Land off Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5NL

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

July 2025

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1.0	04/02/25	-	DR	JG	VP
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Notice to Readers:

The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

All Ecology cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

All Ecology cannot accept responsibility for data collected from third parties.

Reference to sections or particular paragraphs of this document taken out of context may lead to misrepresentation.

Summary

In January 2025, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Land off Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5NL. The site occupies a grassland field within the village of Pewsey, Wiltshire. The site is the subject of a planning application for a new residential development. Access would be off Wilcot Rd and this access has been consented under a separate planning application.

The effect of the development has been considered and key constraints identified. The habitats present in the site interior are of low ecological value in terms of their vegetation. Except for the new access off Wilcot Road, which has already been consented under a separate application, habitats of moderate value including hedge and trees on the boundaries of the field will be retained. The loss of grassland and small patches of scrub is not deemed significant and re-created grassland in public open space and new residential gardens are expected to provide some limited ecological value.

There are a number of designated wetland and watercourse sites in the surrounding area. No direct impacts to these sites are predicted but indirect adverse effects through pollution is possible. Suitable pollution prevention measures to be defined within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) secured by condition.

The habitats on site have potential to support protected or notable species. The following species/groups are either present, potentially present, or could be encouraged onto the site and the recommended actions are as follows:

- Bats – There are no buildings on site and hedgerow trees provided only limited potential for roosting, and in any case, will be retained. The site is dominated by grassland which only provides limited potential for foraging largely associated with boundary habitats. Boundary hedgerows and trees provide potential flight lines for bats and previous bat activity surveys recorded low numbers of bats using the site to forage and commute. The loss of grassland and small pockets of scrub is not deemed significant and the key habitats, hedges and trees, will be retained. New gardens will provide new habitat with limited foraging value. Provided that lighting of the field boundary hedgerows and trees is avoided, no significant impact to bats is predicted and no further surveys are required.

- Dormice – The hedges and trees provide the main potential habitat for this species. Surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2014, 2016, 2020 and 2021 did not record any evidence of presence but in any case, the habitats for this species will be retained. No further surveys are required.

- Badgers and other mammals – The grassland which dominates the site provides foraging habitats for common mammals and the hedgerows and scrub provide opportunities for foraging and provide cover. Precautionary methods of working are advised with regards to the potential for passing Badgers, Hedgehogs and presence of other small mammals.

- Birds – Nesting and foraging habitat in scrub, hedgerows and trees but habitats within the development area are of limited value. Any necessary removal or pruning of nesting habitats to be carried out outside the bird nesting season of March – August unless a nesting bird survey confirms absence.

- Reptiles – The small areas of scrub and field boundaries, where associated with hedges, provide limited reptile habitat. Surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2014, 2016 and 2020 recorded low populations of Common Lizard and Grass Snake with both of these species recorded in the southern part of the current application site. These species are expected to still be present and an on-going survey has recorded a two Common Lizards. Mitigation is proposed that take into account the both the previous and current survey results.

- Amphibians – The site provides terrestrial habitat for amphibians, including Great Crested Newts. However, there are no ponds on site the nearest being 225 m to the west of the site. This was a polluted agricultural pond scoring with wildfowl present scoring 0.43 on the Habitat Suitability Index, below the 0.5 threshold at which further surveys are usually required. The remaining ponds in the surrounding area are all greater than 250 m from the site and poorly connected to it. Great Crested Newts are expected to be absent. The mitigation proposed for reptiles would take into account the low possibility of presence of newts but no further surveys are required.

Suggestions for enhancement are given.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 In January 2025 and June 2025, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Land off Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5NL. The site occupies a grassland field within the village of Pewsey, Wiltshire. The wider area outside of the small village is open countryside of fields bound by a network of hedgerows with occasional woodland.

1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for a new residential development.

1.3 The site including a larger area of land to the west was previously subject to walkover and protected species assessments carried out by LC Ecological Services as follows:

- Ecological Appraisal – 2014, 2016, 2020 & 2022
- Badger Survey – 2014, 2016, 2020 & 2022
- Phase 1 Bat Roost Assessment (buildings and trees) * – 2014, 2026, 2020 & 2022
- Phase 2 Bat Activity Survey (buildings and structures) * – 2014 & 2020
- Phase 2 Bat Activity Transect Survey/Static Monitoring (foraging & commuting) – 2020
- Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment – 2016 & 2020
- Hazel Dormouse Nest Tube Survey – 2014, 2016 & 2020/2021
- Reptile Survey – 2014 & 2020

* No buildings within the current site boundary.

Objectives and Aim

1.4 The main objectives and aim of the survey were to identify features of ecological interest, undertake a basic search of habitats present for evidence of use, or potential use, by protected species, and to identify any other possible ecological constraints to the proposed redevelopment.

Site Location

Figure 1: Site location plan.

Aerial Photograph

Figure 2: Aerial view.

2.0 Methodology

Personnel

2.1 The survey was carried out by Daniel Roberts BSc Hons, an experienced consultant ecologist, and was overseen by James Godbeer BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over 17 years' experience working as a consultant. James has extensive experience of managing environmental contracts, and particular experience in surveying, assessment and mitigation for rare and protected species. He has considerable knowledge of the development and planning process including Ecological Impact Assessments, sustainable ecological design and he has completed ecology chapters of Environmental Statements. James holds a number of protected species licences including bats (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2015-12313-CLS-CLS), and Great Crested Newts (Class Licence Registration No. 2019-44282-CLS-CLS). He has successfully obtained European Protected Species mitigation licences for a number of bat species including Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Serotine, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats, for a number of roost types including maternity and hibernation sites.

Desk Survey

2.2 In order to compile background information on the site and immediate surroundings Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) was contacted.

2.3 Information requested was as follows:

- Statutory site designations on or within 1 km of the site.
- Non-statutory site designations on or within 1 km of the site.
- Records of protected species within the 1 km of the site.
- Records of rare or notable species within the 1 km of the site.

2.4 Online OS maps and aerial photographs were inspected for the presence of ponds in the surrounding area. Additionally, MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2025) was used to establish the distance and direction of any statutory designated sites within the search area.

Field Survey

Habitats

2.5 The site was visited on the 29th January 2025 and the 27th June 2025 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase I Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that might warrant further study.

Fauna

2.6 There were no buildings on site but hedgerow trees were inspected for potential roosting features for bats.

2.7 The site and surroundings, for a minimum distance of 30 m where access was available, were searched for signs of Badgers. These include setts, latrines, dung pits, snuffle marks or hairs caught in hedges or on fencing. A search for any signs of Dormice such as gnawed nuts, or nests was also carried out.

2.8 Incidental observations of invertebrates and birds were recorded and a search made for any signs of previous nesting.

2.9 There were no refuges on site to be inspected for reptiles and amphibians. There are no ponds on site but one indicated on OS maps within 250 m of the application site boundary. This pond was subject to Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment. Other ponds beyond this distance were not subject to survey due to their general isolation from the application site.

2.10 The HSI is a measure of habitat quality using a numerical index between 0 and 1 derived from an assessment of variables known to influence the presence of Great Crested Newts (Oldham et al. 2000). It is used to assess whether a water body warrants detailed surveys to establish presence or absence of newts and aids in the assessment of impacts and the design of mitigation measures.

2.11 To calculate the HSI of the water bodies, ecologists first record the following variables before applying the HSI calculation to these: pond size; surface area; water depth; water quality; % shade, % macrophyte cover; presence of fish and waterfowl; number of water bodies within 1 km of survey water body; quality of terrestrial habitat surrounding the pond; and type of marginal/aquatic vegetation (Oldham et al. 2000).

2.12 Once the HSI score is obtained it can be used to define water body suitability for Great Crested Newts in the following way (National Amphibian Recording Scheme, 2008):

Table 1: HSI Scores

<0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below Average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

2.13 Water bodies scoring above 0.5 are deemed as having potential to support Great Crested Newts and further surveys are usually required.

Equipment

2.14 Equipment used to aid the survey included a high-powered torch, ladder, binoculars and a camera.

Valuation of Ecological Features

2.15 The valuation process used in this report follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018).

2.16 The presence of injurious and legally controlled weeds has also been taken into account.

Nomenclature

2.17 The English name only of flora and fauna species is given in the main text of this report; however, scientific names are used for invertebrates where no English name is available. Vascular plants and charophytes follow the nomenclature of The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) 2007 database (BSBI, 2007) with all other flora and fauna following the Nameserver facility of the National Biodiversity Network Species Dictionary (http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nbn/), which is managed by the Natural History Museum.

Limitations

2.18 The site was surveyed at a suboptimal time of year in regards to fully assessing the botanical value of the grassland and although this can result in some species being under recorded, a sufficient level of botanical information was recorded in order to classify grassland and assess its condition.

2.19 HSI assessment of all ponds within 500 m of the site was not possible due to locations of these waterbodies and restrictions access; however, these ponds were generally isolated from the application site by poor terrestrial habitat.

2.20 Apart from this, the site was fully accessible with no other limitations to undertaking the survey in accordance with the stated methodology.

3.0 Results

Desk Survey

3.1 WSBRC provided the following records of designated sites within 2 km of the application site:

3.2 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):

- River Avon (SAC) – 1.2 km to the north-east. A large, lowland river system that includes sections running through chalk and clay, with transitions between the two. A chalk river designated for its *Ranunculus* vegetation, and fish including sea lamprey (Petromyzon marinus), brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and bullhead (*Cotto gobius*). The site also supports Desmoulin's whorl snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*). Also supports Schedule 1 breeding birds, water voles (*Arvicola amphibious*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*).

3.3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- River Avon System (SSSI) – 0.9 km to the south. A large, lowland river system that includes sections running through chalk and clay, with transitions between the two. The SSSI is notified for its significant populations of the nationally rare southern damselfly (*Coenagrion mecuriale*), and qualifying species white-clawed crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes), Schedule 1 birds kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) and Cetti's warbler (*Cettia cettia*), as well as water vole, and otter.

- Jones's Mill (SSSI) – 1.2 km to the north-east. Jones's Mill is an area of fen vegetation, scrub and woodland lying along the headwaters of the Salisbury Avon north-east of Pewsey. The site occupies a shallow valley and much was formerly managed as water meadow with some water-cress beds. The site comprises fen vegetation, scrub and woodland and is an example of calcareous valley mire. The site supports a colony of marsh fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*).

3.4 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

- Kennet and Avon Canal – 0.7 km to the north. A restored canal much used for recreation.

- Scotchel Nature Reserve – 0.8 km to the west. A small local nature reserve on the Avon headwaters supporting ancient wet woodland and reedbed, with some past replanting.

- Knowle Meadows LWS – 1 km to the west. Fen meadow adjacent to the river Avon and Jones Mill SSSI.

- Salisbury Avon Headwaters – 1 km to the south. A river complex above the SSSI.

- Sharcott Wood – 1.1 km to the south-west. An area of mainly wet woodland in the headwaters of the Salisbury Avon.

- Pewsey Meadow – 1.1 km to the south-east. Small meadow of damp neutral grassland and fen with a pond.

- Knowle Meadows North – 1.1 km to the west. Damp meadow and fen vegetation adjacent to Jones's Mill SSSI.
- Jones' Mill WS – 1.2 km to the north-east. A series of semi-improved pastures and reversion meadows forming part of a WWT reserve.
- Manningfords Swamp – 1.3 km to the south-west. Three small parcels of wetland habitats in the floodplain of the upper reaches of the Salisbury Avon
- Wilcot Withy Bed – 1.6 km to the west. Some felled poplars. Wet area newly planted with oak and alder. Some conifer.
- Park Copse and Bacon Copse – 1.8 km to the north. Varied structure with plantations of broadleaves and/or conifers.

3.5 WSBRC provided the following notable and protected species records within 2 km of the site:

- **Mammals** – Water Vole, Hedgehog, Otter, Badger, Hazel Dormouse and Polecat.
- **Mammals (Bats)** – Unidentified bat species, Western Barbastelle, Serotine, Myotis sp., Daubenton's, Whiskered, Natterer's, Noctule, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Pipistrelle sp., Brown Long-eared and Long-eared sp.
- **Birds** – Skylark, Kingfisher, Short-eared Owl, Cuckoo, Little Egret, Yellowhammer, Merlin, Peregrine, Linnet, Red Kite, Grey Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, House Sparrow, Golden Plover, Willow Tit, Whitchat, Starling, Redwing, Song Thrush, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush, Barn Owl, Lapwing,
- **Reptiles** – Grass Snake, Adder and Common Lizard.
- **Amphibians** – Common Toad and Common Frog.

Field Survey

3.6 The following table presents a description of the habitats present.

Table 2: Details of habitats present on the site.

Habitats	Description
Poor Semi-improved grassland (Modified grassland)	The site is part of a larger grassland field that has been separated into two with the application site located inside the eastern boundary. During the January site survey the grassland within the field was dominated by Fescue sp. with frequent Yorkshire-fog and occasional Perennial Rye-grass and Cocks-foot. Rare occurrences of Rough Meadow-grass, Annual Meadow-grass, Timothy and Crested Dog's-tail were also recorded. Forbs recorded within the grassland included occasional Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, Yarrow, Creeping Thistle, Common Nettle, Ribwort Plantain, Tansy, Smooth Hawk's-beard, Common Mouse-ear and Dandelion with rare occurrences of Daisy, Spear Thistle, Cat's-ear, Pineappleweed, Common Ragwort, Common Chickweed, Broad-leaved Dock, Germander Speedwell and Common Vetch. Tall herb species were more frequent in the centre and southern sections of the site with grassland in the north recorded to be species poor with areas dominated by moss.

	Bramble, young self-seeded Blackthorn and Pedunculate Oak were rare within the grassland. During the June survey was it evident that Yorkshire-fog was more dominant with abundant Rough Meadow-grass and Fescue sp. There was occasional Perennial Rye grass and Cock's-foot locally present but not throughout the sward. Annual Meadow-grass, Timothy, Meadow Foxtail, and False Oat-grass were recorded as rare occurrences. Forbs were not common but there was occasional Common Ragwort and Ribwort Plantain, with rare occurrences in certain areas of Dandelion, Autumn Hawk-bit, Common Knapweed, Creeping Thistle, Red Clover, Germander Speedwell, Spear Thistle, Creeping Buttercup, Common Chickweed, White Clover and Yarrow. The survey recorded the same area of very species-poor grassland in the north of the site where the vegetation was sparse and dominated by dry moss.
Scattered Scrub (Bramble scrub)	Small patches of bramble scrub were present in the southern portion of the site adjacent or near to field boundaries.
Hard standing (Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface)	In the north portion of the site is a small area of compacted stone hard standing that appeared to be recently created associated with the new field gate inside the east boundary.
Hedgerows (native species-rich hedgerow and trees)	Hedgerow 1 – Located on part of the east field boundary in the north portion of the site. This road facing hedge has a new field opening off Wilcot Road. The hedge is approximately 2.5 m (h) and 1 – 1.5 m (w) not including trees. Blackthorn dominates this hedgerow with occasional Hawthorn, bramble and rare Dog-rose, Hazel, Holly and Ivy. Two mature Pedunculate Oak are present within the hedge on the boundary of the site with two other mature oaks off-site to the south. Hedgerow 2 – Located on the south boundary of the field with residential garden and Woodborough Road adjacent. This hedge is approximately 5 – 6.5 m (h) and 2 – 3 m (w) with occasional trees. The hedge on the site boundary frequent Holly, bramble and Hazel with rare Yew, Wild Privet, Blackthorn, Oak and Sycamore. The remainder of the hedgerow off-site to the west is formed of Blackthorn, Dog-wood, bramble, Hazel, Dog-rose, Oak, Ash, Holly and Hawthorn. Hedgerow 3 – The north field boundary hedge is approximately 4 – 5 m (h) x 2 – 3 m (w) and had multiple gaps particularly on the application site boundary which was formed of Ash, Hawthorn, Hazel, Ivy and bramble. Species recorded within this field boundary hedge off-site to the west included Ash, Alder, bramble, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elder and Holly.
Fence	Timber post and rail fence forms the western boundary of the application site as well as forming the boundary between the site and a residential property near the centre of the east boundary. Post and wire fence is present alongside the defunct hedge on the north boundary.

1: View of the north portion of the site.

2: View of the south portion of the site.

1a: View of the north portion of the site (June 2025).

2a: View of the south portion of the site (June 2025).

3: Bramble scrub.

4: Small area of compacted stone to a field gate.

3a: Bramble scrub (June 2025).

4a: Small area of compacted stone to a field gate (June 2025).

5: Hedgerow 1.

6: Hedgerow 2.

5a: Hedgerow 1 (June 2025).

6a: Hedgerow 2 (June 2025).

7: Hedgerow 3.

8: Post and rail fence on the west boundary.

7a: Hedgerow 3 (June 2025).

8a: Post and rail fence on the west boundary (June 2025).

Fauna

3.7 The following table assesses the potential for other protected species to be present.

Table 3: Protected Species Assessment

Fauna	Description
Bats	**Records:** WSBRC provided multiple bat records in the local area including records of Western Barbastelle, Serotine, Myotis sp., pipistrelle sp., Brown Long-eared bats and unidentified bat species. **Habitats (roosting):** No buildings on site. Two mature Oak trees within the east boundary hedgerow that have some light Ivy cover which may conceal potential roosting features (PRF's) but the structure of the Ivy itself is insufficient. Any potential for roosting bats in these trees is low. **Habitats (foraging/commuting):** The grassland itself provides sub-optimal foraging habitat and the majority of bat activity on site is expected to be confined to boundary hedgerows and mature trees. Boundary hedgerows and trees may also be utilised by commuting bats, particularly by any bats roosting in the nearby area. **Bat Activity Transect Survey/Static Monitoring:** Bat transect surveys and static detector monitoring carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2020 recorded generally low numbers

	of bats largely associated with boundary vegetation and most predominantly pipistrelles; however, Noctule, Serotine, long-eared bat sp., Myotis sp., and Western Barbastelle were also recorded.
Badgers	**Records:** Multiple Badger records were provided in the surrounding area; however, the exact location of these records was not given. **Habitats:** The grassland provides foraging habitat with the boundary hedgerows providing cover and therefore areas of higher potential for the construction of setts. **Badger Survey:** Although surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2014 recorded a Badger latrine on site and possible outlier setts in the wider field the most recent surveys carried out in 2020 and 2022 recorded no Badger activity. **Presence/absence:** No evidence of presence recorded. Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individual Badgers which may forage in grassland.
Dormice	**Records:** Records show recent presence of Hazel Dormouse with 2 km of the site. **Habitats:** Hedgerows on the east, north and south boundaries of the site provide suitable habitat for dormice including various native hedge species that provide a range of foraging opportunities at various times of the year. Hedgerows on site also connect to a network of hedgerows and small pockets of woodland in the wider area. **Nest Tube Survey:** Dormouse surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2014, 2016, 2020 and 2021 recorded evidence of Wood Mouse and Yellow-necked Mouse. Hazel Dormouse were concluded to be absent. **Presence/absence:** No evidence of dormice was recorded following a brief nut search and no dormouse nests were observed. Presence/absence unknown but given results of previous nest tube surveys dormice are expected to be absent from boundary hedgerows with other habitats on site deemed unsuitable.
Other Mammals	**Records:** Other mammals that have been recorded in the surrounding 2 km include Hedgehog, Water Vole, Otter and Polecat. **Habitats:** The site provides habitats for small mammals in grassland and boundary hedgerows with small pockets of scrub also providing areas of cover and foraging opportunities. There are no watercourses on or immediately adjacent to the site which may provide opportunities to Otter or Water Vole. **Presence/absence:** Rabbit burrows were recorded alongside boundary hedgerows with droppings and evidence of foraging throughout the site; however, the majority of rabbit burrows were recorded off site to the west and along the northern field hedgerow. On-site habitats are expected to support common small mammals in future but the potential for notable species is low. Otter and Water Vole are concluded to be absent based upon lack of suitable habitat.
Birds	**Records:** Multiple records including numerous red/amber listed species. **Foraging Habitats:** The grassland provides a limited resource. Boundary hedgerows and trees as well as small pockets of scrub provide foraging opportunities.

	Nesting Habitats: Hedgerows with mature trees and small pockets of scrub provide nesting opportunities. The grassland is generally unsuitable for ground nesting birds. **Presence/absence:** No evidence of previous nesting was noted but old nests could have been missed in the denser parts of hedgerows and scrub. Birds are expected to nest on site in future.
Reptiles	**Records:** WSBRC provided records of Grass Snake, Adder and Common Lizard within 2 km of the application site. **Habitats:** The mosaic of grassland, scrub and hedgerow habitats within the site provide potential for various reptile species; however, field margins adjacent to hedgerows and scrub in the southern portion of the site provide most value. **Reptile Survey:** Surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services in 2014, 2016 and 2020 recorded low populations of Common Lizard and Grass Snake with both of these species recorded in the southern part of the current application site. The site was considered to be of local importance for reptiles. **Presence/absence:** No significant change of habitats recorded since previous reptile surveys had been carried out. Low numbers of Grass Snake and Common Lizard expected to remain present particularly in field margins.
Amphibian	**Records:** WSBRC provided records of Common Toad and Common Frog. No records of other amphibians were provided and no records of Great Crested Newt European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences in the surrounding area. **Terrestrial Habitats:** Boundary habitats and adjacent small pockets of scrub provide terrestrial habitats for amphibians with the grassland provides some further limited value. **Aquatic Habitats:** None present on site. One pond previously recorded by LC Ecological Services within an adjacent garden now appeared to be absent. One pond within 250 m of the application site and further ponds recorded in the wider area. Ponds beyond 250 m have poor terrestrial connectivity to the site and therefore were not subject to further consideration. Further details of the pond within 250 m of the site are as follows:

Pond Location:

Figure 3: Pond location plan.

Pond 1: Located on an agricultural complex approximately 225 m to the west.

9: Pond 1.

9a: Pond 1 (June 2025).

Table 4: Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

Pond 1		
	HSI Factors	HSI Assessment
Geographical Location	Zone A	1
Pond Area	1130 m^2	0.93
Permanence	Never dries	0.9
Water Quality	Poor	0.33
Shade	30%	1
Waterfowl	Major	0.01
Fish	Absent	1
Pond Count	6	0.8
Terrestrial Habitat	Poor	0.33
Macrophytes	None	0.3
HSI Score	0.43	

Pond suitability: Pond 1 is classified as 'Poor'. This scored below the 0.5 threshold where further consideration is usually required.

Presence/absence: Amphibians including Great Crested Newts are potentially present in the local area but are expected to be generally absent from the application site.

Invertebrates

Records: None provided.

Habitats: The grassland habitat, hedgerows and trees as well as small pockets of scrub provide areas of interest for a range of invertebrates.

Presence/absence: Common assemblages of invertebrates are expected to be present but the potential for notable species to be present is minimal.

4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations

Development Proposals

4.1 The site is the subject of a planning application for new residential development.

Designated Sites

4.2 Designated sites in the surrounding area range from sites of international value, such as the River Avon SAC to one's of local value comprising of multiple Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). All designated sites comprise of either watercourse or wetland habitats and are therefore vulnerable to pollution incidents within the local catchment area. None of the designated sites are on site or immediately adjacent with the closest being approximately 0.7 km from the site and therefore potential for adverse impacts to designated sites as a result of the development is negligible and limited to indirect impacts through pollution and ground water contamination.

4.3 A standard detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will ensure that the appointed contractor implements site specific pollution prevention measures to avoid any other indirect adverse impacts through to local watercourses or wetland habitats through pollution infiltrating into the groundwater system.

Habitats

4.4 The NERC Priority Habitats include all hedgerows with at least 80% cover of at least one woody UK native species (JNCC, 2017). Boundary hedgerows had at least 80% cover of native species and as such qualify as NERC Priority Habitat. A new site entrance is proposed off Wilcot Road in the northeast corner of the site which will require a new hedgerow opening. Given the small-scale loss of habitat no significant ecological impact is predicted. However, a hedgerow assessment is required due to the new opening to be created, to determine if the hedgerow is classified as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

4.5 The grassland on site was identified as modified (poor semi-improved) grassland and although this was not initially surveyed during the optimal period for grasslands, it was evidently this habitat type. The June survey visit recorded a slight variation in the orinally determined composition but it was classified the same. In order to qualify as a NERC Priority Habitat, grassland typically has to be unimproved (good semi-improved grassland can also qualify) and would have to be examples of grasslands such as lowland calcareous grassland or lowland dry acid grassland, habitats not found on site. The grassland, until recently, was intensively grazed by horses. It has now been left unmanaged and had become a taller sward but lacks in diversity to be considered anything other than modified grassland although the condition in Biodiversity Net Gain terms has increased to good for the most part, the exception being an area in the north of the site where the soil is likely too thin to support more than mosses and sparse grasses. Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to the grassland and loss of small pockets of bramble scrub on site is considered to be negligible.

4.6 Where new trees or shrubs are to be planted, native tree and shrub species should be used as these are most beneficial to invertebrates, and many also produce seeds, nuts and berries that are food for native mammals and birds. Planting of non-native plant species should be limited

to those that are not invasive and should prioritise those that provide a good source of nectar for invertebrates.

Fauna

Bats

4.7 There are no buildings on site and the although ivy cover on hedgerow trees may conceal potential roosting features, any potential for roosting appeared to be low and hedgerow trees are expected to be retained.

4.8 The site provides potential bat foraging and commuting habitat associated with boundary hedgerows and trees, although the grassland within the field offers little value.

4.9 Previous surveys monitoring bat activity associated with the site carried out by LC Ecological Services concluded that the site is of regional importance to bats but given the scale of proposals which result in the clearance of generally low value habitat, the magnitude of adverse effects as a result of the development is expected to be "at worst low and of minor significance" (LC Ecological Services Ltd, 2022). No significant changes to onsite habitats were recorded and bat activity associated with the site is expected to be similar to that previously recorded.

4.10 The loss of grassland and small pockets of scrub is not deemed significant and the key habitats, hedges and trees, will be retained. New gardens will provide new habitat with limited foraging value. Provided that lighting of the field boundary hedgerows and trees is avoided, no significant impact to bats is predicted and no further surveys are required.

4.11 A standard detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will ensure that the appointed contractor implements measures to prevent impacts to boundary habitats and avoid lighting that may disturb nocturnal wildlife such as bats. Protective fencing to BS5837 standard should be used to create works exclusion zones to prevent adverse impacts to hedgerows and trees. Construction works will be restricted to daylight hours only and the use of flood lights will be strictly forbidden on site during the bat activity season (April to October inclusive), unless there are exceptional circumstances. Boundary habitats will not be subject to lighting during the construction phase and a detailed lighting strategy will be provided to ensure new lighting of the development does not impact boundary habitats. In general, measures should include the use of lighting only where absolutely necessary utilising highly directional warm white LED lighting, an example being down spots at 2.5 m high using warm white (2700 K) 8W LED lamps, 550 lumens, 35 degree beam angle. These could be individually activated by PIR sensors on a 1 minute cut off to further reduce their impacts. These will assist in lighting only the areas where lighting is required and minimising light spill either directly or through reflected light.

4.12 New gardens, created grassland and new trees in public open space are expected to provide foraging opportunities for common species of bats similar in value to existing grassland habitat although smaller in area. The new development provides an opportunity to significantly enhance the site for roosting bats by incorporating roosts into the new buildings. There are many ways that the buildings could be enhanced for crevice-dwelling bat species (virtually all UK bat species) without inconveniencing prospective occupants or requiring any significant design considerations. Bat tubes, panels, shelters or boxes can be installed in suitable locations around

the site usually close to cover and at the apices of gable ends. A variety of aspects increases the likelihood of colonisation.

Dormice

4.13 Dormice nest tube surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services concluded absence of this species in 2014, 2016 and 2020/2021. No significant changes to on-site habitats were recorded and the potential for presence remains very low and in any case, the main habitats for this species will be retained. Hedgerows will not be subject to lighting to ensure that this habitat remains suitable for this species and to avoid adverse impacts to common small mammals and Hazel Dormice in the highly unlikely event of presence.

Badgers and other mammals

4.14 Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individuals. Hedgehogs may also pass through the site and common small mammals are present within the field. No impact to mammals is predicted provided works are carried out following precautionary methods. In order to prevent trapping mammals that may cross the site, it is recommended that during the construction phase of the project any trenches and other excavations are back-filled before nightfall or a ramp left to allow animals to easily exit, and any open pipes larger than 150 mm should be capped off overnight. Any new garden fences should incorporate hedgehog access points to allow free access for this species around and on and off site.

Birds

4.15 The site provides foraging value for birds in hedgerows, trees and scrub which also provide nesting opportunities. No evidence of nesting was recorded but birds could nest in suitable habitats in future.

4.16 Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). Nesting habitat will be largely retained and any significant impact will be avoided. Removal of small pockets of bramble scrub, creation of a new hedgerow opening and any on-going hedge and tree maintenance should take place outside the nesting season of March to August unless a pre-works survey for nesting birds concludes absence. If nesting birds are recorded the nest would be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

4.17 The proposed development should include enhancements for nesting and foraging birds to generally enhance the site. It is recommended that any new planting on site should concentrate on species that are native to the area and ideally produce a range of seeds and berries at varying times of the year. Nectar rich plants could also be used encourage invertebrates on to the site, which in turn provide food for birds as well as other species such as bats.

4.18 The following options could be explored for inclusion on the northeast side of the new buildings:

- Nest boxes for Swifts could be incorporated into the eaves. These not only provide nesting sites for Swifts but can also be used by other species such as House Sparrows and Starlings.
- House Martin nests could be provided under the eaves or on the north to east sides of the building.

- Individual boxes, such as the Schwegler Bird Home 1MR, could also be installed at a height of at least 2 m.
- Groups of multiple small bird boxes could also be installed at a height of least 2 m to provide nesting sites for birds such as House Sparrows.

Reptiles

4.19 The site provides suitable habitat for reptiles mostly associated with hedgerows along field margins and small pockets of scrub. Previous surveys carried out by LC Ecological Services recorded low populations of Common Lizard and Grass Snake in the southern part of the current application site and these low populations are expected to remain present given that site habitats remain largely unchanged and an on-going survey that began in July, has recorded two Common Lizards.

4.20 Common reptiles receive partial protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) whereby it is an offence to intentionally kill or injure any of the four common species.

4.21 Given the site habitats remain largely unchanged and the previous surveys and partially completed current survey recorded only low populations of two species of reptiles, works would be carried out in accordance with the following precautionary method of working for reptiles, secured by appropriate condition:

- All clearance works would ideally be undertaken when common reptiles are likely to be fully active i.e. during the April to September period under a watching brief by a suitably qualified ecologist. Works over the winter period would be will be subject additional detailed ground checks.
- Clearance of tall vegetation would be undertaken using a strimmer or brush cutter with all cuttings raked and removed the same day. Cutting will only be undertaken in a phased way, cutting vegetation over three consecutive days to a height of no less than 150mm at the first cut, 75mm at the second cut and 30mm at the third cut. Remaining vegetation will be maintained at a height of 30mm through regular mowing or strimming to discourage common reptiles from returning.
- Should any common reptiles be discovered during works, which are likely to be affected by the work, works should cease immediately. The owner/site manager should then seek the advice of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist and works should only proceed in accordance with the advice they provide.
- The retained south boundary hedge and its ground flora, in the south corner of the site, would provide a suitable location in which to place any captured reptiles.
- Any excavations left overnight should be covered or provided with ramps to prevent common reptiles (and other animals) from becoming trapped.

4.22 Two hibernacula will be created in the south portion of the site to provide refuge for reptiles and small mammals.

Amphibians

4.23 The site provides terrestrial habitat for amphibians, including Great Crested Newts. However, there are no ponds on site the nearest being 225 m to the west of the site. This was a polluted agricultural pond scoring with wildfowl present scoring 0.43 on the Habitat Suitability Index, below the 0.5 threshold at which further surveys are usually required. The remaining ponds in the surrounding area are all greater than 250 m from the site and poorly connected to it. Great Crested Newts are expected to be absent. The mitigation proposed for reptiles would take into account the low possibility of presence of newts but no further surveys are required.

Invertebrates

4.24 The habitats on site will support a variety of common invertebrate species; however, potential for more notable species is negligible. Enhancement for invertebrates is advised by creating invertebrate homes for pollinators.

5.0 References

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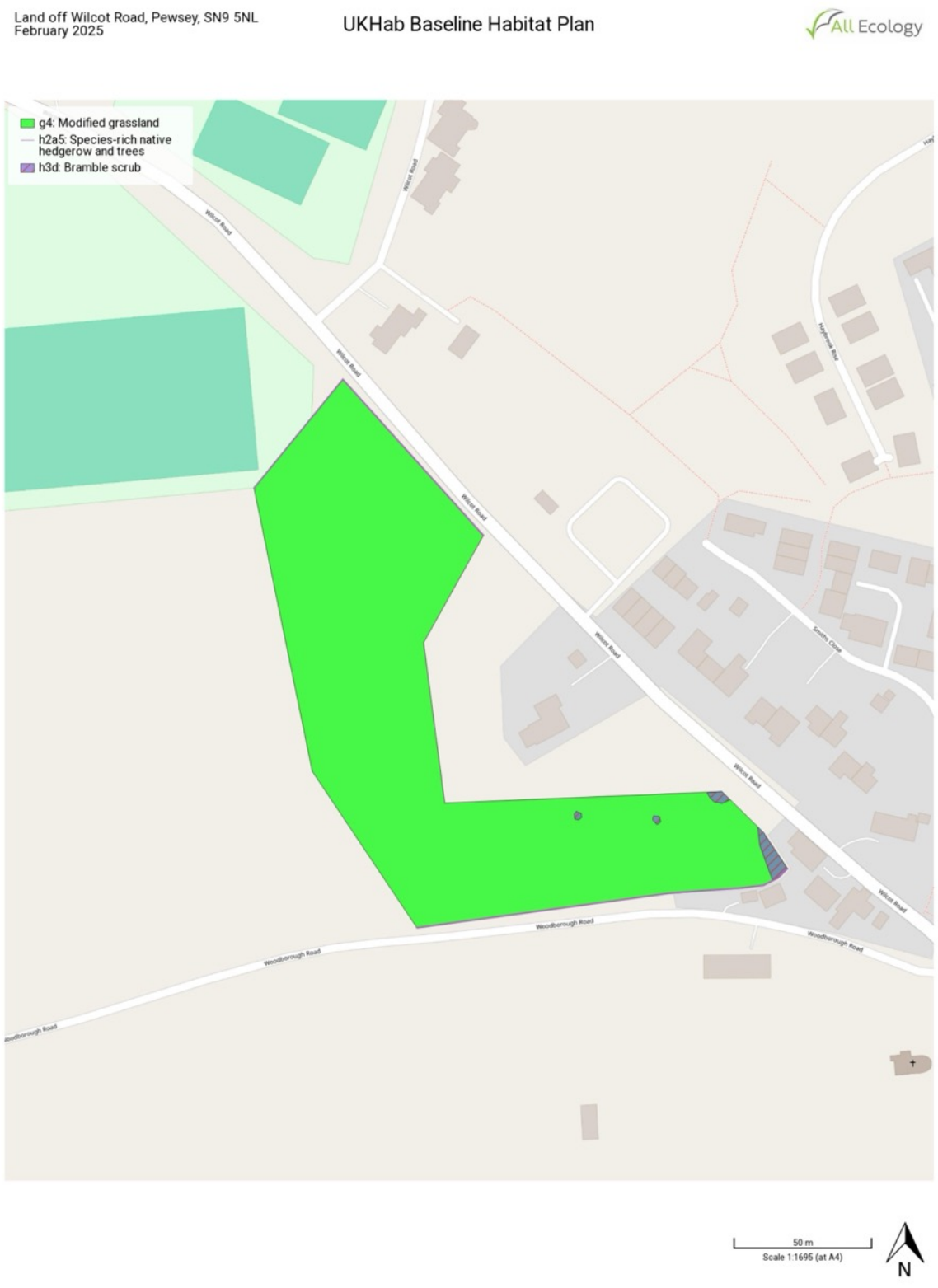
6.0 Plans


Land off Wilcot Road, Pewsey, SN9 5NL
February 2025
UKHab Baseline Habitat Plan
All Ecology
g4: Modified grassland
h2a5: Species-rich native hedgerow and trees
h3d: Bramble scrub
Wilcot Road
Woodborough Road
50 m
Scale 1:1695 (at A4)
N

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Hibernaculum Location and Specification