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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Wintringham District Centre

Urban & Civic

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Document History

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1 Introduction

1.1 Brief and Site location

Pick Everard were commissioned by Urban & Civic (the Client) to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment for land south of Cambridge Road, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 6SN (the Site).

The PEA establishes the site's baseline ecological condition, identifying designated sites, habitats, and protected or notable species that may be affected by the proposed development, and provides initial mitigation recommendations.

The BNG assessment maps and evaluates the condition of habitats within the planning boundary. It defines the baseline habitat units against which the required 10% biodiversity net gain will be measured.

Prior to submission, a meeting was held with the planning, landscape, and ecology officers on Wednesday 12th March 2025 to discuss the proposed development, including the temporary access road. As a follow-up, the Council's ecology officer provided written advice, which has informed the approach taken in this report. The advice confirmed that the most appropriate route to securing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is to submit an accurate baseline habitat assessment that reflects any degradation since January 2020, and to purchase off-site units to deliver the required 10% net gain, and to retain the post-development area as hardstanding without the need for long-term habitat management. Final landscaping of the access area will be detailed and provided as part of the wider Wintringham development, following the conclusion of the use of the temporary access.

Recommendations in this report are based on current development proposals and should be reviewed and updated if the design is revised.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The study comprised the following:

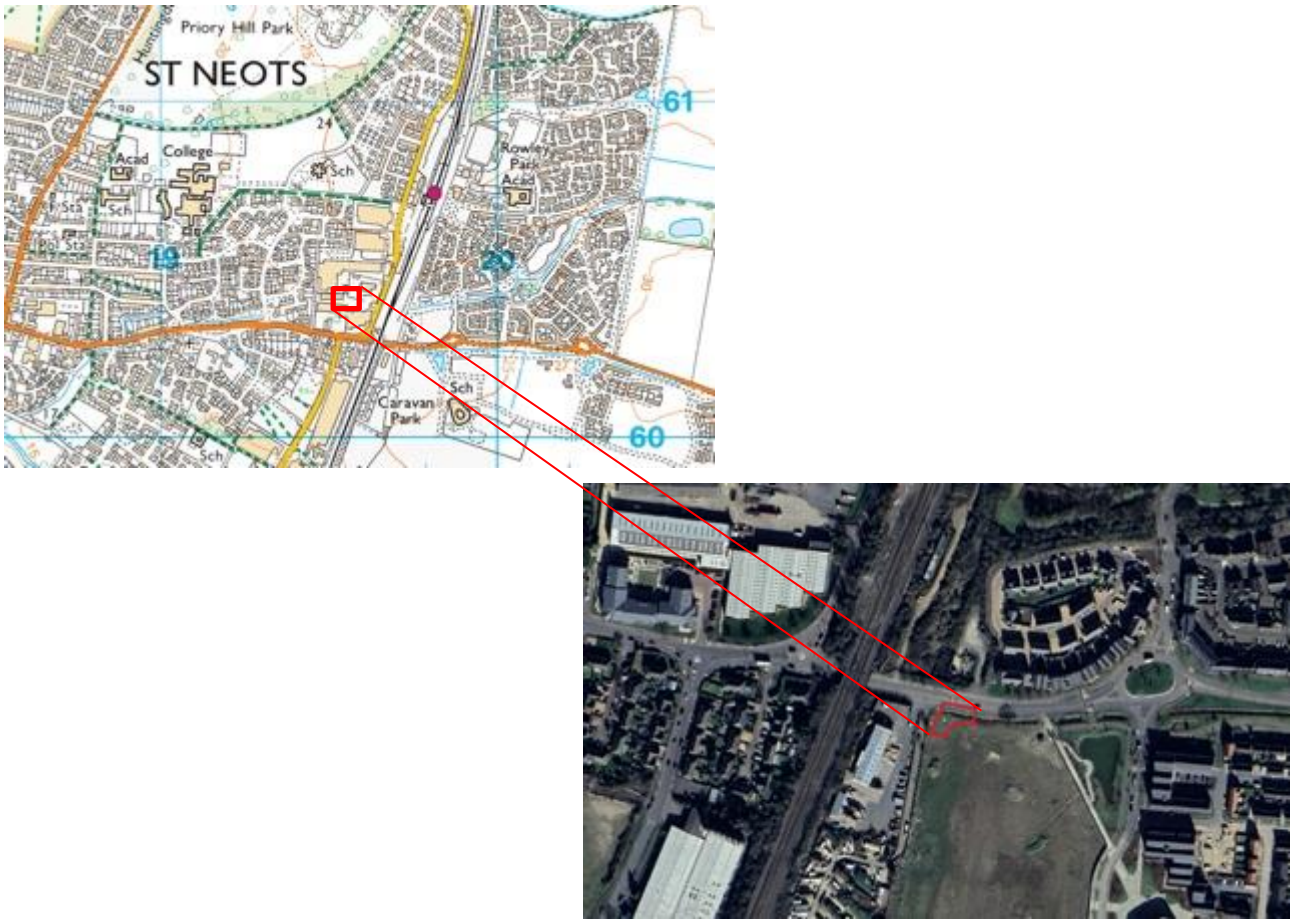
- A desk study to identify existing information on statutory and non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest, and records of notable or protected habitats or species within the site and its surrounding area.
- A UKHAB/ PEA survey of the site, extended to search for evidence of, and potential for, protected fauna.
- Identification of potential ecological constraints to the proposed development and assessments of impacts including appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation and baseline habitat assessment have been undertaken to determine the number of off-site habitat units required to achieve a 10% uplift, in accordance with the Council's recommendation.

2 Site Setting

2.1 Site Location

The site is located on the eastern edge of St Neots and is centred on OS National Grid Reference: 519726, 260239. The Site location and layout are shown in Figure 1.



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Figure 1 – Site Location and Layout

2.2 Site Description

The site is located on the eastern edge of St Neots and consists of disturbed grassland south of a dry, vegetated boundary ditch. It is bordered by new residential development to the west, north, and east, with grassland adjoining the southern boundary.

2.3 Proposed Works

The proposed works involve culverting the dry ditch along the northern boundary to create a hardstanding access road extending south from Cambridge Road into the site. The site will be landscaped and re-seeded with grassland, however this will not contribute to the BNG of the site, as recommended by the council.

3 Methodology

3.1 Scope of the PEA

This assessment has been undertaken following the approach detailed in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland' (CIEEM, 2024)[1]. The assessment has focussed on 'Important Ecological Features' that are present within the 'Zone of Influence' of the project. Important Ecological Features, as detailed in Box 14 of the CIEEM's Guidelines comprise:

- Habitats and Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity in England.
- Legally protected species.
- Red Listed or rare species (based on Red Data Book lists, Birds of Conservation Concern and species considered to be nationally rare/scarce).

The Zone of Influence (ZoI) is the area over which a development proposal could have an influence on ecological features. The ZoI will vary for different features, although the ZoI for this proposed development comprises the land within the red line boundary and immediately adjacent habitat features.

3.2 BNG Assessment

This assessment has been undertaken following the approach detailed in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM) User Guide (DEFRA 2024)[2]. Habitats were mapped using UKHAB methodology. Habitat conditions were assessed using the SBM condition sheets. Detailed results of the habitat conditions are provided in a supplementary document (Pick Everard 2025b)[3]. The habitat units were calculated using the SBM calculator, which is provided as a supplementary document (Pick Everard 2025c)[4]. Habitat areas were calculated using CAD and GIS.

3.3 Desk Study

3.1.1 Protected Sites, Habitats and Species

Existing information on designated sites and protected species was obtained from the sources detailed in Table 1 below.

[1] CIEEM (2024). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine.* Version 1.3, September 2024. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.
[2] DEFRA (2024). *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User Guide* (Version published 23 July 2024). Natural England, York.
[3] Pick Everard (2025b) Wintringham Temporary Construction Access - Condition Assessment Sheets 1.3
[4] Pick Everard (2025c) Wintringham Temporary Construction Access - SBM Calculation Tool

Source	Data	Radius of Search
MAGIC	Statutory and non-statutory nature conservation designated sites	Ramsar/Special Area of Conservation (SACs)/Special Area of Protection (SPAs)/Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (/LNRs) -2km Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, (ASNW), Restored Ancient Woodland Sites (RAWS) and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) - 1km SACs/SSSIs(designated for bats) - 10km
Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC)	Protected species records County wildlife sites Protected Road Verges	1km.

Table 1 – Sources of Information

All available records of bat roosts, badger, dormouse, amphibians and reptiles were considered. For other species, only records collected within the last 10 years were considered relevant.

3.1.2 Landscape Context

The site and wider landscape were assessed and characterised using aerial images, Ordnance Survey maps and Cambridge and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC data 2025). The presence of off-site features and habitats, which add to the ecological value within the wider area (for example, ponds within 0.5km of the site) were identified. Where appropriate, such features were scoped into the detailed assessment of impacts presented in Section 3.

3.1.3 Ancient Woodland

Although ancient woodland is not a designated site as such, it is often listed as a designated site due to its ecological significance and associated protection. Ancient woodland has therefore been included within the non-statutory designated site section of this report.

3.1.4 Planning Authority

The Huntingtdonshire District Council Planning Portal was consulted to determine if any previous survey information was available for the site, or immediate surroundings.

3.1.5 BNG – Strategic Significance

The strategic significance of a location is an assessment of how the location of a habitat parcel contributes to strategic ecological priorities. These priorities should be informed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), if available, or other published strategic documents. In the absence of published priorities, strategic significance should default to 'Low'. All assessments of strategic significance must be supported by a clear justification.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LNRS is still currently under development. Therefore, the following documents were read for reference to the habitat parcels on site:

- Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
- Local Green Infrastructure Strategies.
- Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).
- Existing habitat networks (e.g. Nature Recovery Network).
- Local Wildlife Site maps, ecological network maps, or policies.

The g3c grassland to the north of the site is considered to have medium strategic significance. While not individually identified as a priority habitat, the location adjacent to a proposed green corridor and the structural value of the sward as a buffer and pollinator resource elevates its role in local ecological networks. Supported by Policy LP3 (Green Infrastructure) and Neighbourhood Plan policies encouraging wildlife corridors and ecological connectivity (Appendix 1).

The dry ditch is identified as a built linear feature and considered to have medium strategic significance. Although dry, the ditch is part of a network of linear features and ecological corridors in the broader Wintringham development. Local plans and draft strategies encourage the restoration and multifunctional use of such features, and they contribute to connectivity (Policy LP30, Policy P3 - Appendix 1). If future habitat enhancement occurs (e.g. reinstatement of wet function), its strategic significance may increase further.

The modified grassland g4, is not identified in any local ecological strategy or policy (Local Plan, NRN, or Green Infrastructure Strategy) as being of strategic importance. It lacks connectivity or priority restoration value and has low semi-natural character.

3.4 Field Study

3.4.1 Personnel

The field survey was undertaken in good weather on the 8th of May 2025 by Daniel Falvey MCIEEM.

3.4.2 Vegetation and Habitats

The vegetation and habitat types present within the survey area were categorised and mapped in accordance with the standard[5] The UK Habitat Classification (version 2) codes (UKHab 2023)[6]. Dominant and conspicuous plant species were recorded for each habitat. Target notes were used to record information on features of ecological interest, such as evidence of, or habitats with potential to support, protected species, or where any features of interest too small to map were recorded. Following the completion of the survey, a colour-coded habitat plan was digitised to show the extent and distribution of the different habitat types present within the site (see Plan 2).

Habitats of Principle Importance (HoPI) and Species of Principle Importance (SoPI) listed under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act, as well as Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs) listed under the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plan[7], were consulted to assign an ecological context to the site.

Invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9[8] of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), such as Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) were also noted during the survey, if present.

3.4.3 Protected and Notable Species

Evidence of, and habitats with, potential to support protected or notable species were noted, especially species meeting any of the following criteria:

- Listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) ['CHSAEU'] Regulations 2019;
- Listed under S41 of the NERC Act as being of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in England;
- Listed as a local priority for conservation, for example in the relevant Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP);
- Red Listed using International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria (e.g. in one of the UK Species Status Project[9] reviews, in the Species of Conservation Concern Red, Amber or Near Threatened List[10] or, where a more recent assessment of the taxonomic group has not yet been undertaken, listed in a Red Data Book);

[5] Some additional categories were also used if applicable e.g. broadleaved trees indicated by green filled circles rather than using secondary codes.
[6] UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0.* Version 2.01, July 2023. UKHab Ltd.
[7] https://www.cperc.org.uk/information.php
[8] Schedule 9 species of plants and animals are ones that do not naturally occur in Great Britain but have become established in the wild and represent a threat to the natural fauna and flora.
[9] The Species Status project is the successor to the JNCC's Species Status Assessment project, providing up-to-date assessments of the threat status of various taxa using the internationally accepted Red List guidelines (http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1773).
[10] Eaton *et al.* (2015) Birds of conservation concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. British Birds 108: 708-746.

- Listed as a Nationally Rare or Nationally Scarce species (e.g. in one of the Species Status Project reviews) or listed as a Nationally Notable species where a more recent assessment of the taxonomic group has not yet been undertaken; and/or
- Endemic to a country or geographic location (it is appropriate to recognise endemic sub-species, phenotypes, or cultural behaviours of a population that are unique to a particular place).

Only those species with potential to be present on-site are mentioned within this report. The methodologies used were as follows:

3.4.3.1 Birds

Any birds observed during the field survey were recorded, in addition to features capable of supporting nesting birds (e.g. trees, hedgerows, buildings, bramble, ruderal vegetation and rough grassland etc.). The site was also assessed for its actual and potential suitability to support Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1 species.

A comprehensive bird survey, such as a breeding bird survey, was not undertaken as this was beyond the scope of the assessment.

3.4.3.2 Bats

A preliminary assessment of the value of the site for bats (and any potential roost sites therein) was made in accordance with Table 4.1 of the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists (Collins, 2023)[11]. The assessment was based on the relative abundance and quality of habitat features within the site, and surrounding landscape, suitable for roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

Landscape features suitable for foraging and commuting bats include linear landscape features such as watercourses, transport corridors (e.g. roads, sunken lanes railways), walls, hedgerows, coppice, woodland fringe, tree lines, ditches and areas of scrub and pasture.

3.4.3.3 Dormice

There are no habitats on site that support this species. This species is not mentioned any further in this report.

[11] **Collins, J. (Ed.) (2023).** *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th Edition). Bat Conservation Trust, London.

3.4.3.4 Great Crested Newts

A 500 m pond search was carried out using aerial imagery, Ordnance Survey mapping, and the MAGIC database. A total of eight ponds were identified within the search area (Plan 2). Additional waterbodies were noted beyond 500 m or on the opposite side of significant dispersal barriers (e.g. roads and built development) and were therefore excluded from further assessment. Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments were not undertaken as this did not form part of this current study. However, an assessment of terrestrial habitat suitability was undertaken during the field survey on-site.

3.4.3.5 Otters, Water Voles and White-Clawed Crayfish

There are no habitats on site that support this species. This species is not mentioned any further in this report.

3.4.3.6 Badgers

The habitats on site were assessed for their suitability for badger including their connectivity with the wider landscape and suitability for creating setts. A targeted survey for this species was not undertaken.

3.4.3.7 Reptiles

The habitats on site were assessed for their suitability for common reptiles including their connectivity with the wider landscape. A targeted survey for this species was not undertaken.

3.4.3.8 Invertebrates

The habitats on site were assessed for their suitability for invertebrates. A targeted survey for this species group was not undertaken. The habitats on site are common with no notable plant species recorded. The site is likely to support common assemblages of invertebrates but no species or populations of significance. Invertebrates are not mentioned any further in this report.

3.4.3.9 Other Species

General habitat suitability and incidental sightings of other animal species such as hedgehog were also noted.

3.5 Assessment of Ecological Value

The value of the habitats and features of the site have been provisionally evaluated and graded in accordance with the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom and Ireland (CIEEM, 2024). The level of value of specific ecological receptors is assigned using a geographic frame of reference, i.e. international value being most

important, then national, regional, county, district, local and, lastly, within the immediate zone of influence of the site only. Brief descriptions of how Pick Everard interprets these categories are set out in Appendix 3.

Potential impacts on important ecological features (species, habitats and ecosystems[12]) are identified and assessed. Mitigation measures have been devised following the mitigation hierarchy and appropriate mechanisms for securing mitigation measures have been identified.

3.6 Limitations

General Temporal Limitations

Any ecological survey can only identify what was present on-site at the time the survey was conducted and habitat usage by species can change over time.

[12] The 2024 EcIA Guidelines from CIEEM make it clear that an EcIA should consider the impacts upon ecosystems, as well as habitats and species. Statements to this effect are found throughout the document including in sections 1.3, 1.9, 2.3, 4.1 and 4.8 etc.

4 Baseline Ecological Conditions, Evaluation and Development Impacts

This section outlines the baseline conditions and provides an evaluation of on-site habitats and the actual or potential presence of protected species. It identifies the potential impacts of the proposed development on protected sites, habitats, and protected or notable species, including direct and indirect effects during both the construction and operational phases.

A summary of the relevant legislation and planning policy relating to protected sites, habitats, and species is provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

4.1 Statutory Nature Conservation Designated Sites

Statutory Sites (SACs or SSSIs) Designated for Bats within 10km of Site

There are no statutory sites designated for bats within 10km of the site.

SACs, SSSIs and LNRs within 2km of Site

St Neots Common SSSI is located 1.5km to the west of the site. It is a riverside site designated for its species-rich alluvial grassland, ponds, ditches, and willow carr, which together support a diverse mosaic of wetland and grassland habitats.

The grassland is one of the few remaining traditionally grazed alluvial grasslands in Cambridgeshire, maintaining a rich botanical diversity. Wetter areas are characterised by grasses such as marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and floating sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), along with various sedges and wet pasture herbs including common water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*), southern marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), and marsh arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*). Drier calcareous areas support species such as quaking grass (*Briza media*) and meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*). The site's ecological value is further enhanced by ponds and ditches, which host aquatic flora including water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*), as well as healthy populations of frogs and toads, with frogs noted as rare in the county. A willow carr or holt within the site contains nine willow species, including purple willow (*Salix purpurea*) and almond-leaved willow (*Salix triandra* var. *amygalina*), alongside wetland herbs such as large bittercress (*Cardamine amara*) and butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*). Although invertebrate surveys have not been fully completed, the site's habitat complexity suggests high invertebrate diversity.

The proposed development is very limited in scale and lacks ecological connectivity with St Neots Common SSSI. As such, no adverse impacts on the site's designated features are anticipated. The SSSI is therefore not considered further in this report.

4.2 Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Designated Sites

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)/ Protected Road Verges

There are no sites present within 1km.

Ancient Woodland Sites

There are no areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland within 1km of the site.

4.3 Habitats and Vegetation

The results of the general survey of habitats and vegetation are shown on Plan 2 and described below along with their assessment of value (Appendix 3). The condition assessments of each habitat are mentioned in this section. The detailed condition sheets are attached in a supplementary document (Pick Everard 2025b).

4.3.1 Modified Grassland with Scattered Scrub (g4 10)

Located to the south of the dry ditch. The sward composition within the modified grassland includes a range of grasses and forbs, with dominance by species associated with disturbed or improved conditions. The dominant species recorded were perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) and bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), with dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale agg.*) frequent throughout. Occasional species included creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), curled dock (*Rumex crispus*), cut-leaved cranesbill (*Geranium dissectum*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). The grassland also supported a wide variety of species at low abundance (recorded as rare), including false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cock's-foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), smooth meadow grass (*Poa pratensis*), barren brome (*Bromus sterilis*), hoary ragwort (*Jacobaea erucifolia*), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), smooth sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), hop trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), white dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), greater burdock (*Arctium lappa*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), spotted medick (*Medicago arabica*) and horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*).

The condition assessment of the grassland achieved a score of 4 without passing the essential criteria for moderate or good condition. Therefore, it is in poor condition.

Photo 1: Site looking northwards	Photo 2: Site looking eastwards
	

4.3.2 Other Neutral Grassland with scattered scrub, tall forb with a dry ditch (g3c 10 16 50)

Located along the banks of the dry ditch. Species present include mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) O, great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) A, hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) F, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) F, field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) O, cleavers (*Galium aparine*) O, creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) O, cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) A, blackthorn sapling (*Prunus spinosa*) F, hawthorn sapling (*Crataegus monogyna*) O, false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) A, wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*) O, white dead-nettle (*Lamium album*) R, meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) R, barren brome (*Bromus sterilis*) O, white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) R, greater burdock (*Arctium lappa*) R, common mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) R.

The dry ditch does not meet the criteria for a wetland habitat or built linear feature. Therefore, the classification with inclusion within the grassland is appropriate given it a man-made excavation that is dry for most of the year (>6 months), with no evidence of aquatic or marginal plant species. At the time of survey, the ditch lacked water, and the absence of hydrophilic flora such as *Typha*, *Carex*, or *Juncus* indicates that it does not function as a wetland feature. Instead, it appears to act as a historic or redundant drainage channel with limited ecological value in its current form.

The condition assessment of the grassland achieved a score of **1** and is therefore in poor condition**.**

Photo 3: Site looking westwards from inside dry ditch	Photo 4: Site looking eastwards from inside dry ditch
	

4.3.3 Invasive Plant Species

No invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded during the site visit.

4.3.4 Off-site Habitats within the Zone of Influence

There are two trees within 30m of the red line boundary. The red line boundary may encroach on to the root protection areas (RPAs) of these trees. T1 is a young/semi-mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) (Photo 5) and T2 is a mature oak (*Quercus robur)* (Photo 6). These are not included as part of the BNG assessment.

Photo 5: T1 - Ash	Photo 6: T2 - Oak
	

4.4 Summary of Ecological Value of Habitats

The habitats are of value at the site level. Their clearance is not expected to result in impacts beyond the site boundary.

5 BNG Calculation and On-site Creation (post-intervention)

Detailed results are provided in the supplementary SBM calculator (Pick Everard 2025b).

The modified grassland to the south will be partially lost to the new access road and temporarily retained either side of the road, but future development phases will result in its complete loss. As such, it cannot be counted toward Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The other neutral grassland to the north will be removed and the ground reprofiled for construction. This area will be re-seeded with a species-rich grassland mixture and not contribute to the BNG of the site, as the entire 10% net gain will be achieved through the purchase of off-site units, as agreed with the LPA. This is illustrated in Plan 3.

5.1 Habitat Baseline and Post-Intervention

A summary of the baseline results are as follows:

On-site

- Total on-site baseline habitat units: 0.18
- On-site post-intervention habitats: 0

Final Results

- Total net % change habitats: **-100%.** However, as agreed the 10% gain will be made up through off-site unit purchases.

6 Protected and Notable Species

6.3 Notable Plant Species

No plant species, which individually are of either of national, regional or local significance were recorded on the site.

6.4 Birds

Desk Study Results

One record of swift (*Apus apus*) was provided within the last 10 years. This species is not associated with the habitats on site and is not mentioned any further in this report.

Field Survey Results

A low number of birds were recorded on site, including carrion crow (*Corvus corone*) and woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*). However, skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) were observed displaying territorial behaviour, indicating a likelihood of nesting activity on site.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Birds

The open, short-sward grassland provides suitable nesting habitat for skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), a species that has been recorded both on site and in the surrounding area. Skylark are red-listed under Birds of Conservation Concern and are recognised as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Birds

Skylark have been observed performing territorial display flights in the adjacent field and may potentially nest within the red line boundary. As such, the proposed works carry a risk of breaching the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 if undertaken during the breeding season. To avoid this, all vegetation clearance should be carried out outside the bird breeding season (February to August inclusive). If works must proceed during this period, a pre-works nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. Detailed recommendations are provided in Section 4.0.

6.5 Bats

Desk Study Results

Three bat records were returned by CPERC within 1 km of the site. None of these records relate to confirmed roosts. Species recorded include *Pipistrellus* sp., common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), and Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*). No granted bat licences were identified within 1 km of the proposed development site (MAGIC).

Field Survey Results and Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Bats

Foraging and Commuting Habitat

The site comprises grassland bordered by scattered scrub and occasional trees, with the southern boundary connecting to an area of grassland and balancing ponds, beyond which lies a network of agricultural fields bordered by hedgerows. According to Table 4.1 of the *Bat Survey Guidelines: 4th Edition (BCT, 2023)*, these features are considered to offer low to moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. While the site is enclosed to the north, east, and west by residential development, its southern boundary remains functionally connected to the wider landscape, potentially allowing limited movement and foraging by common bat species.

Roosting Habitat

There is a young/semi-mature ash (T1) approximately 15m to the west of the red line boundary. This tree has negligible roosting suitability due to a lack of potential roosting features (PRFs).

There is a mature oak (T2) located approximately 17m to the east of the red line boundary. This tree has moderate suitability for roosting bats. It supports multiple tear-outs, knot holes and dead-wood leading to cavities.

Photo 7: T2 – PRFs	Photo 8: T2 - PRFs
	
Photo 8: T2 - PRFs	
	

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Bats

No trees or buildings with potential roosting features were identified on site; therefore, the development will not result in direct impacts to roosting bats.

Tree T2, located approximately 17m east of the site, will not be directly affected by the proposed development. The tree is situated adjacent to a busy road, making it unlikely that temporary construction activities would cause disturbance to any roosting bats, if present. Provided that tree protection fencing is installed as specified, no impacts to roosting bats are anticipated. Further details of this mitigation are provided in Section 4.0.

The site is considered to offer low to moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats, with habitat connectivity limited by surrounding urban development. The proposed removal of grassland and culverting of the dry ditch is small in scale and is expected to have a negligible impact on bat foraging and commuting activity. Biodiversity Net Gain measures, including the creation of species-rich grassland, will enhance the site's value for bats post-development. Bats are not mentioned any further in this report.

6.6 Great Crested Newt

Desk Study Results

CPERC returned no records of great crested newt (GCN) within 1 km of the site. Additionally, no Natural England licences, licence returns, or pond surveys (2017–2019) are recorded within 1 km of the proposed development site (MAGIC).

500m Waterbody Search

Eight waterbodies (P1-P8) were recorded within 500m of the site on aerial images and OS maps (Plan 1). Other waterbodies were observed to be within 500m but on the opposite side of significant barriers to dispersal and therefore not included.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Great Crested Newt

There are no waterbodies within the development footprint itself. Although Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments were not undertaken, the waterbodies are all recently created (within the last 3–5 years, from looking at historical aerial images) and were likely constructed as part of the wider Wintringham development as either balancing ponds or for ornamental purposes. This may be sufficient time for GCN to find and colonise these ponds, however given their urban setting, limited ecological connectivity with other ponds in the wider landscape, their probability of supporting a GCN population is reduced. The terrestrial habitat on site - comprising grassland and disturbed margins - offers limited and sub-optimal suitability for great crested newts (GCN) due to its small scale, structural simplicity, and partial isolation.

Given the very limited extent of the proposed works, the small land take, and the fact that the development will deliver habitat enhancement through the creation of other neutral grassland, it is considered that further survey effort, such as eDNA or HSI assessment, is not proportionate to the risk posed. Instead, it is recommended that the works proceed under a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS), designed to avoid harm to amphibians, assuming GCN presence.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Great Crested Newt

Although the waterbodies (P1–P8) may provide varying degrees of suitability for breeding GCN, the overall risk to the species is considered low, given the recent establishment of these waterbodies, the lack of confirmed records within 1km (CPERC data 2025), and the clearly disturbed condition of the site and wider site.

Nevertheless, in recognition of GCN's legal protection, works should proceed with precautionary measures in place, including supervised vegetation clearance, tool-box talks, and appropriate habitat reinstatement or enhancement. It is further recommended that any future applications associated with the wider district centre consider eDNA survey of these waterbodies to inform cumulative assessment and mitigation strategies.

6.7 Badger

Desk Study Results

CPERC returned one badger (*Meles meles*) record, relating to a roadkill individual on the A428 within 1km of the site.

Field Survey Results

No evidence of badger was recorded on site. Although a targeted survey for this species was not undertaken.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Badgers

Although no evidence of badgers was recorded on site, there is some limited potential for them to use the site for sett building, foraging and commuting.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Badgers

No evidence of badger was recorded on site, and the proposed development is not anticipated to result in any adverse impacts on the species. However, as badgers are a mobile and dynamic species capable of colonising new areas, a pre-works check by a qualified ecologist will be required to ensure no setts have been established prior to construction. Further details are provided in Section 4.0.

6.8 Reptiles

Desk Study Results

CPERC returned no reptile records from within the last 10 years.

Field Survey Results and Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Reptiles

The longer grassland and vegetation along the banks of the dry ditch in the northern part of the site offer greater suitability for reptiles. However, the site is small and largely isolated by surrounding urban development and disturbed, short grassland to the south, with limited habitat connectivity. As a result, the likelihood of supporting a significant reptile population is very low.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Reptiles

Clearance of the grassland carries a risk of committing an offence if reptiles are harmed during works. To minimise this risk, it is recommended that vegetation be strimmed in two stages followed by soil stripping under ecological supervision. Detailed mitigation measures are provided in Section 4.0.

6.9 Hedgehog and Other Species

Desk Study Results

CPERC returned one hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) record located 500m north of the site.

Field Survey Results

No hedgehogs or evidence of hedgehog was recorded on site. Although a targeted survey for this species was not undertaken.

Evaluation of Ecological Value of Site for Hedgehog

There is some potential for hedgehog to be present within the long grassland and dry ditch habitats on site. Hedgehog is listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Impact Assessment of Proposed Development on Hedgehog

Clearance of grassland and dry ditch habitats carries a risk of harming hedgehogs. To minimise this risk, vegetation should be strimmed in two stages under ecological supervision. Detailed mitigation measures are outlined in Section 4.0.

7 Required Actions and Conclusions

The following recommendations are expected to be secured via planning conditions. They are based on the development proposals available at the time of writing and may be subject to revision upon finalisation of the design. Their implementation will ensure compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), the Environment Act 2021, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended by the CHSAEU Regulations 2019), and relevant Huntingdonshire District Council policies.

These recommendations are designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the environment and protected species, to mitigate or compensate where impacts are unavoidable, and to promote opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. All developments are required to deliver a net gain for biodiversity.

7.3 Further Work, Mitigation Measures and Precautionary Measures

7.3.1 Bat and Bird Boxes

To enhance the site for roosting bats and nesting birds, one Schwegler 2F or 2FN bat box and one Schwegler 1B bird box will be installed on the mature oak tree located east of the site boundary. The boxes will be mounted on the south-eastern or south-western aspects of the tree at a minimum height of 3m above ground level, as shown on Plan 3. Photographic evidence of the installed bat box will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) post-development for confirmation.

7.3.2 Badger – Pre-Works Check

A pre-works check for badger by an ecologist is recommended to ensure that no setts have been created within 30m of the development footprint.

7.3.3 Tree Protection

Trees T1 and T2 are located within 20 m of the site boundary and will be protected with Heras fencing prior to the commencement of works. This precaution will ensure that construction activities do not cause physical damage to the trees. Notably, Tree T2 has moderate bat roost suitability, and the installation of protective fencing will also serve to minimise any risk of disturbance to roosting bats.

Root Protection Areas (RPAs) were calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in BS 5837:2012 – Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations. The RPA represents the minimum area around a tree that should be protected during development to avoid damage to the root system. Tree T1 (ash) requires a RPA of 2.4m radius (18.1 m^2), while Tree T2 requires a 9.0m radius (254.5 m^2). These RPAs should be protected throughout the development phase using appropriate fencing and exclusion zones, as illustrated in Plan 3.

7.3.4 Precautionary Working Method Statement – GCN, Reptiles and Birds

All contractors will receive a toolbox talk from the ecologist prior to works commencing.

Prior to any vegetation clearance, a suitably qualified ecologist will inspect the grassland for evidence of nesting birds, particularly if works are scheduled during the breeding bird season (February–August inclusive). Surveys will include areas within the red line boundary and up to 30 m beyond, specifically targeting species such as skylark, which nest in open grassland swards. If an active nest is found, works will cease immediately, and an appropriate buffer zone will be established. Works may continue outside this buffer, or if avoidance is not possible, will remain paused until a qualified ecologist confirms the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active.

The ecologist will then conduct a fingertip search of the works area for reptiles, great crested newts (GCN), and other sensitive species. Vegetation will be strimmed to 10–15 cm above ground level, followed by a second fingertip search. If no animals are found, strimming may proceed to ground level. The ecologist will advise whether ecological supervision is required for subsequent soil stripping, which should be carried out using an excavator with a toothed bucket, where possible, to create temporary refugia.

Any reptiles or amphibians encountered will be carefully relocated to suitable adjacent habitat. If a GCN is discovered, works will stop immediately, and the ecologist will determine whether to leave the individual in situ or relocate it, based on welfare considerations. In either case, Natural England will be notified, and an EPS Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be secured before works can resume.

7.3.5 Re-Seeding Bare Ground

The area of other neutral grassland to the north of the site will be removed and the ground reprofiled to facilitate construction. The bare ground left following these works will be reseeded using Emorsgate Seeds EM2 Standard General-Purpose Meadow Mixture (or suitable alternative).

This reseeding will not contribute to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) post-development calculations. However, it will partially mitigate the loss of grassland habitat by providing floristic diversity and opportunities for invertebrate pollinators.

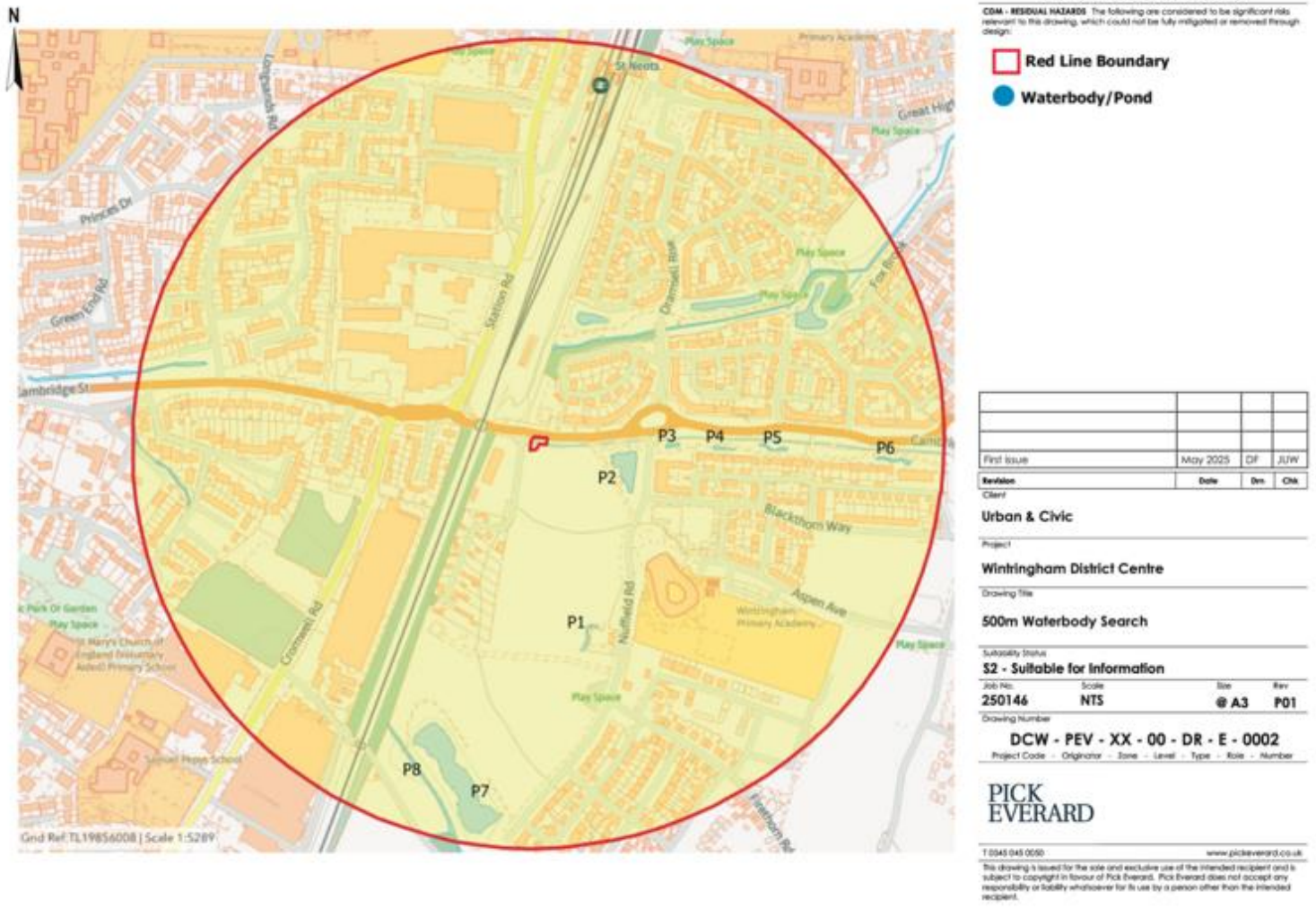
There is no requirement for long-term management of this area; however, it is recommended that seeding is undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out in Appendix 4.

7.3.6 Longevity of Report

If development works do not begin within eighteen months to two years of the date of this report, an update survey is likely to be required in accordance with guidance from CIEEM (2024) and BS 42020:2013[13], to determine if conditions have changed since those described in this report.

[13] As set out in Section 6.2.1, point 7 which states that ecological information should not normally be more than two/three years old, or as stipulated in good practice guidance).

Plan 1 – 500m Waterbody Search



NO DIMENSIONS TO BE SCALED FROM THIS DRAWING

CDM - RESIDUAL HAZARDS The following are considered to be significant risks relevant to this drawing, which could not be fully mitigated or removed through design:

Red Line Boundary

Waterbody/Pond

Revision	Date	Drn	Chk
First issue	May 2025	DF	JUW

Client: Urban & Civic

Project: Wintringham District Centre

Drawing Title: 500m Waterbody Search

Suitability Status: S2 - Suitable for Information

Job No.	Scale	Size	Rev
250146	NTS	@ A3	P01

Drawing Number: DCW - PEV - XX - 00 - DR - E - 0002

Project Code - Originator - Zone - Level - Type - Role - Number

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Plan 2 – Existing Habitats and Vegetation



NO DIMENSIONS TO BE SCALED FROM THIS DRAWING

CDM - RESIDUAL HAZARDS The following are considered to be significant risks relevant to this drawing, which could not be fully mitigated or removed through design:

- Red Line Boundary
- Dry Ditch 50
- Modified grassland g4
- Other neutral grassland g3c
- Fenceline u1e
- Scattered Scrub 10
- Scattered Trees 32

Revision	Date	Drn	Chk
First issue	May 2025	DF	JUW

Client
Urban & Civic

Project
Wintringham District Centre

Drawing title
Existing Habitats and Vegetation

Suitability Status
S2 - Suitable for Information

Job No.	Scale	Size	Rev
250146	NTS	@ A3	P01

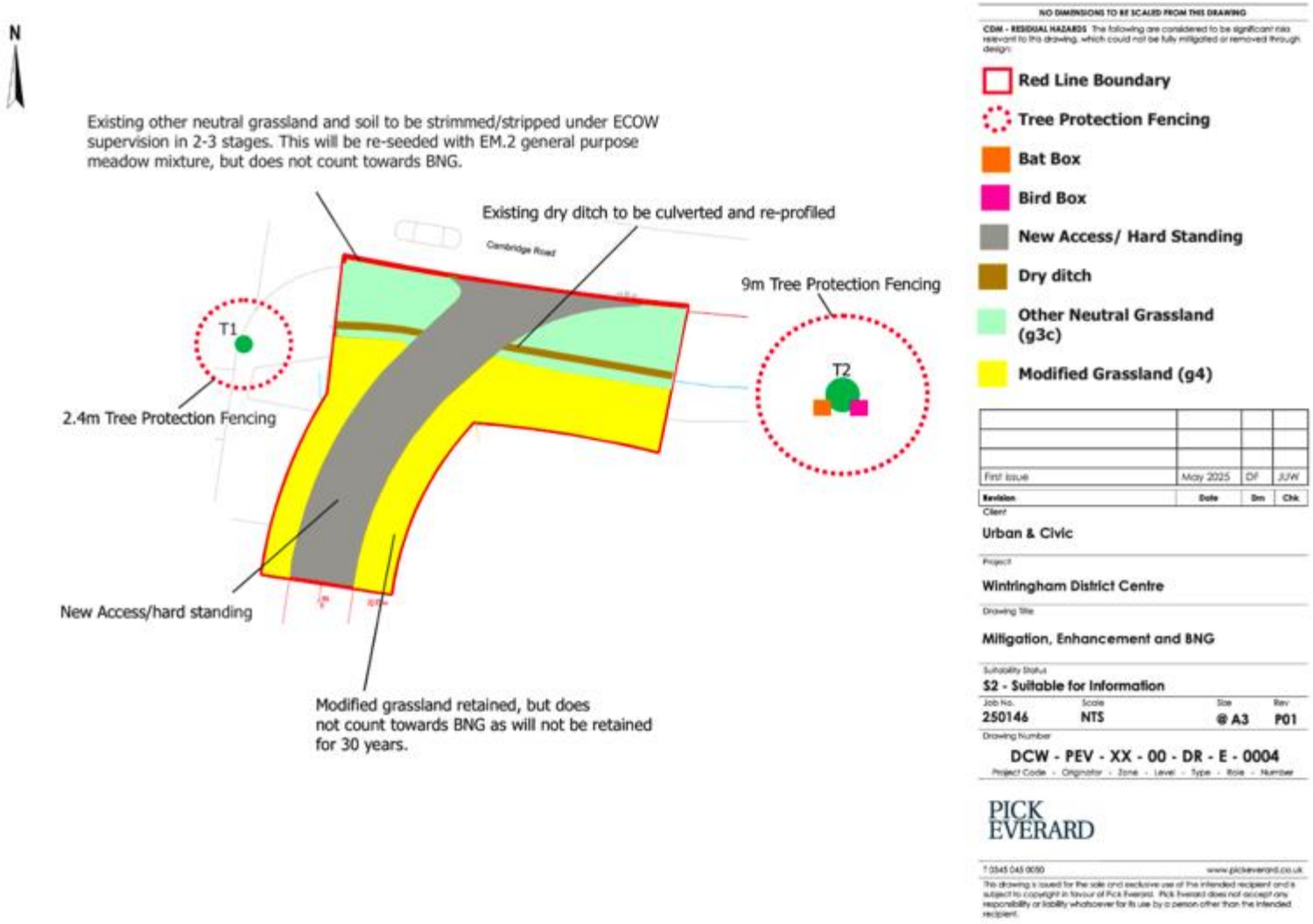
Drawing Number
DCW - PEV - XX - 00 - DR - E - 0003
Project Code - Originator - Zone - Level - Type - Role - Number

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Plan 3 – Mitigation, Enhancement and BNG



Appendix 1 - Summary of Legislation and Policy

Relating to Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites and Planning Policy Relevant to Site

SACs

SACs[14] are strictly protected sites designated under the:

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland (reserved matters) and Northern Ireland (excepted matters),

- the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland,
- the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended in Northern Ireland, and
- the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in the UK offshore area.

These regulations require establishment of a network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the habitats and species identified in Annexes I and II, respectively, of European Council Directive 92/43/EEC[15] on the conservation of natura habitats of wild fauna and flora, known as the Habitats Directive.

SSSIs

SSSIs are important as they support habitats and/or species of national importance. SSSIs are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and are of national (second tier) biodiversity significance and form the essential building blocks of the United Kingdom's protected areas for nature conservation. Many are also designated as Natura sites i.e. internationally (first tier) designated sites. It is an offence for any person to intentionally or recklessly damage the protected natural features of a SSSI.

[14] https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/
[15] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en

Cambridgeshire County Wildlife Sites (CWSs)

Local Sites, including Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and County Wildlife Sites (CWS), are non-statutory areas designated locally for their substantive nature conservation value. They are selected based on specific criteria that reflect the presence of important, distinctive, and often threatened habitats and species at national, regional, and local levels.

CWSs vary in size and habitat type, such as ancient woodland, species-rich grassland, wetlands, and hedgerows. Though not legally protected, they are recognised in the planning system and receive a degree of protection through local planning policies. Many provide crucial habitat for rare and declining species, often due to traditional land management practices.

These sites play a vital role in the ecological network, acting as refuges, buffers, and corridors that complement the statutory network of SSSIs, SACs, and SPAs. In fact, many CWSs support habitat of SSSI quality but are designated locally due to the limited scope of national designations. As a comprehensive system, the collective value of CWSs is nationally significant.

The 2010 Lawton Review identified the need for better protection of non-designated wildlife sites like CWSs to form resilient, climate-adaptive ecological networks. The NPPF requires LPAs to map ecological networks and avoid development that would result in loss of CWSs, as this would likely fail to demonstrate biodiversity net gain.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there are over 500 Local Sites, supported through Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, and strategic documents such as Minerals and Waste Plans and Water Level Management Plans. Public bodies are also required to consider biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 establishes the legal framework for environmental improvement in England, including a landmark target to halt the decline of nature by 2030. The Act introduces a range of biodiversity-focused measures relevant to development and land management:

- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): All new developments under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 must deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, secured for at least 30 years.
- Strengthened Biodiversity Duty: Public authorities are now required not only to have regard to biodiversity in exercising their functions, but to actively enhance it.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS): Introduced to support a national Nature Recovery Network by identifying and mapping local priorities for nature enhancement.

- Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies: Tools to enable strategic, landscape-scale planning for nature conservation and better outcomes for designated sites and priority species.
- Street Trees: Local authorities must consult the public before felling street trees, increasing accountability and protection of urban green infrastructure.
- Woodland Protection: The Act introduces stronger enforcement powers to prevent illegal tree felling and enhance woodland resilience.
- Conservation Covenants: A new legal mechanism allowing landowners to enter into long-term agreements with responsible bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity on their land.
- Deforestation-linked Supply Chains: Large UK businesses are prohibited from using products linked to illegal deforestation and must conduct due diligence on their supply chains to demonstrate environmental responsibility.

These measures are designed to embed nature recovery into planning, land use, and business decisions, ensuring that biodiversity is proactively protected and restored across England.

National Planning Policy Framework, 2024

The NPPF (2024) outlines the Government's planning policies for England, emphasising sustainable development, environmental protection, and biodiversity enhancement. Key ecological principles include:

- **Protecting and enhancing** sites of biodiversity value, green infrastructure, soils, and valued landscapes, in proportion to their designation.
- **Recognising the intrinsic value** of the natural environment, including benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services.
- **Planning for biodiversity net gain**, promoting coherent ecological networks that are resilient to climate change and human pressures.
- **Avoiding significant harm** to biodiversity; if this cannot be avoided, it must be mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.
- **Safeguarding irreplaceable habitats**, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees, and ensuring development that impacts them is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- **Requiring plans to map local ecological networks**, including priority habitats and species, stepping stones, and wildlife corridors.
- **Refusing developments** that adversely affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), protected habitats, or result in the loss of irreplaceable habitats—unless there is overriding public benefit and appropriate compensation.
- **Integrating biodiversity into the design** of new development, encouraging measurable gains and improved access to nature.

The NPPF supports the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless significant environmental harm cannot be adequately addressed.

Huntingdonshire District Council Local Policy

Policy LP 30 – 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 (SAC, SPA, Ramsar), 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.

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 is insufficient will consideration be given to compensation measures. A proposal will only be supported if:

a. A site of international importance (SAC, SPA, Ramsar) would be affected, there must be exceptional overriding reasons of human health, public safety or environmental benefit;
b. A site of national importance (SSSI, NNR) would be affected, there must 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 and any broader national impacts;
c. A protected species, a priority habitat or species, a site of local/regional importance, or the biodiversity value of the site would be affected, the need and benefits must clearly outweigh the assessed impacts.

A proposal will not be supported if it would lead to the deterioration of water body ecological status or potential.

A proposal will ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features. Large-scale proposals should provide an audit of biodiversity losses and gains using a recognised methodology. Priority should be given to:

- Enhancing existing features of biodiversity value

- Creating new biodiversity features
- Reversing species decline
- Achieving local targets for priority habitats and species
- Improving public access to nature
- Managing biodiversity or geological features effectively
- Supporting multifunctional green infrastructure and ecological networks
- Helping species adapt to climate change
- Contributing to good ecological status of water bodies

Policy LP 3 – Green Infrastructure

A proposal will be expected to support green infrastructure and will therefore be supported where it demonstrates that it:

a. Incorporates open/green space in accordance with the Council's Developer Contributions SPD
b. Protects and enhances existing green infrastructure, especially links to Green Infrastructure Priority Areas and the Cambridgeshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Network
c. Is consistent with the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) or successor documents
d. Improves accessibility, naturalness and connectivity of green spaces, contributing to Natural England's ANGSt standards
e. Provides replacement where harm or loss of green infrastructure occurs, ensuring a net benefit
f. Maintains and enhances rights of way
g. Contributes to re-naturalisation of rivers and lakes where possible

Appendix 2 – Protected Species Legislation Relevant to Site

Birds

All wild British birds (while nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs), their nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by law under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Included in this protection are all nests (at whatever stage of construction or use) and all dependent young until the nest is abandoned and the young have fledged and become independent. Particularly rare species such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*) are listed on Schedule 1 which gives them additional protection from disturbance whilst nest building, whilst near a nest with eggs or young, or from disturbing the dependent young. Section 10.8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 state that Local authorities must use all reasonable endeavours to avoid any deterioration of habitats of wild birds.

Bats

All UK bat species are European Protected Species, protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure, kill, or disturb bats, or to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (roost). Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5) and listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as Species of Principal Importance. Bat roosts are protected regardless of whether bats are currently present. Development that may affect bats or their roosts requires an EPS Mitigation Licence, and bat activity surveys must be conducted in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

Great Crested Newt

The great crested newt is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) as a European Protected Species, making it an offence to capture, kill, injure or disturb individuals, or to damage or destroy their breeding or resting places. The species is also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and is listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) is required for any development likely to impact great crested newts or their habitat. Survey effort and mitigation must be proportionate to risk, and appropriate timing and methods are critical for compliance.

Dormice

Hazel dormice are strictly protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), making them a European Protected Species (EPS). It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure, kill or disturb dormice, or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places. They are also protected under Schedule 5 of

the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Any development likely to affect dormice or their habitat may require a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML). Dormice are associated with woodland, hedgerows and scrub, and surveys must be carried out following established Natural England guidance.

Badgers

Badgers and their setts are legally protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. It is an offence to kill, injure or take a badger, or to damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a badger sett, or disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett, without a licence from Natural England. While badgers are not a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act, their widespread distribution and legal protection necessitate careful consideration in development contexts. Survey and mitigation are required where works may affect badgers or their setts, with licensable activities often restricted to certain times of year to avoid breeding disruption.

Reptiles

All native UK reptiles, including species such as slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), and adder (*Vipera berus*), are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation prohibits intentional killing, injury or trade of these species. While they are not afforded protection for their places of shelter (unlike European Protected Species), mitigation measures are still required where development may result in harm. In England, all native reptiles are also listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006, requiring public authorities to have regard for their conservation. Reptile habitat loss, fragmentation, and unsympathetic management are significant threats, and all developments must take appropriate steps to avoid harm and, where possible, enhance suitable habitat.

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are a species of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in England, listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. This imposes a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of such species when carrying out their functions, including in planning and land management. Hedgehogs are also afforded partial protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which prohibits certain inhumane methods of capture and killing, such as specific types of traps or snares. Although not fully protected, hedgehogs are recognised as a priority conservation species, with significant population declines documented across both rural and urban areas. They are classified as Vulnerable to extinction in Britain under the Mammal Society's Red List (2020). Planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), supports the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and encourages consideration of priority species such as the hedgehog during development design and assessment.

Appendix 3 – Definitions of Site Value

International Value

Internationally designated or proposed sites such as Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, Biosphere Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation, or non-designated sites meeting criteria for international designation. Sites supporting populations of internationally important species or habitats.

National Value

Nationally designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or non-designated sites meeting SSSI selection criteria (NCC 1989), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Nature Conservancy Review (NCR) Grade I sites, viable areas of key habitats within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Sites supporting viable breeding populations of Red Data Book (RDB) species (excluding scarce species), or supplying critical elements of their habitat requirements.

Regional Value

Sites containing viable areas of threatened habitats listed in a regional Biodiversity Action Plan, comfortably exceeding SINC/SNCI criteria, but not meeting SSSI selection criteria. Sites supporting regionally significant areas of BAP habitats or large and viable populations Nationally Scarce species, or those included in the Regional Biodiversity Action Plan on account of their rarity, or supplying critical elements of their habitat requirements.

County Value/District Value

Site identified as local sites i.e. SINC/SNCI/CWS at the district level; but falling short of SSSI designation criteria, whether designated as a local site or not. Ancient woodlands and sites supporting regionally significant areas of UK BAP habitat. Large scale examples of BAP habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, NERC S41/ LBAP or threatened species (other than badger).

High Local

Habitats which just fail to meet District/County value criteria, but which appreciably enrich the ecological resource of the locality. Sites supporting species which are notable or uncommon in the county; or species which are uncommon, local or habitat-restricted nationally, and which might not otherwise be present in the area. Moderate scale examples of BAP habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, NERC S41/LBAP or threatened species.

Local Value

Old hedges, woodlands, ponds, significant areas of species-rich grassland, small scale examples of NERC S41 habitats or areas supporting small populations of protected, NERC S41/LBAP or threatened species. Undesignated sites or features which appreciably enrich the habitat resource in the context of their immediate surroundings, parish or neighbourhood (e.g. a species-rich hedgerow). Rare or uncommon species may occur but are not restricted to the site or critically dependent upon it for their survival in the area.

Site Value (within the immediate zone of influence)

Low-grade and widespread habitats. Woodland plantations, structured planting, small areas of species-rich grassland and other species-rich habitats not included in the NERC S41 or Local BAP.

Negligible

No apparent nature conservation value.

Appendix 4 – EM2 Grassland Creation and Management

Description

This meadow mixture contains species that are characteristic of traditional meadows across a wide range of soil types.

Ground Preparation

- Ploughing is recommended to bury surface vegetation, followed by harrowing to produce a medium tilth and then rolling to produce a firm surface.

Sowing

- Seed will be sown in autumn or spring. The seed will then be surface broadcast by hand and firmed in with a roller.
- The seed will be sown at a rate of around 4g/m^2

First Year management

Most of the sown meadow species are perennial and are slow to establish. Soon after sowing there will be a flush of annual weeds, arising from the soil seed bank. These weeds can look unsightly, but they will offer shelter to the sown seedlings, are great for bugs, and they will die before the year is out. So resist cutting the annual weeds until mid to late summer, especially if the mixture contains Yellow Rattle, or has been sown with a nurse of cornfield annuals. Then cut, remove and compost. Early August is a good time. This will reveal the young meadow, which can then be kept short by grazing or mowing through to the end of March of the following year. Dig out any residual perennial weeds such as docks.

Second and Subsequent Year management

In the second and subsequent years EM2 sowings can be managed in a number of ways which, in association with soil fertility, will determine the character of the grassland. The best results are usually obtained by traditional meadow management based around a main summer hay cut in combination with autumn and possibly spring mowing or grazing.

Meadow grassland is not cut or grazed from spring through to late July/August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower. After flowering in July or August take a 'hay cut': cut back with a scythe, petrol strimmer or tractor mower to c 50mm. Leave the 'hay' to dry and shed seed for 1-7 days then remove from site.

Mow or graze the re-growth through to late autumn/winter to c 50mm and again in spring if needed.

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