnerable or threatened species (including migratory species).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981)

The WCA is the primary UK mechanism for statutory site designation (Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs]) and the protection of individual species listed under Schedule 1,2,5 and 8 of the Act, each subject to varying levels of protection.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

This legislation strengthens the provision of the 1981 WCA (as amended), both in respect of statutory sites such as SSSIs and protected species. It also places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities and other public bodies to further conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their functions, thus providing a statutory basis to the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process, which began in 1994. Section 74 of the Act lists the habitat types and species of principal importance in England. The UK Biodiversity action Plan has now been superseded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' (July 2012), however, many of the species and habitats in the UK and local BAPs have not been updated and are still considered relevant to date.

A Bill to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to extend the right of public access to the countryside, including to woodlands, the Green Belt, waters and more grasslands; and for connected purposes is currently in second reading in the House of Commons (November 2022).

Local Plan: Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019-2036)

The following polices are taken from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019-2036).

LP30 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

'LP30 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

A proposal will 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 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;*
g. *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'*

LP31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges, and Hedgerows

'LP31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges, and Hedgerows

A proposal will be required to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated. Where investigations show that such adverse impacts are possible a statement will be required that:

a. *assesses all trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows that would be affected by the proposal, describing and assessing their value;*
b. *sets out how the details of the proposal have been decided upon in terms of their impact on the value of trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows and how adverse impacts will be avoided as far as possible, or if unavoidable how they will be minimised as far as possible.*

A proposal will only be supported where it seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development. In such cases the proposal will be expected to make reference to and follow the guidance contained in the Council's A Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire (2015) or successor documents.

Loss, threat or damage to any tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerow of visual, heritage or nature conservation value will only be acceptable where:

c. *it is addressed firstly by seeking to avoid the impact, then to minimise the impact and finally where appropriate to include mitigation measures; or*
d. *there are sound arboricultural reasons to support the proposal. Where impacts remain the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location must clearly outweigh the loss, threat or damage.*

Where loss, threat or damage cannot be fully addressed through minimisation and/ or mitigation measures the proposal may be supported if alternative measures such as reinstatement of features, additional landscaping, habitat creation or tree planting will compensate for the harm and can be implemented and established before development starts.

A proposal for major scale development will be required to include additional new trees to form part of landscaping for the proposal, the form of which will be determined by negotiation.'