



**ECOLOGY**SOLUTIONS

Part of the ES Group

HOSTMOOR AVENUE, MARCH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

July 2020  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background and Proposals**

- 1.1.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Planning Potential on behalf of ALDI in June 2020 to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal of Units 1 to 3 Hostmoor Avenue / Martin Avenue, March, Cambridgeshire (see Plan ECO1).
- 1.1.2. The proposals for the site include the demolition of the existing buildings, and the provision of a new ALDI food store with associated parking and landscaping.

### **1.2. Site Characteristics**

- 1.2.1. The site is located within the south-west of March Trading Estate in the town of March in Cambridgeshire. The site is bound to the south by Hostmoor Avenue and to the east by Martin Avenue. To the north lies a health club and to the west a public house. The wider area comprises largely retail development and arable land.
- 1.2.2. The site itself comprises hardstanding and buildings with elements of unmanaged amenity grassland. Scrub, amenity planting, and trees are present at the boundaries of the site. A dry ditch runs adjacent to the western boundary of the site.

### **1.3. Ecological Appraisal**

- 1.3.1. This document assesses the ecological interest of the site as a whole. The importance of the habitats within the site is evaluated with due consideration given to the current guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CIEEM (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Version 1.1 – Updated September 2019. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.



## **2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1. The methodology utilised for the survey work can be split into three areas, namely desk study, habitat survey and faunal survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

### **2.2. Desk Study**

- 2.2.1. In order to compile background information on the site and the surrounding area, Ecology Solutions contacted Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC).
- 2.2.2. The data search area included a 1.5km radius centred on the site for protected species records and a wider 2.5km radius centred on the site for information on statutory sites.
- 2.2.3. Further information on designated sites from a wider search area was obtained from the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)<sup>2</sup> database, which uses information held by Natural England and other organisations.
- 2.2.4. This information is reproduced at Appendix 1 and where appropriate on Plan ECO1.

### **2.3. Habitat Survey**

- 2.3.1. Habitat surveys were carried out by Ecology Solutions in June 2020 in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the site and to identify the main habitats and associated plant species present.
- 2.3.2. The site was surveyed based on extended Phase 1 survey methodology<sup>3</sup>, as recommended by Natural England, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail.
- 2.3.3. Using the above method, the site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified.
- 2.3.4. All the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent at different seasons. The timing of the survey work undertaken is such that a good understanding of the nature of the habitats present has been gained.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.magic.gov.uk>

<sup>3</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit*. England Field Unit, Nature Conservancy Council, reprinted JNCC, Peterborough.



## 2.4. Faunal Survey

2.4.1. Obvious faunal activity recorded during the site survey, such as birds or mammals observed visually or by call, was recorded. Specific attention was paid to any potential use of the site by protected species, priority species or other notable species.

2.4.2. In addition, specific surveys were undertaken in respect of bats and Badgers *Meles meles* by experienced surveyors.

### *Bats*

2.4.3. All buildings within the site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats in June 2020. Buildings were categorised as having high, medium, low or negligible suitability for roosting bats in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*.

2.4.4. The probability of a building being used by bats as a summer roost site increases if it:

- is largely undisturbed;
- dates from pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century;
- has a large roof void with unobstructed flying spaces;
- has access points for bats (though not too draughty);
- has wooden cladding or hanging tiles; and / or
- is in a rural setting and close to woodland or water.

2.4.5. Conversely, the probability decreases if a building is of a modern or pre-fabricated design / construction, is in an urban setting, has small or cluttered roof voids, has few gaps at the eaves or is a heavily disturbed premises.

2.4.6. The main requirement for a winter / hibernation roost site is that it maintains a stable (cool) temperature and humidity. Sites commonly utilised by bats as winter roosts include cavities / holes in trees, underground sites and parts of buildings. Whilst different species may show a preference for one of these types of roost site, none are solely dependent on a single type.

2.4.7. Trees within the site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Features typically favoured by bats and evidence of past use by bats were searched for, including:

- Obvious holes, e.g. rot holes and old Woodpecker holes;
- Dark staining on the tree, below the hole;
- Tiny scratch marks around a hole from bats' claws;
- Cavities, splits and / or loose bark from broken or fallen branches, lightning strikes etc.; and
- Very dense covering of mature Ivy over trunk.

2.4.8. In addition, the site was appraised for its suitability for foraging and commuting bats.



- 2.4.9. All field surveys were undertaken with regard paid to best practice guidelines issued by Natural England (2004<sup>4</sup>), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004<sup>5</sup>) and the Bat Conservation Trust (2016<sup>6</sup>).

*Badgers*

- 2.4.10. The site and immediate vicinity was subject to specific surveys for Badgers in June 2020.
- 2.4.11. The surveys comprised two main elements: firstly, searching thoroughly for evidence of Badger setts. If any setts were encountered each sett entrance was noted and plotted, even if the entrance appeared disused. The following information was recorded where present:
- i) The number and location of well used or very active entrances if present; these are clear of any debris or vegetation and are obviously in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently.
  - ii) The number and location of inactive entrances; these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance.
  - iii) The number of disused entrances; these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be together with the remains of the spoil heap.
- 2.4.12. Secondly, any evidence of Badger activity such as well-worn paths, run-throughs, snagged hair, footprints, latrines and foraging signs was sought and if present recorded so as to build up a picture of the use of the site by Badgers.

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<sup>4</sup> Mitchell-Jones, A J (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

<sup>5</sup> Mitchell-Jones, A J & McLeish, A P (Eds.) (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

<sup>6</sup> Collins, J (Ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.



### 3. ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

3.1. A habitat survey was undertaken within the site by Ecology Solutions in June 2020.

3.2. The following main habitat / vegetation types were identified within the site during the surveys undertaken:

- Buildings;
- Hardstanding;
- Trees;
- Amenity Grassland;
- Amenity Planting;
- Scrub; and
- Ditch.

3.3. The locations of these habitats are shown on Plan ECO2.

#### 3.4. Buildings

3.4.1. The three buildings (labelled B1 to B3 on Plan ECO2) present on site are all the same design and construction, comprising large steel framed warehouse buildings clad with corrugated metal sheeting (see Photograph 1). They all support a shallow pitched corrugated metal roof with large skylights. Single storey offices have been built into the internal spaces supporting mezzanine floors above. There are no internal loft spaces.

#### 3.5. Hardstanding

3.5.1. Hardstanding is present across the site comprising areas of concrete, hardcore and gravel used for access, parking and loading (see Photograph 2).

3.5.2. A number of opportunistic and early colonising species were noted across the areas of hardstanding having established due to the lack of recent management. Species present include Perennial Rye Grass *Lolium perenne*, Bristly Oxtongue *Picris echioides*, Smooth Sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Fescue *Festuca* sp., Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Prickly Lettuce *Lactuca serriola*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Wall Barley *Hordeum murinum*, Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris*, Salsify *Tragopogon porrifolius*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, Wall Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, Perforate St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* saplings, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Field Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*, Greater Burdock *Arctium lappa*, Procrumbent Yellow-sorrel *Oxalis corniculata*, Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Field Rose *Rosa arvensis*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Round-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium rotundifolium*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Barren Brome *Anisantha sterilis*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Willow *Salix* sp.



saplings, Knotted Hedge-parsley *Torilis nodosa*, Dove's-foot Cranesbill *Geranium molle*, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, Mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Butterfly-bush *Buddleja davaiidii*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.

### 3.6. Trees

- 3.6.1. A treeline is present on the western boundary of the site, with several other scattered trees present on the southern and eastern boundaries of the site (see Photograph 3). Tree species present include Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Elder, Silver Birch, *Salix* sp. and Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. The understorey and ground flora comprise White Bryony *Bryonia dioica*, Field Rose, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Bramble, Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus*, Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata*, Wood Avens, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Spear Thistle, Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, Common Nettle, Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Cocksfoot, Salsify and Wall Cotoneaster.

### 3.7. Amenity Grassland

- 3.7.1. Small areas of unmanaged amenity grassland are present across the site. Verges associated with the areas of hardstanding have become sparse of vegetation (see Photograph 3), whilst two areas in the centre of the site have become overgrown and support a long sward (see Photograph 4).
- 3.7.2. Species present include False Oat-grass, Bristly Oxtongue, Field Forget-me-not, Field Rose, Bramble, Hawthorn saplings, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Dove's-foot Cranesbill, Cleavers, White Champion *Silene latifolia*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Prickly Sow-thistle *Sonchus asper*, Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*, Yorkshire Fog, Creeping Thistle, Common Mouse-ear, *Festuca* sp., Ribwort Plantain, Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acer*, Cocksfoot, Perennial Rye Grass, Selfheal, Hemlock, Perforate St John's Wort, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Black Medick, Wall Cotoneaster, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Common Nettle, Spear Thistle, Common Ragwort, Wood Avens and Ground Ivy.

### 3.8. Amenity Planting

- 3.8.1. Amenity planting is present on the eastern and southern boundaries of the site (see Photograph 5). The planting is for the best part unmanaged and overgrown, with elements of scrub and self-seeded trees. The amenity planting is dominated by Snowberry, with Hawthorn, Hazel, Ivy, Field Rose, Bramble, False Oat-grass, Cocksfoot, Lady's Bedstraw, Blue Fleabane, Knotted Hedge-parsley, Perennial Rye Grass, Yorkshire Fog, Barren Brome and Ribwort Plantain also present.

### 3.9. Scrub

- 3.9.1. Three pockets of scrub are present at the boundaries of the site (see Photograph 6). The scrub is dominated by Bramble, with Hawthorn, Elder and Field Rose also present.



### 3.10. Ditch

- 3.10.1. The ditch that runs adjacent to the western boundary of the site was dry at the time of the survey. The ditch is heavily over shaded by trees and contains no aquatic vegetation. As such it is considered that the ditch is likely to be only wet during periods of heavy precipitation. A large amount of litter was present within the ditch, and anecdotal evidence of Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* inhabiting the ditch was provided.

### 3.11. Non-native Invasive Species

- 3.11.1. Butterfly-bush and Wall Cotoneaster were both recorded within areas of hardstanding across the site during the initial Phase 1 habitat survey. Additionally, Wall Cotoneaster was recorded in areas of amenity grassland.

### 3.12. Background Records

- 3.12.1. No records of plant species protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were returned by the desk study.
- 3.12.2. Eleven recent records of Basil Thyme *Clinopodium acinos* were returned. Basil Thyme is listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) Act 2006 and as a priority species by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The closest records of this species relate to a location approximately 1km north-east of the site and date from 2013 and 2014. The most recent record dates from 2016, which cannot be accurately located as it is given to an accuracy to the nearest 10km. All Basil Thyme records are described as from the Whitemoor Marshalling Yard County Wildlife Site (CWS), located beside the railway line that runs through March.



#### **4. WILDLIFE USE OF THE SITE**

- 4.1. General observations were made during the surveys of any faunal use of the site with specific attention paid to the potential presence of protected species.

##### **4.2. Bats**

- 4.2.1. No evidence for the presence of bats was recorded during the external and internal survey work of the buildings. Bat roosting opportunities on site were found to be negligible, and it is not considered likely that the site supports roosting bats.
- 4.2.2. The treeline on the western boundary, along with the other boundary vegetation offer limited foraging opportunities for bats.
- 4.2.3. The desk study returned a single record of a bat species within the data search area dating from the past ten years. This record is of a Common Pipistrelle and it relates to a location in the 1km grid square approximately 0.8km south-east of the site at its nearest point and dates from 2017.
- 4.2.4. In addition, four older records of unidentified Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus* sp. were returned dating from 1987, 2003 and 2004. All four records relate to locations in the 1km grid square approximately 1.1km south of the site at its closest point. One of the records dating from 2004 is of a hibernation roost of *Pipistrellus* sp. in an agricultural building.
- 4.2.5. Three older records of Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* were returned dating from 1997 and 2003. All three records are located along the railway sidings in March and Noctules are known to use this as a feeding area. The closest record with an accuracy to the nearest 100m relates to a location approximately 1.3km north-east of the site.
- 4.2.6. A single record of a *Myotis* sp. was returned dating from 2003 and relating to a location approximately 1.3km east of the site.

##### **4.3. Badgers**

- 4.3.1. No evidence of the presence of Badgers was recorded during Ecology Solutions' survey work in June 2020. The site provides some limited opportunities for Badger foraging, commuting and sett building but given the use of the land surrounding the site, it is considered highly unlikely that Badgers would be present in this location.
- 4.3.2. A single record of Badger *Meles meles* was returned by the desk study, which relates to a location in the 1km grid square approximately 1.1km north-east of the site at its closest point and dates from 2015. This record is of a Badger recorded dead beside a road.

##### **4.4. Hedgehogs**

- 4.4.1. The site contains some limited suitable habitat for Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* foraging and dispersal, as well as hibernation confined to the treeline, amenity planting, grassland and scrub.



- 4.4.2. A single record of a Hedgehog was returned by the desk study, which relates to a location in the 1km grid square approximately 50m south of the site at its closest point and dates from 2015. However, the record cannot be accurately located as it is given to an accuracy to the nearest 1km. The record is of a dead Hedgehog recorded on a road in March.

#### 4.5. Other Mammals

- 4.5.1. It is considered that other small common mammal species could make use of vegetation within the site. None of the small mammals are likely to be notable or species of conservation concern.
- 4.5.2. Three records of Otter *Lutra lutra* were returned by the desk study. Otters are protected under Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive and under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). All three Otter records are associated with the River Nene (Old Course). The River Nene flows through March and is located approximately 1km south of the site at its nearest point. The closest record given to an accuracy to the nearest 100m is a record of Otter spraints recorded in 2012 at a location approximately 1.1km south-east of the site. The most recent record is of Otter sightings in 2017 in the 1km grid square located approximately 50m south of the site at its closest point. This record cannot be accurately located as it is given to an accuracy to the nearest 1km, although it relates to the River Nene.
- 4.5.3. Three records of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* dating from the past ten years were returned by the desk study. Water Voles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The closest record of this species relates to a location along the River Nene approximately 1km south-west of the site and dates from 2012. The most recent record dates from 2016 and relates to a location approximately 1.4km north-east of the site.

#### 4.6. Birds

- 4.6.1. A number of common bird species were identified during the survey. Bird species recorded by sight or call during the survey include House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* recorded on site, along with Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* and Blackbird *Turdus merula* all recorded adjacent to the site.
- 4.6.2. Multiple House Sparrow nests were recorded on the exterior of building B3. The other two buildings on site have a different guttering design to building B3 and as such offer less opportunities for nesting birds and no nests were recorded.
- 4.6.3. The trees, scrub and amenity planting offer good nesting and foraging opportunities for birds.
- 4.6.4. The desk study returned a large data set of birds in the search area, including eight recent records of protected bird species listed under Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and / or Annex I of the Birds Directive. Six protected bird species were recorded within the data search area including Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Marsh Harrier



*Circus aeruginosus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* and Common Tern *Sterna Hirundo*.

- 4.6.5. The closest of the recent protected bird records is that of a Firecrest recorded in 2010 in a rural garden within the 1km grid square approximately 0.2km south-west of the site at its nearest point. The most recent records date from 2013 and include single records of a Marsh Harrier and Cetti's Warblers at locations within the 1km grid square approximately 1.1km north-east of the site at its nearest point, and a single record of a Red Kite at a location within the 1km grid square approximately 1.3km south-east of the site at its nearest point.
- 4.6.6. Other protected bird species records recorded within the data search area within the past twenty years include Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Red Kite, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Barn Owl, Marsh Harrier, Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*. The closest and most of recent of these records include a Little Egret and a Red Kite recorded in 2009 flying over Tesco's car park at a location approximately 0.1km south-east of the site.
- 4.6.7. In addition, the desk study returned eight recent records of birds listed as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 and as priority species by the UK BAP. These include records of seven bird species including Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*, Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.
- 4.6.8. The closest of the notable bird records is a record of a Turtle Dove, which relates to a location in the 1km grid square approximately 0.8km south-east of the site at its nearest point and dates from 2012. The most recent of the notable bird records date from 2013 and include single records of Bullfinch, Corn Bunting, Cuckoo, House Sparrow and Yellowhammer from locations in the 1km grid square approximately 1.1km north-east of the site at its closest point.

#### 4.7. Reptiles

- 4.7.1. The site contains some limited suitable habitats for foraging and dispersing reptiles including scrub and unmanaged amenity grassland; however, the areas suitable for reptiles are somewhat isolated with greater opportunities present within the environs off site. Additionally, no reptiles were recorded during the survey work undertaken.
- 4.7.2. The desk study returned no recent records of reptiles within the data search area.
- 4.7.3. Three reptile records were returned dating from the past twenty years, including two records of Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica* and a single record of Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*. Grass Snake and Common Lizard are both protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).



- 4.7.4. Of the two Grass Snake records, the closest record relates to a location approximately 1.4km north-east of the site and dates from 2003, whilst the most recent record dates from 2009 and relates to a location approximately 1.5km south-east of the site. The 2003 record includes up to four Grass Snakes recorded in Norwood Nature Reserve CWS. The single Common Lizard record dates from 2003 and relates to a location in the 1km grid square approximately 0.8km east of the site at its closest point. A total of 34 Common Lizard individuals were recorded under tins throughout Whitemoor Marshalling Yard CWS adjacent to the railway line in March.

#### 4.8. Amphibians

- 4.8.1. No amphibians were recorded during work undertaken and there are no waterbodies on site. The dry ditch to the west of the site is not suitable for breeding amphibians. The scrub and grassland offer some suitable habitat for amphibians during their terrestrial phase; however, these are somewhat isolated with greater opportunities present within the environs off site. The nearest pond is located 0.6km to the north-west of the site, beyond Wisbech Road.
- 4.8.2. The desk study returned records of three amphibian species within the data search area including Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and Common Toad *Bufo bufo*. Great Crested Newt is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 4.8.3. Fourteen records of Great Crested Newt were returned by the desk study. All returned records are within the Whitemoor Marshalling Yard CWS and range from locations approximately 1.2km to 1.3km north-east of the site. The most recent records date from 2017, with the highest count of 49 individuals recorded on 15.05.17.
- 4.8.4. Two records of Common Frog were returned, of which the closest record relates to a location approximately 1.3km north-east of the site and dates from 2010, and the most recent record dates from 2012 and relates to a location approximately 1.4km south-east of the site in Norwood Nature Reserve CWS.
- 4.8.5. A single record of Common Toad was returned relating to a location approximately 1km south-west of the site and dating from 2012.

#### 4.9. Invertebrates

- 4.9.1. Given the habitats present it is likely a small assemblage of common invertebrate species would be present within the site. There is no evidence to suggest that any rare or notable species would be present.
- 4.9.2. No records of protected invertebrate species were returned by the desk study.
- 4.9.3. The desk study returned records of five invertebrate species listed as species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 and as priority species by the UK BAP, including Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus*



*malvae*, Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, Wall *Lasiommata megera*, Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* and Five-Banded Weevil Wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata*. These notable invertebrate species records are all from Whitemoor Marshalling Yard CWS in March. The closest record with an accuracy to the nearest 100m is of a Wall butterfly recorded in 2013 in a location approximately 1km north-east of the site. The most recent records date from 2014 and include three records of Small Heath and two records of Wall. Of these 2014 records, the closest records are of both Small Heath and Wall recorded in a location approximately 1.3km north-east of the site.



## 5. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

### 5.1. The Principles of Ecological Evaluation

- 5.1.1. The guidelines for ecological evaluation produced by CIEEM propose an approach that involves professional judgement, but makes use of available guidance and information, such as the distribution and status of the species or features within the locality of the project.
- 5.1.2. The methods and standards for site evaluation within the British Isles have remained those defined by Ratcliffe<sup>7</sup>. These are broadly used across the United Kingdom to rank sites so priorities for nature conservation can be attained. For example, current SSSI designation maintains a system of data analysis that is roughly tested against Ratcliffe's criteria.
- 5.1.3. In general terms, these criteria are size, diversity, naturalness, rarity and fragility, while additional secondary criteria of typicalness, potential value, intrinsic appeal, recorded history and the position within the ecological / geographical units are also incorporated into the ranking procedure.
- 5.1.4. Any assessment should not judge sites in isolation from others, since several habitats may combine to make it worthy of importance to nature conservation.
- 5.1.5. Further, relying on the national criteria would undoubtedly distort the local variation in assessment and therefore additional factors need to be taken into account, e.g. a woodland type with a comparatively poor species diversity, common in the south of England, may be of importance at its northern limits, say in the border country.
- 5.1.6. In addition, habitats of local importance are often highlighted within a local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The Cambridgeshire BAP has been considered as part of this assessment and is referenced below.
- 5.1.7. Levels of importance can be determined within a defined geographical context from the immediate site or locality through to the international level.
- 5.1.8. The legislative and planning policy context are also important considerations and have been given due regard throughout this assessment.

### 5.2. Habitat Evaluation

#### *Designated Sites*

- 5.2.1. **Statutory Sites.** The site is not part of or adjacent to a statutory nature conservation designation.
- 5.2.2. The closest such site is Rings End Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which is located approximately 2.7km to the north of the site boundary. Rings End LNR is approximately 11ha in size and supports extensive reedbeds, ponds and areas of scrub.

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<sup>7</sup> Ratcliffe, D A (1977). *A Nature Conservation Review: The Selection of Biological Sites of National Importance to Nature Conservation in Britain*. Two Volumes. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



- 5.2.3. Nene Washes Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies approximately 4.3km to the north-west of the site. Nene Washes has been designated for nationally and internationally important populations of wildfowl and waders.
- 5.2.4. SPAs are designated under the EC Birds Directive as areas of international importance for bird populations. The Birds Directive is transposed into UK legislation by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, commonly known as the Habitats Regulations. The closely related Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated under the Habitats Directive and receive an equivalent level of legislative protection in the UK to SPAs.
- 5.2.5. Ramsar Sites are designated under the Ramsar Convention (formally The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat), which came into force in 1975. Ramsar Sites are internationally protected nature conservation sites, and the UK Government has directed that, in policy terms, they should receive an equivalent level of policy protection to SPAs and SACs. In practice the majority of UK Ramsar Sites are also designated as SPAs.
- 5.2.6. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations any plan or project must be assessed against potential effects that could arise upon the integrity of a European designated site.
- 5.2.7. The site falls into an Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) associated with Nene Washes SSSI such that Natural England consider that development within this zone has the potential to impact the SSSI in some way. However, only a restricted range of uses (namely aviation, residential developments, rural non-residential, air pollutant uses such as large-scale manure storage, and large-scale combustion use such as incineration) would trigger the need for the local planning authority to consult with Natural England in regard to potential impacts on the SSSIs. Given the scale and type of the proposals and their location within an existing urban area, it is not considered likely that any direct or indirect alone or in-combination effects on the interest features of the SSSIs would occur.
- 5.2.8. **Non-statutory Sites.** There are no non-statutory designated sites within the site itself, or immediately adjacent to the site. Several County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) lie within the vicinity of the site, the closest of which is Whitemoor Marshalling Yard CWS located approximately 0.9km to the east of the site boundary. Approximately 16.3ha in size, it is designated for its populations of vascular plant species which are nationally scarce and rare in the county, as well as significant populations of nationally scarce invertebrates.

#### *Habitats*

- 5.2.9. The majority of the habitats present on site are of limited intrinsic nature conservation value, including the buildings, hardstanding and amenity grassland. The trees and areas of scrub are considered to be of some ecological interest for the foraging and nest-building opportunities they



offer faunal species, as opposed to any significant intrinsic ecological value.

- 5.2.10. None of the above habitats pose an overriding ecological constraint in themselves that would prevent the development proceeding.
- 5.2.11. It is recommended that the landscape strategy for the proposed development incorporate a selection of native species of local provenance, which would have greater benefit for local wildlife.

#### *Invasive Non-native Species*

- 5.2.12. Wall Cotoneaster is located in areas of hardstanding and amenity grassland across the site. Wall Cotoneaster are listed under Schedule 9 Part II of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, making it an offence to cause these species to grow in the wild. Clearance works taking place in these areas will either remove specimens carefully and dispose of these at an approved facility, or (if specimens are to be retained) will be mindful not to disturb these specimens or the ground around them.
- 5.2.13. Butterfly-bush is present across areas of hardstanding within the site. Butterfly-bush is classed as a non-native invasive species by the Non-native Species Secretariat. It is noted that the control of this species is not a legal requirement, but nonetheless where works are proposed within or close to the boundary vegetation all reasonable measures should be taken to prevent its spread. Where present on site, the vegetation is to be removed and the material should be disposed of at an approved facility.
- 5.2.14. To prevent the spread of invasive non-native species, any other such species identified within or immediately adjacent to the site during the demolition and construction works will be treated with caution and will be removed or avoided (with suitable barriers installed where necessary) as is deemed most appropriate.
- 5.2.15. Overall, it is considered that the site has good scope to accommodate appropriate avoidance and mitigation towards the protected species and habitats of value identified on site, as well as provide enhancements post-development that will ensure the nature conservation status of the species present is maintained.

### 5.3. Faunal Evaluation

#### *Bats*

- 5.3.1. **Legislation.** All bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ("the Habitats Regulations"). These include provisions making it an offence:
- Deliberately to kill, injure or take (capture) bats;
  - Deliberately to disturb bats in such a way as to:-
    - (i) be likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate; or
    - (ii) affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;



- To damage or destroy any breeding or resting place used by bats;
  - Intentionally or recklessly to obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection (even if bats are not in residence).
- 5.3.2. While the legislation is deemed to apply when bats are not in residence, Natural England guidance suggests that certain activities such as re-roofing can be completed outside sensitive periods when bats are not in residence provided these do not damage or destroy the roost.
- 5.3.3. The words deliberately and intentionally include actions where a court can infer that the defendant knew that the action taken would almost inevitably result in an offence, even if that was not the primary purpose of the act.
- 5.3.4. The offence of damaging (making worse for the bat) or destroying a breeding site or resting place is an absolute offence. Such actions do not have to be deliberate for an offence to be committed.
- 5.3.5. European Protected Species licences are available from Natural England in certain circumstances, and permit activities that would otherwise be considered an offence.
- 5.3.6. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations Natural England must apply the three derogation tests as part of the process of considering a licence application. These tests are that:
1. the activity to be licensed must be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest or for public health and safety;
  2. there must be no satisfactory alternative; and
  3. the favourable conservation status of the species concerned must be maintained.
- 5.3.7. Licences can usually only be granted if the development is in receipt of full planning permission.
- 5.3.8. **Site Usage.** No evidence for the presence of bats was recorded during the survey work undertaken at the site, which offers negligible roosting opportunities for bats.
- 5.3.9. The treeline on the western boundary along with the other areas of boundary vegetation offer limited opportunities for foraging.
- 5.3.10. **Recommendations.** The building can be demolished at any time without the need to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species licence. In the highly unlikely event that any bat is discovered, work will cease, advice sought and a Natural England licence may be required.
- 5.3.11. The proposals for the site show that the majority of the on site vegetation, particularly along the western boundary, is to be retained.
- 5.3.12. A sympathetic lighting scheme should be designed for the site in order to minimise light spillage onto boundary vegetation, with particular regard given to the treeline along the western boundary.



### *Badgers*

- 5.3.13. **Legislation.** The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates the previous Badgers Acts of 1973 and 1991. The legislation aims to protect the species from persecution, rather than being a response to an unfavourable conservation status, as the species is, in fact, common over most of Britain, with particularly high populations in the south-west.
- 5.3.14. As well as protecting the animal itself, the 1992 Act also makes the intentional or reckless destruction, damage or obstruction of Badger setts an offence. A sett is defined as, “*any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a Badger*”, by current Natural England guidance.
- 5.3.15. In addition, the intentional elimination of sufficient foraging area used to support a known social group of Badgers may, in certain circumstances, be construed as an offence by constituting ‘cruel ill treatment’ of a Badger.
- 5.3.16. Any work that disturbs Badgers is illegal without a licence granted by Natural England. Unlike general conservation legislation, the Badgers Act 1992 makes specific provision for the granting of licences for development purposes, including for the destruction of setts.
- 5.3.17. It should be noted that a licence cannot be issued until the site is in receipt of full and valid planning permission, and that generally licences are not granted between December and June inclusive to avoid disruption to the Badger breeding cycle.
- 5.3.18. **Site Usage.** The site provides some very limited opportunities for Badger foraging, commuting and sett building but given the use of the land surrounding the site, it is considered highly unlikely that Badgers would be present in this location.
- 5.3.19. **Recommendations.** It is recommended that the treeline on the western boundary is retained and where possible, bolstered with planting consisting of native thorny fruit bearing species. This would improve foraging and dispersal opportunities post-development.
- 5.3.20. Owing to the dynamic nature of this species it is recommended that updated surveys are carried out prior to the commencement of any works to ensure that no setts have been excavated.

### *Hedgehogs*

- 5.3.21. **Legislation.** Hedgehogs are not a protected species, but they are a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.
- 5.3.22. The NERC Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to:
- ...take such steps as appear...to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, or...promote the taking by others of such steps.**



- 5.3.23. **Site Usage.** Hedgehogs were not recorded during survey work. The site contains suitable habitat for foraging and dispersal, as well as hibernation.
- 5.3.24. **Recommendations.** As a precautionary measure, any clearance of log piles or other Hedgehog shelter features will be subject to inspection to ensure that Hedgehogs are absent. In the event that an individual is encountered, it will be carefully placed in an appropriate lidded box and immediately removed to an area of suitable habitat at the margins of the site away from working areas.
- 5.3.25. Any trenches or deep pits associated with construction that are to be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape in case a Hedgehog enters. This is particularly important if the trench fills with water, and will take the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface.

#### *Birds*

- 5.3.26. **Legislation.** Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 is concerned with the protection of wild birds, whilst Schedule 1 lists species that are protected by special penalties. All species of birds receive general protection whilst nesting.
- 5.3.27. **Site Usage.** Multiple House Sparrow nests were recorded on the exterior of building B3.
- 5.3.28. The trees, scrub and amenity planting offer good nesting and foraging opportunities for birds.
- 5.3.29. **Recommendations.** It is recommended that, where possible, the existing planting be retained and enhanced through a landscape scheme comprising species of benefit to wildlife, including berry-bearing species, which will provide additional foraging habitat over the existing situation.
- 5.3.30. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that clearance of any suitable nesting habitat (including buildings) be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to July inclusive) to avoid any potential offence. Should the above timing constraints conflict with any timetabled works, it is recommended that works commence only after a suitably qualified ecologist has undertaken checks to ensure no nesting birds are present.

#### *Invertebrates*

- 5.3.31. **Site Usage.** Given the habitats present it is likely an assemblage of common invertebrate species is present within the site.
- 5.3.32. **Recommendations.** It is recommended that, wherever possible, new landscape planting be composed of native species rather than non-native species, as native species are known to support a greater assemblage of invertebrates.



## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned by Planning Potential on behalf of ALDI in June 2020 to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal of Units 1 to 3 Hostmoor Avenue / Martin Avenue, March, Cambridgeshire.
- 6.2. The proposals for the site include the demolition of the existing buildings, and the provision of a new ALDI food store with associated parking and landscaping.
- 6.3. **Statutory Sites.** The site is not part of or adjacent to a statutory nature conservation designation. The closest such site is Rings End LNR, which is located approximately 2.7km to the north of the site boundary.
- 6.4. Nene Washes SAC, SPA, Ramsar and SSSI lies approximately 4.3km to the north-west of the site.
- 6.5. In accordance with the Habitats Regulations any plan or project must be assessed against potential effects that could arise upon the integrity of a European designated site.
- 6.6. The site falls into an IRZ associated with Nene Washes SSSI. Given the scale and type of the proposals and their location within an existing urban area, it is not considered likely that any direct or indirect effects on the interest features of the SSSIs would occur.
- 6.7. **Non-statutory Sites.** The site is not subject to any non-statutory designations. The closest such site is Whitemoor Marshalling Yard CWS approximately 0.9km east of the site.
- 6.8. Standard engineering practices will avoid any potential adverse effects upon the LWSs within the vicinity of the site.
- 6.9. **Habitats.** The majority of the habitats present on site are of limited intrinsic nature conservation value, including the buildings, hardstanding and amenity grassland. The trees and areas of scrub are considered to be of some ecological interest for the foraging and nest-building opportunities they offer faunal species, as opposed to any significant intrinsic ecological value.
- 6.10. None of the above habitats pose an overriding ecological constraint in themselves that would prevent the development proceeding.
- 6.11. It is recommended that the landscape strategy for the proposed development incorporate a selection of native species of local provenance, which would have greater benefit for local wildlife.
- 6.12. **Invasive Species.** Wall Cotoneaster have been recorded within areas of hardstanding and amenity grassland across the site. Wall Cotoneaster is listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) under schedule 9 Part II.
- 6.13. Butterfly-bush has also been recorded in areas of hardstanding within the site. Butterfly-bush is classed as a non-native invasive species by the Non-native Species Secretariat. Reasonable measures should be taken to prevent the spread of these plant species and are detailed within the report.



- 6.14. **Bats.** No evidence for the presence of bats was recorded during the survey work undertaken at the site, which offers negligible roosting opportunities for bats. The treeline on the western boundary along with the other areas of boundary vegetation offer limited opportunities for foraging.
- 6.15. The building can be demolished at any time without the need to obtain a Natural England European Protected Species licence. In the highly unlikely event that any bat is discovered, work will cease, advice sought and a Natural England licence may be required.
- 6.16. The proposals for the site show that the majority of the on site vegetation, particularly along the western boundary, is to be retained. A sympathetic lighting scheme should be designed for the site in order to minimise light spillage onto boundary vegetation, with particular regard given to the treeline along the western boundary.
- 6.17. **Badgers.** The site provides some limited opportunities for Badger foraging, commuting and sett building but given the use of the land surrounding the site, it is considered highly unlikely that Badgers would be present in this location.
- 6.18. It is recommended that the treeline on the western boundary is retained and where possible, bolstered with planting consisting of native thorny fruit bearing species. This would improve foraging and sett building opportunities post-development.
- 6.19. Owing to the dynamic nature of this species it is recommended that updated surveys are carried out prior to the commencement of any works to ensure that no setts have been excavated.
- 6.20. **Hedgehogs.** Hedgehogs were not recorded during survey work. The site contains suitable habitat for foraging and dispersal, as well as hibernation.
- 6.21. As a precautionary measure, any clearance of log piles or other Hedgehog shelter features will be subject to inspection to ensure that Hedgehogs are absent. In the event that an individual is encountered, it will be carefully placed in an appropriate lidded box and immediately removed to an area of suitable habitat at the margins of the site away from working areas.
- 6.22. Any trenches or deep pits associated with construction that are to be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape in case a Hedgehog enters. This is particularly important if the trench fills with water, and will take the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface.
- 6.23. **Birds.** A number of common bird species were identified during the survey work undertaken. The site offers some opportunities for nesting and foraging birds in the form of trees, scrub, amenity planting and suitable buildings.
- 6.24. Multiple House Sparrow nests were recorded on the exterior of building B3.
- 6.25. It is recommended that, where possible, the existing planting be retained and enhanced through a landscape scheme comprising species of benefit to wildlife, including berry-bearing species, which will provide additional foraging habitat over the existing situation.



- 6.26. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that clearance of any suitable nesting habitat (including buildings) be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to July inclusive) to avoid any potential offence. Should the above timing constraints conflict with any timetabled works, it is recommended that works commence only after a suitably qualified ecologist has undertaken checks to ensure no nesting birds are present.
- 6.27. **Reptiles.** The site contains some limited suitable habitats for foraging and dispersing reptiles including scrub and unmanaged amenity grassland; however, the areas suitable for reptiles are somewhat isolated with greater opportunities present within the environs off site. Additionally, no reptiles were recorded during the survey work undertaken.
- 6.28. **Amphibians.** No amphibians were recorded during work undertaken and there are no waterbodies on site. The dry ditch to the west of the site is not suitable for breeding amphibians. The scrub and grassland offer some suitable habitat for amphibians during their terrestrial phase; however, these are somewhat isolated with greater opportunities present within the environs off site. The nearest pond is located 0.6km to the north-west of the site, beyond Wisbech Road.
- 6.29. **Invertebrates.** Given the habitats present it is likely a small assemblage of common invertebrate species would be present within the site. There is no evidence to suggest that any rare or notable species would be present. It is recommended that any new planting be composed of native species rather than non-native species.
- 6.30. In conclusion, subject to appropriate mitigation, there is not considered to be any insurmountable ecological reasons the site could not come forward for development.



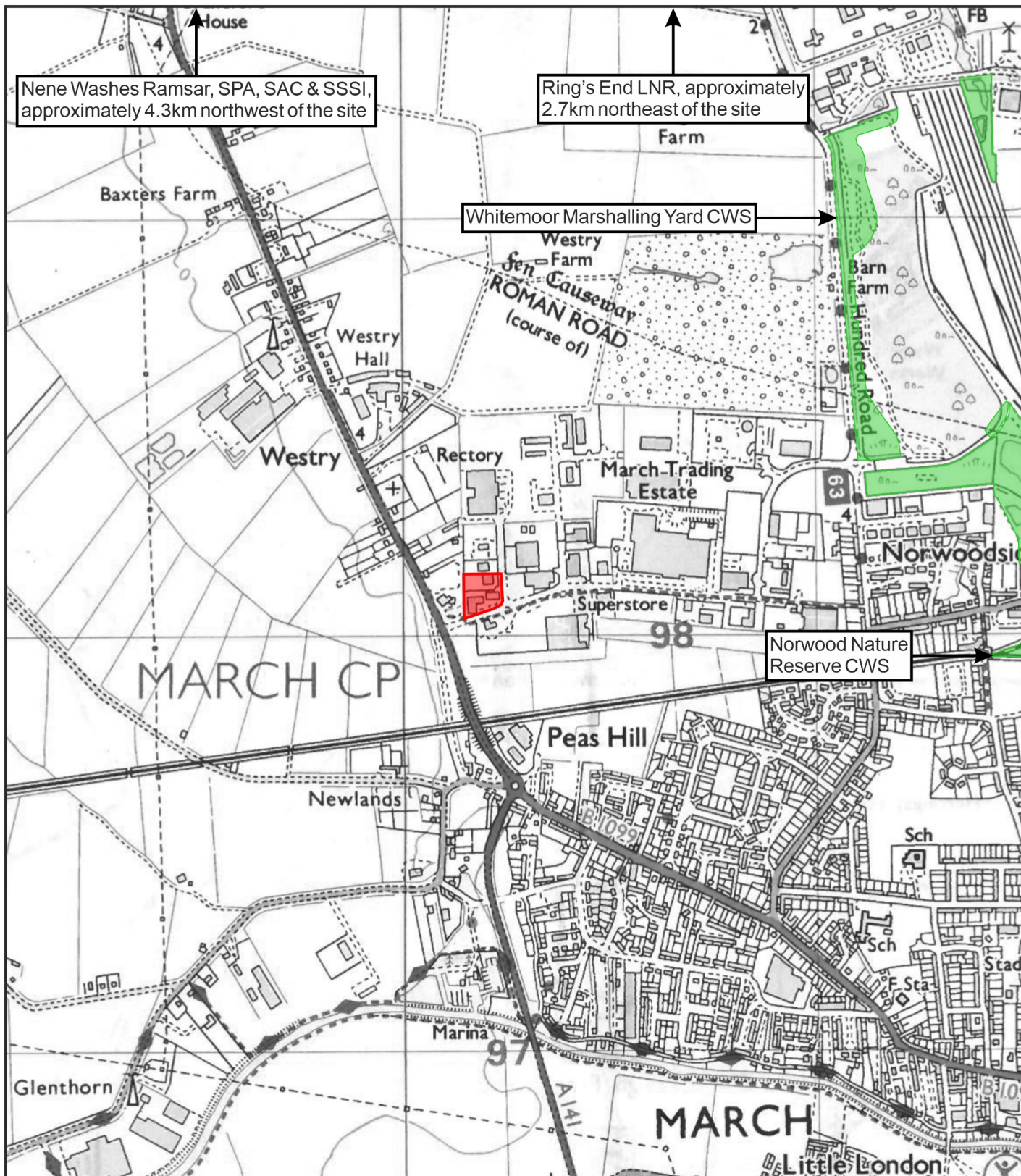
## PLANS



## **PLAN ECO1**

Site Location and Ecological Designations





KEY:



SITE LOCATION



COUNTY WILDLIFE SITE (CWS)



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PLAN ECO1: SITE LOCATION AND  
ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

Rev: A  
Jun 2020











## **PLAN ECO2**

Ecological Features





KEY:

-  SITE BOUNDARY
-  BUILDING
-  HARDSTANDING
-  AMENITY GRASSLAND
-  AMENITY PLANTING
-  SCRUB
-  TREE
-  DRY DITCH



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PLAN ECO2:  
ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

Rev: B  
Jul 2020



## **PHOTOGRAPHS**



PHOTOGRAPH 1: Exterior of Building B1



PHOTOGRAPH 2: Hardstanding





PHOTOGRAPH 3: Trees and Amenity Grassland



PHOTOGRAPH 4: Amenity Grassland





PHOTOGRAPH 5: Amenity Planting



PHOTOGRAPH 6: Scrub





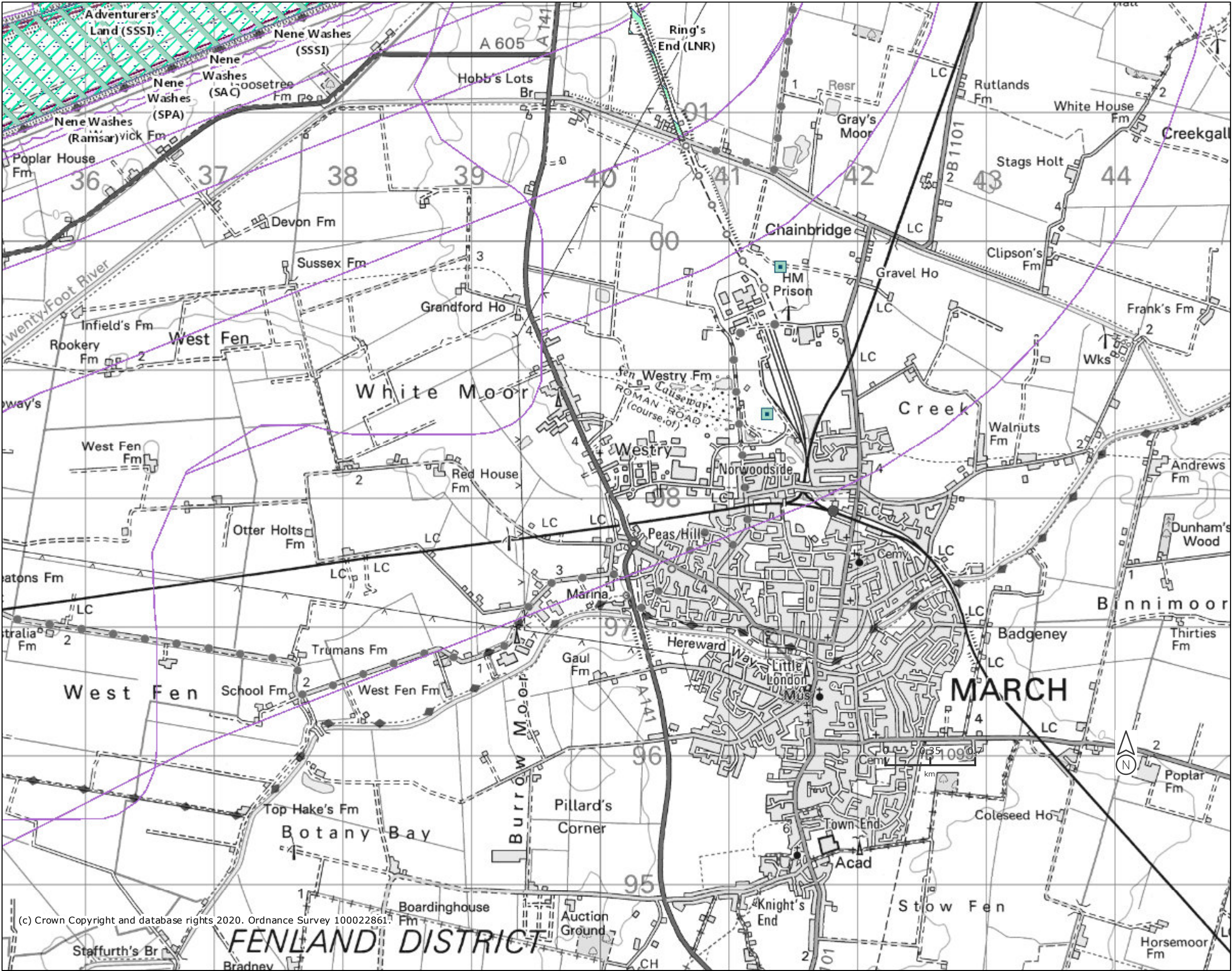
## **APPENDICES**



## **APPENDIX 1**

Information downloaded from Multi-Agency  
Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)





Legend

- Local Nature Reserves (England)
- National Nature Reserves (England)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Special Protection Areas (England)
- Ancient Woodland (England)
  - Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
  - Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Granted European Protected Species Applications (England)
  - Amphibian
  - Bat
  - Cetacean
  - Invertebrate
  - Other Mammal
  - Plant
  - Reptile

Projection = OSGB36  
xmin = 532500  
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xmax = 547700  
ymax = 301900

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