

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Client: **DHA Planning**

For proposed development of land at

**The Barn at 2 Hartley Wood Corner Cottage
Manor Drive
Hartley
DA3 8AU**

Contents

1. Summary
2. Introduction
3. Methodology
4. Survey Results
5. Recommendations
6. Additional Recommendations / Enhancements
7. Conclusion
8. References
9. Appendices
 - Appendix 1: Phase One Local Area Map
 - Appendix 2: Survey Photographs
 - Appendix 2: Legislation

Figures:

- Figure 1: Proposed Build Location
- Figure 2: Magic Map

Disclaimer: This report should be read in full and detailed guidance given in this report must be followed to avoid breaching legislation regarding protected species and Habitats. This report is valid for two years from the date of the survey visit. Should works be delayed to later than one year after the survey then a further update survey of the site would be required as habitats change over time, along with their potential to support protected species.

This document has been prepared by Fellgrove Ecological Consultancy in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines for Ecological Report Writing, Second Edition December 2017. Planning policy and legislation may affect the timing works and operations described in this report.

It is accepted that this document may need to be updated and more detailed information added throughout the planning and development process. The interpretations and recommendations contained within this report represent our professional opinion in addition to using accepted industry practice based on current legislation. Fellgrove accept no responsibility for any use of this document outside that of which it is intended.

1 - Summary

On behalf of DHA Planning, Fellgrove were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey Assessment at The Barn, 2 Hartley Wood Corner Cottage, Manor Drive, Hartley, Sevenoaks, Kent, DA3 8AU.

The site location and immediate surrounding area were accessible and surveyed in fair weather conditions during June 2021.¹ The surveyor and the author of this report is Richard Ferrett BSc (Hons), Ecologist. Richard currently holds survey licenses for Great Crested Newts and continues his ecological professional development.

The site is adjacent to an occupied residential property. The barn on the site has moderate nesting bird potential, and moderate roosting bats potential was recorded within the wood slatted and corrugated metal roofed barn.

Results from this survey found and highlighted the following:

- **Moderate potential for roosting bats within the barn** - further emergence surveys are necessary; these surveys will help identify any protection measures need to be put in place.
- **Bird surveys of the barn may be necessary** depending on the time of the year that works are planned to take place.

¹ Best practice guidelines suggest carrying out surveys in dry, warmer weather conditions to produce optimal results with the best possible chance of gathering accurate data. Surveys undertaken outside of this may provide sub-optimal results.

2 – Introduction

2.1 - Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this survey was to provide a baseline assessment of current site conditions and highlight any ecological issues which may affect development proposals. Further surveying or mitigation works are recommended where relevant. If works are to be carried out any later than two years after this report, then a second site visit is recommended so that an update to this report be carried out. Key considerations when surveying the site were as follows:

- Identification of significant ecological features present on site and their potential to support protected species, both within the proposed development site and surrounding local area, including all relevant statutory and non-statutory designated site
- Provide an overview of ecological impacts on proposed development
- To use the results and data obtained from the initial assessment to provide recommendations for further surveys where necessary and to detail enhancement / biodiversity measures to be taken where appropriate, following best practice timelines

2.2 - Site Description

The site is located with National Grid Reference: TQ612673 and accessed by parking just off Manor Lane at the point it meets Manor Drive. The site lies adjacent to the North of Manor Drive and is bordered on the East by a country track leading to a residential property and to the West and North are residential properties.

2.3 – Development Proposal

The development proposal put forward by the client is for the construction of a two-storey new residential build located within the same parameters of the barn with associated garden and parking. ***Please refer to figure 1 below for indicative proposed development location.***

Figure 1: Proposed Build Location

(Outlined in red)



3 - Methodology

3.1 - Desk Study

A desk top data search for protected and notable species within 2km of the site was made using freely available environmental and ecological databases.

The ordnance survey 1:25000 scale map for the area was also examined for evidence of water bodies within 250m of the site which might be potential great crested newt breeding sites.

A search of the MAGIC (magic.defra.gov.uk) website was carried out to determine if any statutory designated nature conservation sites were located within 2km of the site and any European Protected Species Mitigation Licences had been granted in the same search area.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is based on Phase 1 Survey methodology, as described in the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Survey (1990). Its use allows habitat types on sites to be mapped. From this the ecological value of areas of a site can be ascertained. It can then be determined how likely it is that protected, or otherwise notable species might occur on site. It also determines which areas on site might support protected species. Based on the information gathered, the ecologist will make an assessment on the potential presence of protected and otherwise important or notable species on the site of the proposed development.

Incidental records of other species noted during the habitat survey were also compiled, Scientific names are given after the first mention of a species, thereafter, common names only are used. Nomenclature follows Stace (2010) for vascular plant species.

Information sourced from the desk-top study included the following: Statutory sites of nature conservation importance. Non-statutory sites designated as SNCIs at county level and of local conservation importance, and often recognised in Local Planning Authority development plans; Protected, rare and/or other noteworthy species; and Habitats and Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity in England as listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 which may be relevant to the site (hereby referred to as 'species or habitats of principal importance').

This information can aid the ecologist in justifying their recommendations from the initial findings of the field study or alternatively will help then decide that there is a better course of action regarding certain protected species. A map showing habitat types and locations on site is included further on. The following protected species are those most found on potential development sites: Amphibians, Badger, Birds, Bats and Reptiles.

3.2 - Field Study

The Preliminary Ecological Assessment Survey followed the standard method outlined in the JNCC (1990) Handbook for Phase 1 Survey. A Preliminary Ecological Habitat Appraisal involves a field survey whereby an ecologist will visit the proposed development site. The ecologist will study as much of the site as they can safely access. Habitats are described, mapped and a map of the site is compiled together with photographs and list of plant species in the final report. Preliminary Ecological Habitat Assessment guidelines are published by CIEEM (2013).

Where the site shows no evidence of protected species and no suitable habitats for them, further surveying for that species can be ruled out. Where suitable habitat is present further surveying is recommended if current guidelines and the judgement of the surveyor suggest presence is reasonably likely.

Upon completion of the field survey, the ecologist carried out a data search researching freely available local area biodiversity records and habitat mapping information to provide an overview in terms of protected species presence within the local and surrounding area.

This site was assessed for potential habitat for protected species and species of principal conservation or concern during a walkover survey carried out in June 2021.

All trees on site were also taken into consideration and checked for potential roosting bats in addition to checks for nesting birds.

4 – Survey Results

4.1 – Desk Study

The desk study alongside the freely available online record data searches also made use of documents submitted for planning within the immediate local area. The data search looks at local ecological interest of the site and identifies records of protected species within 2km of the site.

Species Records

In addition to designated sites, protected and notable species records were provided by local records. Birds, and Bats are likely to be found within the habitat on the site. There are records of House Martin and Common Pipistrelle within the local area. Common Frog, Common Lizard, Badger, Dormice and Hedgehog are also present within 2km of the site.

Designated Site Records

The site is located within 2km of the following:

- **Hartley Wood Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)** - these are areas of substantive nature conservation value and make an important contribution to ecological networks in the local landscape. LWS include woodland, grassland, and associated species of conservation importance. They are selected and assessed following recognised criteria and Defra guidance.
- **Ancient Woodland** - these are areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600 in England. This is when maps started to be reasonably accurate so we can tell that these areas have had tree cover for hundreds of years. They are relatively undisturbed by human development these include Foxborough wood and Hartley Wood.

Protection Areas

The site is located within 2km of the following:

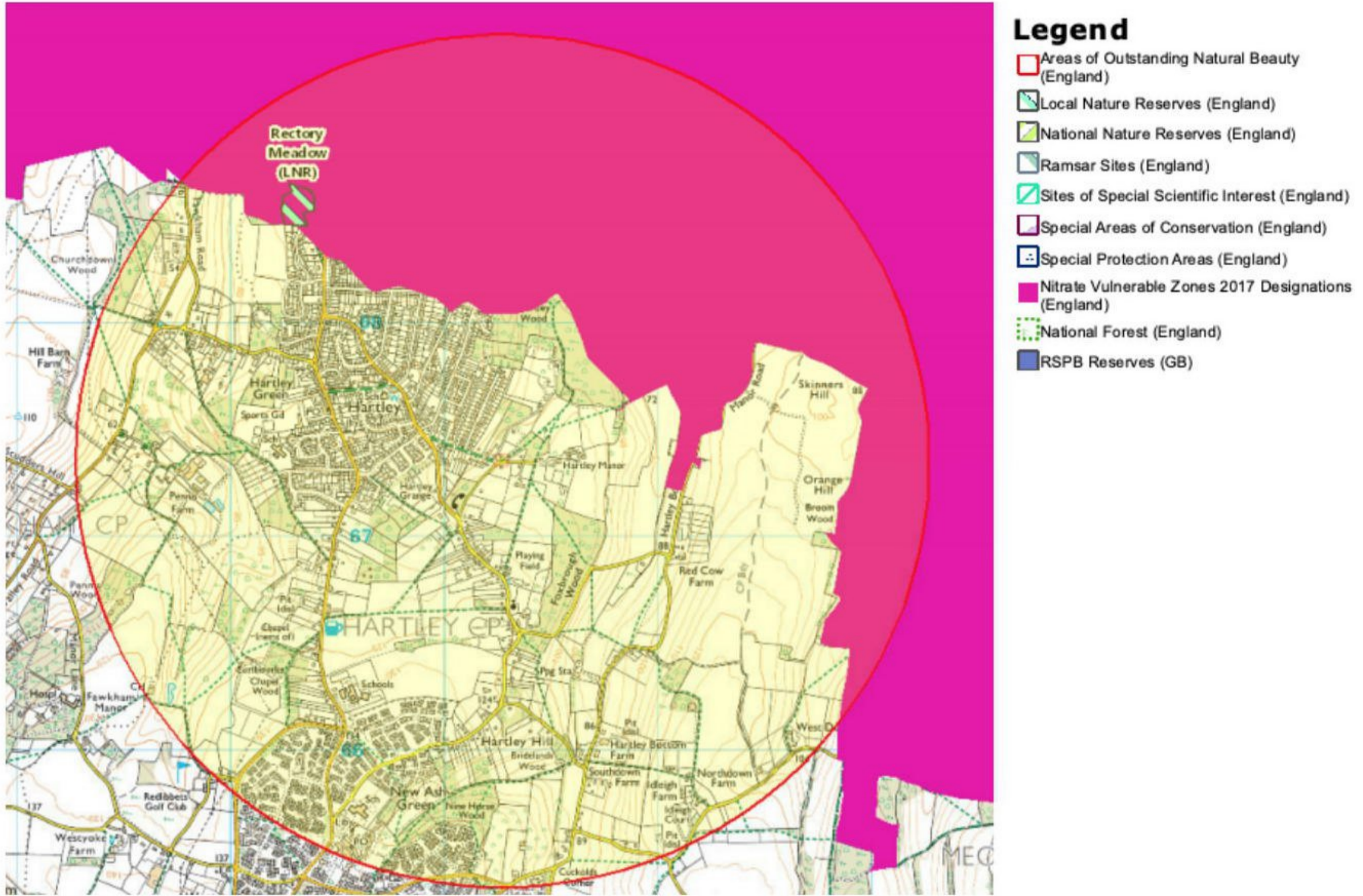
- **Rectory Meadow Local Nature Reserve (LNR)** - A designation for nature reserves in Great Britain. The designation has its origin in the recommendations of the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee which established the framework for nature conservation in the United Kingdom and suggested a national suite of protected areas comprising national nature reserves, conservation areas (which incorporated suggestions for Sites of Special Scientific Interest), national parks, geological monuments, local nature reserves and local educational nature reserves.
- **Local Nature Partnership Area** - Which are run by a broad range of influential organisations, businesses, and people, and from a range of sectors, charged by government with the task of bringing about improvements in their local natural environment in England. To achieve this, they are expected to ensure that consideration for the environment is put right at the heart of local decision-making.
- **Hartley Green Belt** - The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- **Nitrate Vulnerable Zone** - Nitrate vulnerable zone is a conservation designation of the Environment Agency for areas of land that drain into nitrate polluted waters, or waterways that could become polluted by nitrates due to environmental and health threats. A nitrate vulnerable zone can be designated as a response to an increase in nitrate leaching or increased use of nitrate fertilizers.

Waterbodies

There is one pond within 500m of the proposed build area. There are no ponds within 250m of the site. There are no ponds within the site itself.

Figure 2: Magic Map (2km)

Source: MAGIC (www.defra.gov.uk)



4.2 - Field Survey

The likelihood of species being present ranges in a scale from extremely unlikely to highly likely. The judgement of the surveyor combined with knowledge of habitats present, signs and sightings of animals and evidence from records is used to give an estimated likelihood of presence.

The habitat survey identified the following broad habitat types on the site, each of which is mapped and described further below with reference to the dominant or more notable plant species identified within each habitat during the survey. The proposed development area was found to contain the following:

1. **Buildings** – A wooden slatted with corrugated metal roof barn and a portable metal container.
2. **Hardstanding** – around the barn is hard standing which has been degraded and broken up over time with scrub growing through.
3. **Scrub** – The largest proportion of the external habitat of the site is scrub made up of brambles and stinging nettle.
4. **Trees** – There are a few trees on the East border of the proposed development site.

Protected Species Presence - Guidelines (2016)

Confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species directly observed on site • Clear evidence of species presence observed (e.g., droppings, burrows, etc.)
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important structures or features of use for breeding or refuge present. For instance, ponds for newts, old trees for bats. • Significant amount of high-quality foraging habitat present • Site adjacent to surrounding areas of suitable habitat, or connected by linear features of use to commuting species (e.g., river) • Site close to known offsite species populations
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some features suitable for breeding or refuge present. Some suitable foraging habitats available • Site connected to suitable offsite areas of habitat
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small amounts of low-quality areas for refuge or breeding • Small areas suitable for foraging • Site not connected to suitable offsite habitats or species not likely to enter site.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No suitable habitats on site

Impacts of the Proposed Development

The wooden slatted barn with the corrugated roof could provide roosting and nesting for birds and bats. These could be at risk if the proposed development went ahead without further survey.

5 – Recommendations

A baseline assessment of the site to support protected species has been carried out and, based on the desk-top observations made, an assessment of the suitability of on-site and adjoining habitat and information on the distribution of these species. Those considered potentially present were further evaluated as follows:



5.2 - Bats

The desk study shows that bats have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. The field survey found **moderate** potential for bats and bat roost features in the wooden slatted shed structure and onsite trees. **As a result, we recommend bat emergence surveys.** This survey will involve two site visits at dusk by a licenced bat surveyor and an experienced field surveyor to cover all aspects of the shed building and the ivy-covered trees. If bat activity is high additional visit's may be necessary. If these surveys identify bats being present on site, mitigation and compensation measures must be put in place for roosting bats. A Woodstone Beaumaris Bat Box must be installed within the proposed development site during or immediately after construction.

5.3 - Nesting Birds

The desk study shows that birds have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. Birds on the amber list have been recorded with 2km of the site. The survey found moderate nesting bird potential on the site within and on the external walls of the barn and nests were present. Any works on the building must be completed outside of nesting bird season. If works are not planned until winter, then further surveys are not necessary however if works are planned to take place February to August (Inclusive). **Further surveying and mitigation for birds is recommended before any works on the building takes place. Two Woodstone Seville Nest boxes with a 32mm entrance will be installed within the proposed development site during or immediately after construction.**

5.4 – Dormice

The desk study shows that Dormice have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. However, the site habitat offers negligible potential for Dormice no further surveys have been recommended because the development will affect an area of scrub unsuitable for dormice habitat and the development is unlikely to affect dormice.

5.5 – Amphibians

The desk study shows that Amphibians have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. However, the site habitat offers negligible potential for amphibians no further surveys have been

recommended because the development will affect habitat unsuitable for Amphibians the development is unlikely to affect Amphibians.

5.6 – Reptiles

The desk study shows that reptiles have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. However, the site has negligible potential for the same reasons as Amphibians (*please refer to section 6.5 above*).

5.7 - Other notable species

The desk study shows that Hedgehog have been recorded within 2km of the site in the last twenty years. The survey found negligible probability of hedgehog being present on-site due to limited-suitable habitat. No further surveys or mitigation measures have been recommended.

6 - Additional Recommendations

6.1 – Biodiversity Enhancements

Planning policy requires new developments to be enhanced for biodiversity. The existing proposals are considered to determine whether biodiversity enhancements are offered and whether they are adequate to meet the policy requirements. Again, national, regional, county and borough policies are considered. Opportunities should be sought where appropriate during the design of landscaping.

- All new planting should be of native species of local provenance that will have a value as forage and cover for species using the site.
- Planting associated with the proposed development should include native, flower rich species, including those that flower in the late and early seasons to benefit pollinators, such as bumblebees where appropriate.
- 2 Woodstone Seville Nest Box will be installed within the proposed development site during or immediately after construction.
- A Woodstone Beaumaris Bat Box will be installed within the proposed development site during or immediately after construction.

7 – Conclusion

There were no limitations to the survey effort which may have negatively impacted the conclusions of the surveys.

With the recommended surveys mitigation and enhancement measures wildlife can be protected and improved (planting of flower rich local plant species) and opportunities for birds and bats can be retained and improved (additional nest boxes). With the relatively small scale of the proposal, it would be disproportionate to suggest enhancement beyond those already recommended above.

8 - References

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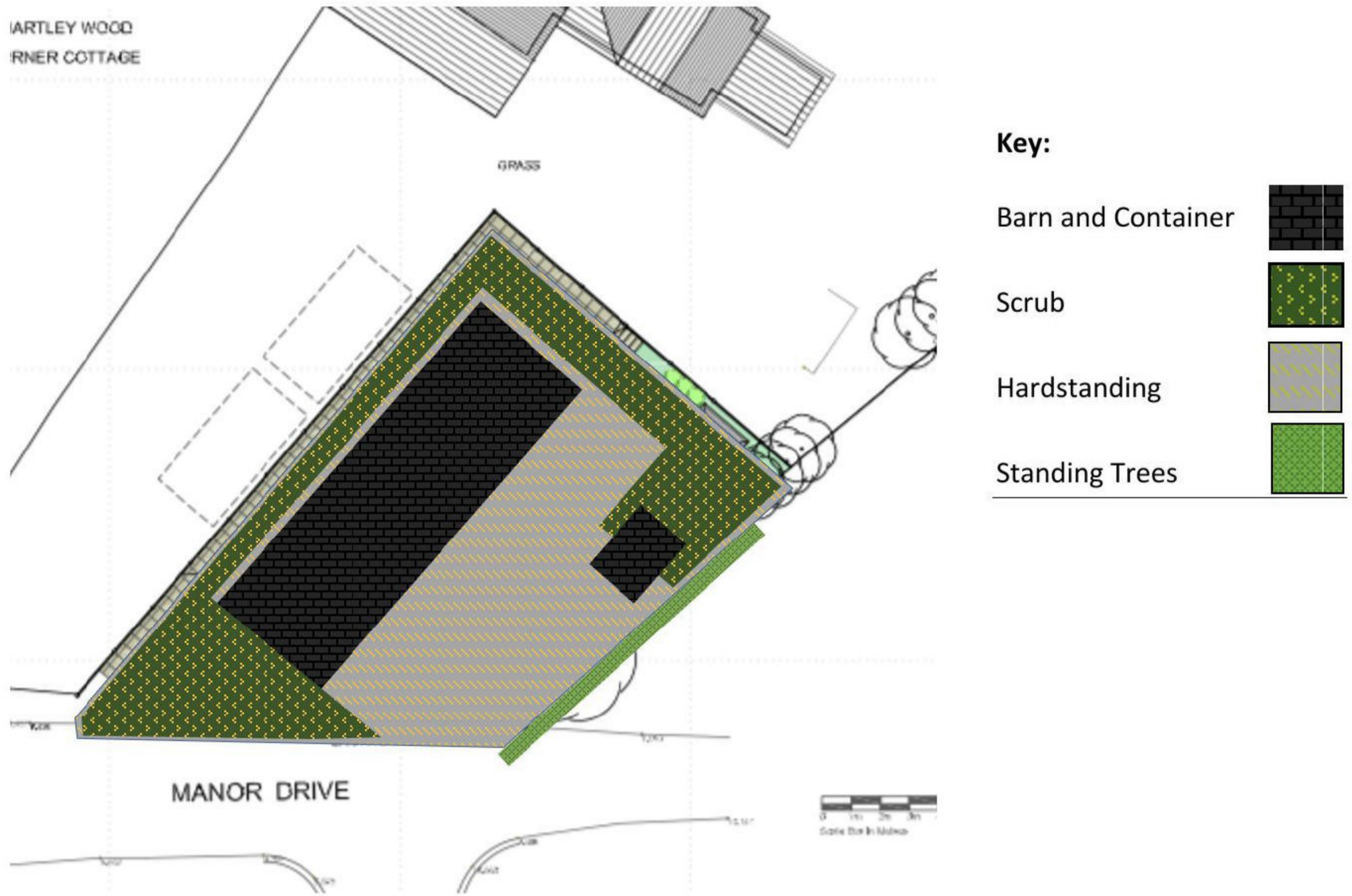
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9 - APPENDICES



Appendix 1: Phase One Local Area Map



Appendix 2: Survey Photographs



Figure 1: Barn



Figure 2: Barn



Figure 3: Barn and Old Nest box



Figure 4: Barn and scrubland



Figure 5: Barn and scrubland



Figure 6: Barn and scrubland



Figure 7: Barn and scrubland



Figure 8: Metal Container



Figure 9: Barn and scrubland



Figure 10: Barn and Scrubland



Figure 11: Nest boxes



Figure 12: Scrubland



Appendix 3: Planning Policy & Legislation (United Kingdom)

For the most up to date information please visit <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law>