

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

14th April 2022

Woodpecker Wood, Damerham,
Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3HL

On behalf of: Mr and Mrs G French

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SURVEY DATA VALIDITY

Information and data provided within this report is
considered accurate at the time of writing. Survey data is considered
valid for 18 months from the survey date for planning purposes, although update survey
data may be required for a planning application dependent on conditions and impacts.

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Executive summary

- ABR Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Mr and Mrs G French to produce an Ecological Assessment report informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA) at Woodpecker Wood, Damerham, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3HL. These surveys were conducted to advise on ecological constraints associated with the prospective development of the site. This report was requested to support an application for the change of use of the existing barn and the conversion of the building into a dwelling.
- The PEA and PRA were conducted on the 25th February 2022 by experienced Class bat licensed ecologists Becci Smith and Sophie Morris.

Habitats, invasive species and statutory sites mitigation:

- The site comprises a barn surrounded by an area of poor semi-improved neutral grassland, mixed broadleaved woodland, replanted woodland, woodland rides, and a pond.
- The site is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, this is due to ancient semi-natural woodland being onsite which is also designated as Lowland Mixed deciduous woodland and is a UK Priority habitat. A 'woodland management plan' and a 'Construction Environmental Management Plan' will be required to ensure no impacts to the woodland and the protected species that are likely present on site, occur as part of the development.
- The site falls within the Wessex Water Avon discharge catchment and a Natural England Solent nitrate budget calculation will need to be provided to address increases in nutrients within the River Avon in addition to phosphorous control and mitigation measures.
- Rhododendron, a species listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), was recorded on site. It is an offence to allow this species to spread 'in the wild'. Recommendations for its removal are provided in Section 5.

Badgers:

- A badger sett was recorded to the southwest of the site with one active hole and one disused hole present. Further recommendations have been outlined in Section 5 to ensure the sett is not affected during the works and to ensure badgers can continue using the site.

Barn owls

- A barn owl survey was undertaken by licensed barn owl worker Becci Smith on the 25th February 2022. Evidence in the form of pellets were recorded on the mezzanine within the building. An appropriate mitigation and compensation strategy have been provided in Section 5.

Bats:

- The PRA was conducted on the building, and it was assessed to hold 'negligible potential' for roosting bats. A PRA was also undertaken on the trees on site, several of which had potential roosting features. However, as the works are for the change of use of the building, no planned tree works are expected, and no further action has been recommended in relation to roosting bats and the proposed works.
- The general site and area is considered suitable for foraging and commuting bats and a lighting strategy is detailed in Section 5 to minimize lighting disturbance.

Dormice:

- The woodland onsite is highly suitable for dormice and are considered highly likely to be onsite. However, as the works are for the change of use of the building, no works on the woodland are expected and no further action has been recommended in relation to dormice and the proposed works.

Great crested newts and reptiles:

- The pond, log piles, brash piles, and grassland margins onsite are highly suitable for great crested newts (GCN) and common reptiles. Habitat Suitability Index assessments were undertaken on the pond onsite and within the neighbouring property. These ponds scored 0.66 and 0.8 respectively, noting average and excellent scores in relation to great crested newts and their likelihood of utilising the ponds and the surrounding terrestrial habitats. However, as the works are for the change of use of the building, no works on the suitable habitats are expected and no further action has been recommended in relation to GCN and reptiles and the proposed works.

Nesting birds:

- No evidence of nesting birds was identified on site. However, there is potential for nesting birds to be present in the woodland on site. A precautionary mitigation strategy is detailed in Section 5 to safeguard nesting birds.

Ecological enhancements:

- To ensure the proposed development is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy, ecological enhancements will include the provision of a bat box, a swift box, a minimum of one new fruit tree and native landscaping, solitary bee bricks and hedgehog-friendly fencing as detailed in Section 5 of this report.

1. Introduction

ABR Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Mr and Mrs G French to produce an Ecological Assessment report informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA) at Woodpecker Wood, Damerham, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3HL (Central Grid Reference: SU 11362 15809). These surveys were conducted to advise on ecological constraints associated with the prospective development of the site. This report was requested to support an application for the change of use of the existing outbuilding and the conversion of the building into a dwelling.

The PEA and PRA were conducted on the 25th February 2022 by experienced Natural England bat licensed ecologists Becci Smith and assistant ecologist Sophie Morris. The proposed site and building plans are provided in Appendix 1.

Site context

The application site is located in Fordingbridge, Hampshire and is set within a rural woodland location. The site comprises a barn surrounded by an area of mixed broadleaved woodland, improved, neutral grassland, replanted woodland, two woodland rides and a pond. In the immediate surrounding landscape, housing is present with the River Avon approximately 225m south. Within the wider landscape, heathland, woodland, arable and pastures with good hedgerow networks and mature trees are present. The immediate and surrounding landscapes were considered to provide excellent opportunities for foraging and commuting bats and local wildlife.

Aims and scope of this report

This report is based on the results of the PEA and data search from the Local Records Centre, which were principally aimed at determining the ecological value of the site and any constraints associated with the development. This report is also based on the results of the PRA which aimed to determine if a bat roost is present within any of the building(s)/trees or whether the building(s)/trees had 'potential' to support roosting bats in line with The BCT Good Practice Survey Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

This report aims to establish whether the proposed works will impact on any protected or vulnerable species and/or habitats and identifies whether there is a requirement for further detailed surveys, which may inform the need for a European Protected Species (EPS) licence(s) to allow the works to proceed lawfully.

2. Legislation and policy

Legislation and UK BAP priority habitats/species

Legislation

In England, bats, dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), otters (*Lutra lutra*), great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*), smooth snakes (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizards (*Lacerta agilis*) are legally protected under Annex IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), which is transposed into domestic law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) are protected under the above Regulations under Annex I (as originated from the EC Birds Directive).

Some species are also listed under Annex II of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), including barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), great crested newt, stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) and otter.

The above-named species and adders (*Vipera berus*), slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*), grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*), common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*), palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*), smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) and several invertebrate species are also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended). Barn owls (*Tyto alba*) are protected under Schedule 1 of the WCA (1981). Schedule 9 of the WCA (1981) includes non-native, invasive species including (but not limited to) Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

Some sites that have been designated for nature conservation are legally protected due to being of European importance. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) (protected under the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds (protected under the EC Birds Directive) and Ramsar (Ramsar Convention, 1975). Other protected sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Protected Road Verges which are designated under the WCA (1981) and strengthened by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) (2006).

Following the exit of the European Union, several changes have occurred to the above legislation under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. This has adopted these European laws into UK legislation, referring to the previous Natura 2000 sites as the 'national site network' which includes existing and newly designated SACs and SPAs. Ramsar sites do not form part of the national site

network however, these are still protected in the same way and many overlap with SACs and SPAs. These changes allow the Government to continue commitment to the protection of the environment along with fulfilling the international commitments under the Bern Convention, the Oslo and Paris Conventions (OSPAR), Bonn and Ramsar Conventions.

Hedgerows that qualify as 'important' under The Hedgerows Regulations (1997) are legally protected under the Regulations and badgers (*Meles meles*) are protected under The Protection of Badgers (1992).

UK BAP

Several species and habitats are listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) (JNCC, 2016) as priority habitats/species due to their vulnerability or rarity as listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) and Section 40 places a duty to conserve biodiversity on all public authorities.

These include several terrestrial and freshwater habitats, including some hedgerows and streams, and several species such as hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), barbastelle, Bechstein's bat, both species of horseshoe bat, brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and otter.

National and local policy

NPPF – The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Section 15 concerns the natural environment and states:

'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'

New developments and projects are supported where plans promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue measurable net gains for biodiversity.

To ensure this application is compliant with Section 15 of NPPF, wildlife/habitat enhancements will be required to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain as a post-development outcome.

Section 15 of NPPF also gives consideration to sites with potential to impact on irreplaceable habitats, and states:

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

To ensure this application is compliant with Section 15, this application should be accompanied by a suitable arboricultural report to assess the presence of potential ancient or veteran trees, where appropriate.

The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy

The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy (New Forest District Council, 2020) Policy ENV1 'Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites' states the overall objectives that will protect and enhance biodiversity in the region:

'Except as provided for in the first paragraph of Saved Policy DM2: Nature Conservation, Biodiversity and Geodiversity, development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that any necessary mitigation, management or monitoring measures are secured in perpetuity as part of the proposal and will be implemented in a timely manner, such that, in combination with other plans and development proposals, there will not be adverse effects on the integrity of any of the following International Nature Conservation sites:

- *The New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and the New Forest Ramsar site;*
- *The Solent Maritime SAC, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC, the*
- *Solent and Southampton Water SPA, and the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site;*
- *The River Avon SAC, Avon Valley SPA and Ramsar site; and*
- *The River Itchen SAC.'*

Policy SP6 - the natural environment, notes that proposals should protect, maintain and enhance nationally, regionally and locally important sites and features of the natural environment, including habitats and species of biodiversity importance, geological features and the water environment. Development which is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) will not be permitted. Only where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh both the impacts on the special interest features of the SSSI and on the broader national network of SSSIs will an exception be considered.

Development proposals which adversely affect locally designated sites, priority habitats and species populations, protected species or those identified of importance by national or local biodiversity plans will be refused unless the Authority is satisfied that:

- a) it has been demonstrated that suitable measures for mitigating adverse effects will be provided and maintained in order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity value
- b) there are no alternative solutions
- c) there are overriding reasons which outweigh the harm.

In cases where it is not possible to fully avoid or mitigate for the loss of biodiversity interests resulting from a development, appropriate compensation will be secured for any residual losses via on or off-site compensation measures. The latter may include the provision of compensatory habitats elsewhere. In addition, opportunities to enhance ecological or geological assets and the water environment should be maximised, particularly in line with the Authority's 'Action for Biodiversity'¹². Applicants will be required to demonstrate the impacts of their proposal on biodiversity, and for certain types of development¹³ by submission of an Ecological Appraisal, which should outline the mitigation and enhancement measures needed to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management

Policy DM2 'Nature conservation, biodiversity and geodiversity' set out in The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management Adopted April 2014 states:

'Development proposals which would be likely to adversely affect the integrity of a designated or candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC), classified or potential Special Protection Area (SPA), or listed Ramsar site will not be permitted unless there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest which would justify the development.'

Development proposals within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which would be likely to adversely affect the site will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development outweigh both the adverse impacts on the site and any adverse impacts on the wider network of SSSIs.

Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of regional or local importance (including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGGS), and habitats or species of principal importance for biodiversity) will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity.

Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity and retain and, where possible, enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site. Existing ecological networks should be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and ecological corridors should form an essential component of green infrastructure provision in association with new development to ensure habitat connectivity.

Where development is permitted, the local planning authority will use conditions and/or planning obligations to minimise the damage, provide mitigation and site management measures and, where appropriate, compensatory and enhancement measures.

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect species of fauna or flora that are protected under national or international law, or their habitats, unless their protection can be adequately secured through conditions and/or planning obligations.'

It is the applicant's/landowner's responsibility to ensure that the proposed development proceeds in full compliance with this report and/or any update version report thereafter, that works are undertaken lawfully, in compliance with national and local policy, and in accordance with all conditions of the obtained planning consent.

3. Methodology

Desktop data search

Internationally, nationally and locally protected sites including Ramsar, SPAs, SACs, SSSIs, NNRs and LNRs were identified within a 5-kilometre (km) radius of the application site using the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC, 2021) website. Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC, 2021) were contacted to provide records of any protected, vulnerable and notable species and any locally designated sites such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) within a 1km radius of the application site.

This information was used to inform the assessment of the site and its potential to support protected/vulnerable species and habitats and to assess whether the proposed works hold potential to impact on protected sites designated for nature conservation.

Phase 1 Habitat survey

The Phase 1 Habitat survey was conducted on the 25th February 2022 by experienced ecologist Becci Smith and assistant ecologist Sophie Morris.

The survey was conducted in accordance with the 'Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit' (JNCC, 2010) methodology. The survey involved the mapping of broad habitat types within the application site boundary using colour codes alongside a comprehensive species list, categorising flora species in order of abundance under the DAFOR scale. 'Target notes' were made where ecological features of interest were identified.

Badgers

A direct search was conducted looking for signs of badgers and their setts. Any setts encountered were classed as main, annexe, subsidiary or outlier, dependent upon the number of holes and apparent extent of their use. A search was also conducted for any other evidence of badger including faeces or latrines, pathways, scratching posts at the base of trees, snuffle holes, day nests, hair or footprints.

Barn owls

A thorough search for evidence of barn owl was conducted on the 25th February 2022 by Becci Smith a suitably qualified ecologist. The ecologist conducted a thorough search of the trees and hedgerows for feeding remains, feathers, splashing/droppings, pellets, nesting material and the presence of barn owls.

Bats

Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA)

Natural England licensed bat ecologists Becci Smith and Sophie Morris undertook the PRA of the building and trees on site. Timing and weather conditions are provided in the table below:

Survey date	Time of survey	Surveyor(s)	Equipment used	Weather conditions		
25/02/2022	14:00pm	Becci Smith and Sophie Morris	Extendable ladder, high-powered torch, binoculars	Temp:	Okta cloud cover:	Beaufort wind force:
				10°C	2/8	1-2/12

The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Survey Guidelines (Collins, 2016). A thorough search for evidence of bats was undertaken in any internal loft spaces, voids, holes within trees through damage and on any external features of the building and trees notably any sills, walls, floors and flat surfaces. Evidence of roosting bats include:

- Presence of live/dead bats;
- Bat droppings - distinguished from rat/mouse droppings by their crumbly texture;
- Staining from fur around access points; and
- The presence of feeding remains, such as insect wings and casings.

The building/trees were identified as a 'confirmed' bat roost if evidence of roosting bats was recorded. To confirm the species of bat present, a sample of any bat droppings recorded was made and sent to Swift Ecology Ltd for DNA analysis.

Most native bats in the UK are crevice-dwelling species, with bats roosting in remote areas such as between tiles and membrane, behind cladding, at wall tops, in cavities, soffits, behind lead flashing, lifted bark, knot holes, tear outs, and frost frees to name a few examples within buildings and trees. Evidence of these species is often concealed and/or inaccessible due to the remote nature of the roost. Therefore, where no evidence of roosting bats was recorded, an assessment on the availability of potential roosting areas and bat access points around the building, as well as the quality/availability of surrounding bat habitat, was conducted. The building was then assigned a category based on a sliding scale of negligible to high, in accordance with the BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2016):

Bat roosting potential	Description
High potential	A building/tree with one or more potential roosting sites that are highly suitable for use by many bats on a regular basis and for a longer period of time.

Moderate potential	A building/tree with one or more potential roosting features that could be used by bats due to appropriate conditions but are unlikely to support a bat roost of important conservation status (roost type only, not species).
Low potential	The building/tree features one or more potential roosting features that could be used by bats opportunistically. These features do not provide the appropriate conditions to be used on a regular basis by large numbers of roosting bats.
Negligible potential	The features of the building/tree are of negligible value to bats and highly unlikely to be used by roosting bats.

Habitat suitability assessment: Commuting and foraging bats

An assessment of the site was undertaken on the 25th of February 2022 by ecologists Becci Smith and Sophie Morris to evaluate the suitability and quality of the habitats on site for the local bat population. General habitats of suitability for bats include sheltered areas such as woodland rides, treelines/hedgerows, watercourses, valleys and species-rich/tussocky grassland that generally support good assemblages of invertebrates and thus offer ample bat foraging opportunities. Linear features such as treelines/hedgerows and woodland edges also provide good commuting corridors for bats navigating the landscape. The site was assessed on a sliding scale of ‘negligible’ to ‘high’ potential for commuting and foraging bats in accordance with the BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2016).

Dormice

Dormice are small, nocturnal mammals which occupy habitats such as hedgerows, woodland and scrub. The dormouse requires good arboreal connectivity with a good range of food sources such as fruit, nuts, flowers or insects. Plant species such as hazel, oak, bramble and honeysuckle are favoured in particular, as well as hornbeam, blackthorn, sweet chestnut and sycamore supporting dormice within woody connective habitat. The habitats on site and immediately adjacent to the site was assessed for the potential to support dormice.

Great crested newts

Great crested newts occupy both aquatic and terrestrial habitats throughout their life cycle, spending a short period of the year breeding and egg-laying in waterbodies such as ponds, standing water and ditches. Throughout the remainder of the year, newts will spend their time foraging and commuting within terrestrial habitats such as longer grassland, woodland, hedgerow bases and scrub. Newts will hibernate within features such as log piles, tree roots and rubble piles. Great crested newts are known to forage up to 500 metres (m) from their breeding sites.

An aerial assessment was made prior to the site visit to determine if any waterbodies such as ponds were present within 250m of the site. Any accessible waterbodies were assessed under the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) (Oldham et al, 2000, 2008) to determine the suitability of the waterbody to support great crested newts.

Nesting birds

A search for evidence of nesting birds was conducted on the 25th February 2022. Birds will nest in buildings, hedgerows, scattered trees, scrub and planting and forage amongst these habitats.

Reptiles

An assessment was undertaken on the suitability of the habitats on site for supporting reptiles. Reptiles are found in habitats with a varied vegetative structure, offering opportunities for foraging and basking, such as areas of unmanaged grassland with shorter vegetation margins, heathland and woodland. An assessment was also made of potential sites suitable for hibernation such as log, spoil and brash piles, rubble, rockery or tree roots.

Survey limitations

The site visit provides a 'snapshot' of the site and does not take into account seasonal variation. Species and habitats may have been overlooked due to the constraints of the season and time in which the survey was undertaken. A lack of evidence of a species does not confirm its absence from site, rather there was no indication of its presence at the time of survey, with botanical species likely to be restricted to the time of year.

The data within this report should not be seen as comprehensive. Data obtained from the HBIC (HBIC, 2022) data search is unlikely to provide a complete record of habitats and species within the search area. It is therefore possible that a protected species may occur within the vicinity that has not previously been identified within the data search.

Potential evidence of crevice-dwelling bats may have been missed due to the nature and remote location of potential roosting areas within the buildings. However, binoculars were used to identify any potential bat droppings on the exterior features of the buildings, where possible.

Survey data within this report is considered valid for 18 months for planning purposes. If 18 months pass and no works have been undertaken and/or if conditions on-site change such as the condition of the buildings and vegetation, an update site visit with appropriate surveys must be conducted to re-evaluate the potential of the site to support protected/vulnerable species and habitats.

Aerial maps were used to identify ponds within 500m of the site, an additional seven ponds were noted within the estates to the east. Landownership was not identified and as such access was not possible to the seven ponds within 500m of the site due to the ponds being on private property, and HSI's were unable to be conducted on these ponds. As the conversion of the building will not see any impacts upon terrestrial or aquatic habitats this is not considered to be a material consideration.

4. Results

Desktop data search

Internationally, nationally and regionally protected (statutory) sites

MAGIC (MAGIC, 2022) was used to identify any statutory designated sites within 5km of the application site, and these have been identified below.

Site name	Distance from site	Designation	Size (ha)	Site description
Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs	Site within Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	AONB	985.94	A mix of chalkland, downs and valleys make up much of the southern landscape. In the north, is a mix of knolls and ridges, adjoining to clay vales. Cranborne Chase is of great importance for both ecological and historical purposes. Habitats include ancient downland, river meadow and deciduous woodland.
Boulsbury Wood	3km west	SSSI	119.76	Boulsbury Wood sensu lato (consisting of Boulsbury Wood, High Wood, Stone Hill Wood, Martin Wood and Blagdon Hill Wood) is a large varied wood lying astride the high county boundary ridge where Dorset and Hampshire meet. The wood lies across the transition between the acidic deposits of the Reading Beds and the Chalk, which give rise to a complex series of soils ranging from thin chalk, through a deep, rich, calcareous loam, to podsolised soils and dense cappings of flints. The wood is known to support ten different identifiable stand-types (i.e. natural groupings of tree species according to environmental conditions), some of which are known to be rare in Hampshire.
Dorset Heaths	3.4km south	SAC	5711.25	Primary Annex I habitats including Northern Atlantic wet heaths, European dry heaths, depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion and primary Annex II species southern damselfly.
Cranborne Common	3.4km south	SSSI	133.99	The site comprises complex heathland and grassland with notable species being dwarf gorse, bell and Dorset heather, brown beak sedge, sand lizard and smooth snake.
Dorset Heathlands	3.4km south	Ramsar	6674.82	Ramsar criterion include good examples of northern Atlantic wet heaths, 1 nationally rare and 13 nationally scarce wetland plants and 28 nationally rare

				wetland invertebrate species and a high richness and high ecological diversity of wetland habitat types and transactions.
Dorset Heathlands	3.5km south	SPA	8166.97	During the breeding season the SPA regularly supports at least 12.8% of the nightjar population, at least 6.8% of the woodlark breeding population, at least 26.1% of the Dartford warbler breeding population, over winter the area regularly supports 2.7% of the hen harrier population and 1.2% of the Merlin population count.
River Avon	3.8km southeast	SAC	467.58	The site has qualified for SAC status due to the presence of Annex 1 habitat being a water course that support aquatic wild flora. Species present include stream water-crowfoot, river water-crowfoot. Fish species of Annex 2 present include brook lamprey, sea lamprey, Desmoulins's whorl snail, Atlantic salmon and bullhead.
River Avon System	3.8km southeast	SSSI	475.94	A river of both chalk and acid nature which supports densities of Desmoulin's whorl snail, sea lamprey, brook lamprey, Atlantic salmon and bullhead. Has excellent water vegetation diversity.
Breamore Marsh	4.4km northeast	SSSI	14.77	Breamore Marsh comprises a cattle and goose-grazed green; the grassland flora, whilst limited, is of interest in the extent to which its species composition has been derived from its grazing history. The marsh includes shallow pools and connecting waterways which support an exceptionally rich aquatic flora, including the national rarity brown cyperus, common mudwort and pennyroyal.
Toyd Down and Quarry	4.5km northwest	SSSI	6.68	Toyd Down lies at the extreme east of the Dorset Downs on the Hampshire-Wiltshire border. The Site of Special Scientific interest falls into two distinct parts:- (1) A steep west-facing downland slope, grazed by sheep, and an abandoned chalk quarry believed to have been last worked around 1970.
Martin and Tidpit Downs	4.6km northwest	SSSI	367.53	Martin and Tidpit Downs form an extensive tract of chalk downland, chalk heath and scrub at the extreme east of the Dorset Downs on the Hampshire-Wiltshire border. They include a gently undulating plain rising to a high east-west ridge, the crest of which is marked by the Bokerley Ditch, a massive linear prehistoric earthwork. The whole area is rich in archaeological features of Bronze Age and subsequent dates, and these,

				together with the varied topography, soils, and differences in past management, contribute to great habitat variation.
Avon Valley	4.7km southeast	SPA	1351.05	The site supports 1.9% of the British over wintering Bewick's swan population and the site supports 2.2% of the British winter migratory population of Gadwall.
Avon Valley (Bickton to Christchurch)	4.7km southeast	SSSI	1403.77	The river Avon runs through this site creating dykes and rivulets. Notable species include brown trout, cross leaved heath, wintering gadwall, godwit, Bewick's swan. Cetti's warbler, kingfisher, yellow wagtail, sedge warbler, reed warbler, shelduck, and little ringed plover. Barn owl, buzzard and hobby are also known to breed in the valley.
Avon Valley	4.7km southeast	Ramsar	1390.37	Ramsar criterion 1 includes the designation for showing a greater range of habitats than any other chalk river in Britain, including fen, mire, lowland wet grassland and small areas of woodland; Ramsar criterion 2 incorporates the sites ability to support a diverse assemblage of wetland flora and fauna including several nationally-rare species. Qualifying species include Gadwall, northern pintail and black tailed-godwit is all present on site.
Moors River System	5km southwest	SSSI	291.85	Lowland chalk river, improved grassland, swamp, tall-herb fen, fen woodland, wet pastures, neutral grassland and heathland the site supports 32 species of dragonfly fauna.

The site falls within the Wessex Water Avon discharge catchment and a Natural England Solent nitrate budget calculation will need to be provided to address increases in nutrients within the River Avon in addition to phosphorous control and mitigation measures. Further details are provided in Section 5.

No impacts on the other above designated sites are anticipated due to the localised nature of the proposed works and no further action has been recommended in relation to these sites.

Locally designated (non-statutory) sites

HBIC (HBIC, 2022) was consulted to identify any non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the application site and are shown below.

Site name	Distance from site	Designation	Size (ha/m)	Site description
Higher Court Wood	Site is within SINC	SINC	0.12	- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands.
West Park Woods	130m northeast	SINC	0.26	- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands. - Site supports great wood-rush (<i>Luzula sylvatica</i>).
Lower Breach Copse	240m southeast	SINC	0.17	- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands.
Lower Court Wood	400m southeast	SINC	0.29	- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands.
C148 Court Hill, Damerham	440m northwest	Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEI)	100m	Site includes daffodils, moschatel, and goldilocks buttercup.
Damerham Water Meadows	500m west	SINC	0.09	-Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland. - Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent).
Hill Farm Meadow	625m southwest	SINC	0.10	- Agriculturally unimproved grasslands which are not of recent origin.
Lady's Wood	655m north	SINC	0.23	- Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands.
U117 The Common, Damerham	850m southwest	RVEI	200m	Steep sided hedge-topped bank with woodland flora, including bluebells and ferns.

The site is designated as a SINC site and qualifies as a SINC due to the presence of ancient woodland. The presence of both these features, notes the sites ecological importance for wildlife. The SINC site is protected under Policy SP6 of The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy (New Forest District Council, 2020), which states that *'development proposals which adversely affect locally designated sites, priority habitats and species populations, protected species or those identified of importance by national or local biodiversity plans will be refused unless the Authority is satisfied that:*

a) it has been demonstrated that suitable measures for mitigating adverse effects will be provided and maintained in order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity value

b) there are no alternative solutions

c) there are overriding reasons which outweigh the harm '.

In addition, under Section 15 of NPPF, *'Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists'*

The ensure there are no negative impacts upon the irreplaceable habitat on site and to secure the long-term management of the woodland in the SINC site, a woodland management plan will need to be provided to secure the long-term management of the site and secured as part of the planning application along with a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to prevent short term impacts during the conversion works. Details regarding these prescribed documents have been provided in Section 5 of this report.

Protected and vulnerable species of interest

HBIC (HBIC, 2022) was consulted to provide records of any protected, rare and/or vulnerable species within 1km of the application site. These are presented below.

Species	Number of records	Most recent record	Closest record to site
<i>Birds</i>			
Barn owl	4	2019	Within 1km of the site
Common reed bunting	3	2016	965m northwest
Curlew	1	2018	Within 1km of the site
Fieldfare	3	2011	Within 1km of the site
Hawfinch	1	2010	Within 1km of the site
Hen harrier	1	1997	Within 1km of the site
Honey buzzard	1	1996	Within 1km of the site
House sparrow	3	2019	Within 1km of the site
Kingfisher	5	2017	735m west
Lapwing	1	1998	Within 1km of the site
Lesser redpoll	1	2003	Within 1km of the site
Little egret	3	2004	Within 1km of the site
Peregrine	2	2004	Within 1km of the site
Osprey	1	1995	Within 1km of the site
Red kite	2	2017	Within 1km of the site
Redwing	4	2016	965m northwest
Skylark	2	2018	Within 1km of the site
Song thrush	4	2019	625m west
Spotted flycatcher	3	2011	Within 1km of the site
Starling	3	2019	965m northwest
Tree Pipit	1	2005	Within 1km of the site
White stork	1	2003	Within 1km of the site
Woodlark	1	1999	635m southeast
<i>Mammals (including bats)</i>			
Brown long-eared bat	1	2005	760m west
Common pipistrelle bat	3	2017	500m southeast
European water vole	2	2002	695m west
Long-eared sp. bat	1	2009	810m northwest
Myotis sp. bat	1	2017	500m southeast
Pipistrelle sp. bat	5	2013	390m northwest
Polecat	1	2009	85m east (at neighbouring property)
Serotine bat	1	2005	760m west
Soprano pipistrelle bat	1	2017	500m southeast
<i>Rare and notable invertebrates</i>			
August thorn	5	2018	395m southeast
Autumnal rustic	4	2002	395m southeast

Beaded chestnut	7	2015	300m north
Blood-vein	8	2018	300m north
Brindled beauty	5	2018	395m southeast
Broom moth	1	2003	395m southeast
Brown-spot pinion	1	2002	620m southeast
Buff ermine	9	2018	300m north
Centre-barred sallow	4	2017	395m southeast
Cinnabar	9	2018	300m north
Crescent	2	2000	Within 1km of the site
Dark-barred twin-spot carpet	5	2018	395m southeast
Dark brocade	2	2000	Within 1km of the site
Dark spinach	2	2002	300m north
Dot moth	6	2018	300m north
Dusky brocade	2	2010	395m southeast
Dusky thorn	5	2018	300m north
Ear moth	3	2003	300m north
Feathered gothic	1	2000	Within 1km of the site
Galium carpet	1	2001	395m southeast
Garden tiger	3	2018	620m southeast
Ghost moth	6	2018	395m southeast
Green-brindled chestnut	4	2017	300m north
Grey dagger	5	2001	395m southeast
Hedge rustic	2	2000	Within 1km of the site
Hornet robberfly	2	2001	Within 1km of the site
Knot grass	5	2018	395m southeast
Lackey	2	2000	Within 1km of the site
Large nutmeg	1	2002	395m southeast
Large wainscot	1	2002	395m southeast
Light crimson underwing	1	2012	960m southeast
Minor shoulder-knot	4	2003	300m north
Mottled rustic	6	2018	300m north
Mouse moth	5	2017	300m north
Oak hook-tip	4	2018	395m southeast
Oak lutestring	1	2001	395m southeast
Pale eggar	1	2000	Within 1km of the site
Powdered quaker	4	2003	300m north
Pretty chalk carpet	2	2003	395m southeast
Rosy rustic	6	2018	395m southeast
Rustic	6	2018	300m north
Sallow	3	2002	300m north
September thorn	4	2017	395m southeast
Shaded broad-bar	4	2002	395m southeast
Shoulder-striped wainscot	7	2018	300m north
Small emerald	4	2010	890m southeast
Small phoenix	5	2018	300m north
Small square-spot	7	2018	300m north
Spinach	3	2003	300m north
Sprawler	2	2003	395m southeast
White admiral	4	2011	395m southeast
White ermine	10	2018	300m north
<i>Rare and notable plants</i>			
Butcher's-broom	5	2008	On site
Corn spurrey	1	1998	Within 1km of the site

Lesser spearwort	7	1999	625m west
Whorl-grass	2	2004	625m west

The above records will be used to inform the assessment of the site in supporting protected and vulnerable species.

Phase 1 Habitat survey

Habitats within the boundary included mixed broadleaved woodland with woodland rides, replanted woodland, improved grassland, a pond, and log and brush piles. A Phase 1 Habitat map is provided in Appendix 2 and photographs of the site in Appendix 3, and habitat descriptions are provided below:

Mixed broadleaved woodland

The site is pre-dominantly woodland, which is designated at the UK Priority habitat 'Lowland Mixed deciduous woodland'. The site is also designated as a SINC due to ancient semi-natural woodland being present. Woodland rides are present within the southern area of the woodland and to the northern area of the woodland. A list of species that were encountered within the woodland are provided in the table below:

Species	Abundance
Alder	Locally occasional
Ash	Frequent
Bamboo	Locally abundant
Blackthorn	Occasional
Box	Locally abundant
Bracken	Locally occasional
Bramble	Occasional to locally abundant
Butcher's broom	Locally frequent
Cherry sp.	Locally occasional
Cleavers	Locally occasional
Cock's-foot	Locally occasional
Common nettle	Occasional
Creeping bent	Locally dominant to locally frequent
Early hair-grass	Occasional
False brome	Locally occasional
Field maple	Rare
Greater woodrush	Locally frequent
Ground ivy	Locally occasional
Hart's-tongue fern	Rare
Hazel	Frequent to locally abundant
Herb-Robert	Locally frequent
Holley sapling	Occasional
Honeysuckle	Locally frequent
Laurestine	Locally abundant
Leylandii	Rare
Lesser celandine	Locally frequent
Lords-and-ladies	Occasional
Male-fern	Occasional
Oak	Frequent

Pendulous sedge	Occasional
Pignut	Locally frequent to locally abundant
Polypody sp.	Rare
Primrose	Occasional
Privet	Rare
Remote sedge	Occasional to locally abundant
Rhododendron (Schedule 9 invasive species)	Locally frequent
Silver birch	Rare
Snowdrop	Locally frequent
Soft brome	Frequent to locally abundant
Sycamore	Rare
Vetch sp.	
Violet sp.	Locally occasional
Wood avens	Locally frequent
Wood dock	Occasional
Wood meadow-grass	Frequent to locally abundant
Wood speedwell	Locally frequent
Wood spurge	Locally occasional
Woodruff	Frequent
Wood-sedge	Locally frequent
Yorkshire-fog	Locally dominant

Rhododendron (Appendix 2 - Target note 1), a highly invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), was recorded within woodland. It is highly recommended that this species be removed to prevent an offence occurring; it is an offence to allow this species to spread 'in the wild'. Recommendations for its removal are made in Section 5.

Replanted woodland

An area of replanted woodland is present to the south of the improved grassland on site and within the existing mixed broadleaved woodland. A list of species was recorded within the replanted woodland is listed below:

Species	Abundance
Ash	Dominant
Bracken	Occasional
Bramble	Locally abundant
Common nettle	Occasional
Creeping bent	Locally occasional
Creeping buttercup	Locally abundant
Ground ivy	Occasional
Hairy sedge	Locally occasional
Hazel	Occasional
Herb-Robert	Occasional
Ivy	Abundant
Lords-and-ladies	Locally occasional
Male-fern	Occasional
Mistle thrush	Rare
Perennial ryegrass	Locally abundant
Primrose	Locally occasional
Remote sedge	Frequent

Soft brome	Frequent
Soft rush	Occasional
Sycamore	Occasional
Wood speedwell	Occasional
Wood meadow-grass	Locally abundant

Poor semi-improved grassland

An area of poor semi-improved neutral grassland is present in the centre of the site. The grassland is well managed and mown regularly, with longer areas at the margins near the woodland. A list of species encountered within the grassland are provided in a list below:

Species	Abundance
Bramble	Locally occasional
Cock's-foot	Locally frequent
Common nettle	Locally occasional
Common sorrel	Locally occasional
Creeping bent	Locally abundant
Creeping buttercup	Locally frequent to occasional
Dandelion	Locally occasional
Greater plantain	Rare
Hairy brome	Locally occasional
Ivy	Locally occasional
Lesser celandine	Locally occasional
Lesser trefoil	Rare
Lords-and-ladies	Locally occasional
Marsh thistle	Occasional
Pendulous sedge	Locally occasional
Perennial ryegrass	Occasional
Red fescue	Locally occasional
Soft rush	Locally abundant
Star sedge	Locally frequent
Wood dock	Frequent
Yorkshire-fog	Dominant

Pond

A pond that measures approximately 9m by 7m is located in the woodland to the south of the site.

Brash piles

Brash piles (Appendix 2- Target note 2) are present within the grassland and woodland on site. The piles are newly formed from recent gardening works.

Log piles

Log piles (Appendix 2 -Target note 3) are present within the grassland and woodland on site. The piles are newly formed from recent gardening works due to the recent storms.

Badgers

An active outlier sett is present in the west of the site, facing into a bank of the arable field to the northwest, evidence of fresh excavations were noted and a second disused outlier sett was noted approximately 10m south of the active sett. The disused sett also led into a bank within the woodland however this had collapsed and was partially filled with soil. Along with the sett, a latrine was noted in the woodland near the northern boundary line and snuffle marks were recorded across the site within the woodland. Mammal tracks were also noted across the site, and as there is a badger sett on site these were assessed as likely to belong to badger. A map showing the badger evidence is provided in Appendix 2. No works will be undertaken within 30m of the badger sett and therefore no further recommendations have been made in regard to badgers.

Barn owl

Evidence of barn owls was identified within the barn in the form of pellets scattered across the mezzanine floor. There was no clear access into the building and so it has been assumed, through historical repair works this species has subsequently been excluded from using the building and as such the pellets were noted to be aged and disintegrating. Photographs of the evidence is provided in Appendix 3 and a map has been provided in Appendix 4 while a summary has been presented below:

- More than 100 pellets were recorded scattered down the middle of the mezzanine floor.
- 50 pellets were recorded in a pile to the north section of the floor.

As evidence of barn owls was recorded within the barn a suitable mitigation and compensation strategy will be required to allow for the conversion of the barn to living accommodation.

Bats – Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA)

Building description

Assessments of the building was undertaken to firstly identify if any evidence of bats was present, and secondly, to identify the building's 'potential' to support roosting bats. The building location is indicated in Appendix 2 and photographs of the building is provided in Appendix 3, whilst building descriptions are provided in the table below:

Building name	Description
Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The barn is of cinderblock construction.▪ The roof is pitched and constructed of cement fibre corrugated sheeting.▪ Wooden window and door frames are present.▪ Wooden fascia is present.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internally, no enclosed roof voids are present. - The roof structure is formed with wood rafters and a double ridge beam. - A mezzanine floor is present to the southeast area of the barn.
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Preliminary Roost Appraisal (PRA) results

A thorough search was undertaken of the internal area and external elevations of the barn. Despite a thorough inspection, no evidence of bats was recorded during the survey in the building on site.

Assessment of bat roosting potential and potential bat access points

An inspection of the building revealed the building features were negligible for bats; the building was deemed to hold ‘negligible potential’ for roosting bats due to a lack of suitable roosting provisions (Collins, 2016). Therefore, roosting bats are not considered to be impacted by the proposed development. Further information is provided in Section 5 regarding the validity of this report.

Roosting bats and trees

Several trees within the woodland on site have Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) and hold ‘high potential’ for roosting bats. However, no tree works are planned for the proposed plans of the conversion of the barn to living accommodation. No further action is recommended in relation to roosting bats and trees.

Commuting and foraging bats

The site as a whole supports a variety of habitats including grassland, woodland and a pond. The variety of habitats provides excellent habitats for invertebrates, which in turn provides ample foraging opportunities for bats, and the presence of linear features are suitable as commuting corridors for bats navigating the landscape. As the site is completely rural and unlit this increases the likelihood of bats utilising the site.

The converted barn may adversely impact on local bats, through illumination of the tree canopies and surrounding habitats which could be used from foraging and commuting. Bats are highly light-sensitive and will actively avoid lit areas, and an increase in lighting levels upon the trees and surrounding habitats will actively deter bats from using the site. As the building currently has electricity and lighting can occur within the building at all times, as the current owners access the site when they wish, it is assumed that the site is already lit and currently lighting levels from within the building would remain the same/similar. As part of the development, no new external lighting will be installed as part of the conversion and information regarding internal lighting has been provided in Section 5.

Dormice

The woodland on site was assessed for its potential to support dormice. This features native species such as oak, hazel and honeysuckle which are considered to be suitable habitat for dormice. The woodland connects to hedgerows and treelines leading to more woodland offsite, making the landscape as a whole very desirable to dormice.

Although the data search did not reveal any records of dormice within the vicinity this is likely to be due to a lack of survey effort rather than absence. An additional search was undertaken for any dormouse European Protected Species (EPS) licences within the area; the nearest EPS licence is located approximately 5km southeast of the site and at least eight licence applications are present within a 15km radius. The presence of these licenses within the wider landscape illustrates that dormouse are likely present within the site woodland however where plans include change of use of the barn and conversion of the barn to living accommodation, no direct or indirect impacts are anticipated upon dormice.

Great crested newts

The terrestrial habitats on site were considered to provide good habitats for great crested newt, including the woodland, the woodland rides and the margins of the improved grassland. The site also supports many brash and log piles which create suitable refugia and places to shelter.

One pond is located within the woodland to the south of the site and is surrounded by woodland vegetation, and another was located within the neighbouring property of Yafflewood. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment was undertaken on the ponds and the results have been provided below:

Waterbody ref:	Woodpecker wood (P1)	Yafflewood (P2)
SI1 – Location	1	1
SI2 – Pond area	0.1	0.8
SI3 – Pond drying	1	0.9
SI4 – Water quality	1	0.67
SI4 – Shade	0.3	1
SI6 – Fowl	1	0.67
SI7 – Fish	1	0.67
SI8 – Ponds	1	1
SI9 – Terrestrial habitat	1	1
SI10 – Macrophytes	0.5	0.5
HSI SCORE =	0.66	0.8

P1 scored 'average' and P2 scored 'excellent' for GCN. There are no known records of great crested newts within the area. However, a pond 2.5km east of the site was surveyed

in 2017 by a GCN class licence holder and GCN were present (MAGIC, 2022). A total of seven other ponds were identified within the locale (within 500m of the site boundary) however these are mostly noted to be in an estate to the east, with the landowners details unknown. This includes, ponds 272m and 470m north, 335m, 480 and 470m northeast and 215m east, with one pond identified 441m south of the site.

As a pond is present in the south of the site and within the neighbouring property, there is the potential for this species to be present within the terrestrial habitats on site however where the impacts are restricted to the building, it is unlikely impacts upon this species will occur.

Nesting birds

The woodland on site hold potential for nesting birds. However, as the works are restricted to the building, it is unlikely impacts upon this species will occur.

Reptiles

The terrestrial habitats on site were considered to provide good habitats for reptiles such as slow worms and grass snake. Habitats which were noted to be suitable for reptiles include the woodland, woodland rides, and the grassland margins. The site also supports brash and log piles which create suitable refugia and places to shelter and the pond nearby is likely to be utilised by grass snake. Common reptiles are likely present within the site, however where the impacts are restricted to the building conversion, it is unlikely reptiles will be impacted upon during the works.

5. Ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy

River Avon Catchment nutrient increases

The site falls within the Wessex Water Avon discharge catchment and a Natural England Solent nitrate budget calculation will need to be provided to address increases in nutrients within the River Avon in addition to phosphorous control and mitigation measures. These can be presented as a package elsewhere or once a calculation has been undertaken, and a solution determined these can be present within this Ecological Assessment.

Higher Court Wood SINC and ancient woodland

The site is designated as a SINC, due to the presence of known ancient woodland, ancient woodland is identified as an irreplaceable habitat under NPPF and the SINC site is protected under Policy SP6 of The New Forest District Council Local Plan Part 1: Planning Strategy (New Forest District Council, 2020), which states that *'development proposals which adversely affect locally designated sites, priority habitats and species populations, protected species or those identified of importance by national or local biodiversity plans will be refused unless the Authority is satisfied that:*

- a) it has been demonstrated that suitable measures for mitigating adverse effects will be provided and maintained in order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity value*
- b) there are no alternative solutions*
- c) there are overriding reasons which outweigh the harm '.*

To ensure the ancient woodland on site, and the SINC site are protected throughout the conversion of the barn to living accommodation a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will be required prior to start of development. The CEMP would cover potential impacts upon the woodland such as:

- Noise disturbance, a normal working day will be implemented which will ensure no nocturnal animals are disturbed.
- Light spill, the use of artificial lighting will not be allowed within the site which could result in the exclusion of nocturnal animals from the site.
- Pollution spillage, avoidance measures to ensure no runoff/spillages enter the broad-leaved woodland habitat will include details regarding the storage of the machinery/chemicals, the installation of a buffer which the machinery cannot enter and provisions to detail the refuelling and use of fuels on site.
- Dust suppression will be implemented to ensure the dust does not result in a lack of photosynthesis and result in diseased/dying trees.

To ensure the long-term health of the woodland was secured, as part of the planning application, a woodland management plan would be required to secure the woodland retention and health. The woodland is designated as Hampshire Ecological Networks (Core Non-Statutory) and the network must be retained and protected in the long-term. The condition of the woodland is generally considered to be good, however as there is the presence of rhododendron (Schedule 9 invasive) on site, in the southeast of the site, the removal of this plant would benefit the woodland greatly.

The south western section comprises predominantly replanted woodland which is dominated by the same age ash growth. The trees are planted closely together, all appear to be the same size/age and has very little structure. This area in particular could benefit from the thinning of the overplanted ash trees and the creation of some diversity in species, structure and ecological benefit.

The primary aim of the woodland management plan would be to seek no loss of woodland on site so as to comply with NPPF, whereby ancient woodland (an irreplaceable habitat) would not be lost and secondary aims would be to retain the current quality, improving where possible the quality of the woodland.

The vision would be of a well-structured and biodiverse woodland to sustain its long-term future, these aims should be discussed with the land owner, the Wildlife Trust who designated the SINC and also the council to ensure the correct management objectives are achieved. A proposed list of management practices and aims has been provided below:

- To ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that rhododendron in the woodland is removed by a licensed contractor and managed in the long-term to prevent re-establishment.
- To increase structural diversity of the woodland, with a wider age-range of trees and coppice, a well-developed shrub layer and ground flora.
- To ensure a diversity of habitats throughout the woodland by retaining standing and fallen dead wood (where practically safe and possible).
- To increase the number and diversity of native deciduous species (where soil conditions allow) within the woodland through planting of a range of native specimens sourced from British-grown stock.
- To prevent an increase in light spill onto the woodland habitats through a combination of careful design and placement of luminaires and vegetation screening (if needed).

- To support the local bat and bird populations through provision of a range of bat and bird boxes within the woodland.

A management plan for the woodland must be conditioned as part of the planning consent and production of a management plan must be produced prior to occupation to secure the retention/protection of the woodland.

The woodland management and enhancement works will be implemented over a 30 year period from the date the site is operational and these works will be undertaken by a suitably experienced and qualified person.

Invasive species

Rhododendron was recorded on site and is listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). It is an offence under the Act to allow this species to spread 'in the wild'; this species is an aggressive colonizer that can outcompete local biodiversity if left unmanaged. It is recommended that this species is removed from site by one of the following methods:

- **Herbicides:** The upper foliage of the plants should be cut back to stump level and holes drilled into the stems. A suitable herbicide may then be applied to the 'drilled wells' in the cut stumps (may require multiple applications) with all arisings being cut, burned, chipped or mulched.
- **Manual cutting and digging:** Top woody growth is manually removed, and the root system dug out. The resulting cut woody material and stumps can be removed to a safe area for burning or chipped on site.

From either of the above methods, all foliage should be burnt on site as soon as possible to reduce the likelihood of germination. Freshly cut material is difficult to ignite and benefits from being allowed to dry first.

Barn owls

Barn owls are known to have historically roosted within the barn. Barn owl pellets were noted within the building predominantly on the mezzanine floor to the southwest of the barn. Due to the presence of this protected species the following mitigation will be required to ensure no harm comes to barn owls using the site:

- Works should be undertaken outside of the nesting period which is noted to run between 1st March and 31st August. Where works are undertaken between 1st September and 28th February.
- Prior to works a suitable experienced and licensed ecologist will undertake a pre-works check for the presence of barn owls. Should barn owls be nesting then no works can take place until the chicks have fledged.

- Should barn owls not be nesting within the barn then works can commence to make the building unsuitable for barn owls.
- One replacement barn owl box will be erected within the roof space of the newly converted dwelling while a second barn owl box will be installed within a mature tree within the grounds at the site as a temporary measure.
- An illustrative plan showing the location of these has been provided within Appendix 5. The barn owl box placed within the roof void requires an area of approximately 1m cubed plus an access point at least 12cm in width by 25cm in height. The access point should face away from glazed elevations and face into open fields, this maximises the return occupation rate and minimises disturbance from humans.
- No lighting will be allowed within three metres of either of the barn owl boxes.
- Further nesting advice can be sought from either <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox/barn-owl-nestboxes-building-projects/> or <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox/barn-owl-nestboxes/>.

Roosting bats

The PRA of the building and trees were undertaken, and the building was identified to hold ‘negligible potential’ for roosting bats due to a lack of suitable bat roosting provisions. Several trees were noted to be suitable for roosting bats due to the presence of PRFs, however no works are expected on the trees. Therefore, roosting bats are not considered to be impacted as part of the proposed works and therefore no further action is recommended in relation to the proposed conversion of the barn.

It should be noted that the PRA provides a ‘snapshot’ of conditions at the time of survey and does not account for seasonal changes. It is considered possible for bat species to ingress at any point in the future, therefore it is recommended that if in three years works have not begun a further PRA is undertaken to assess whether the conditions have altered.

In the unlikely event bat(s) are encountered at any stage, work will cease and Natural England or a suitably qualified bat ecologist will be sought for advice. The nature of the advice will concern allowing the bat(s) to leave on their own accord or waiting for a licensed person to remove the bat(s). **All building contractors/roofers are explicitly forbidden from handling bats or interfering with bats in any way.**

Commuting and foraging bats

The site holds potential for commuting and foraging bats to be present due to the presence of ancient woodland on site. In line with the current national guidance (BCT & ILP, 2018) no external lighting will be installed due to the site being in a rural location and

ancient woodland being present on site. This is in line with NPPF which does not allow for the loss of irreplaceable habitats, where impacts are identified upon this irreplaceable habitats, suitable avoidance measures should be undertaken in the first instance. Lighting will be monitored throughout the construction in the CEMP above and upon completion, through the use of a lighting strategy.

Site lighting and night-time working:

- No night-time working will be permitted and this is due to the disturbance of temporary site lighting on commuting and foraging bats; any light spill will have a detrimental impact on bats, in particular light-sensitive species, which may deter bats from foraging on site and utilizing the corridor as a commuting route. Therefore, **working hours will only be permitted between 08:00am and 18:00pm**, to ensure site lighting does not prevent bats from accessing their foraging grounds.
- In addition, no overnight lighting will be permitted (e.g. security lighting) for the above reasons.

Permanent site lighting restrictions –amenity and personal security lighting:

Permanent internal lighting:

As the building is set within the woodland, there will not be any external lighting installed as part of the development. A final lighting design will need to be illustrated through the use of a contour lux lighting plan to illustrate the light spill will not encroach into the woodland and the following strategy for amenity lighting will be followed:

1. Any new lighting within each new unit will comprise LED halogen lighting only; all new lighting will be recessed down lights installed into the ceilings, of a low wattage and installed at the furthest point away from the windows internally where practically possible (no pendant lighting will be used).
2. The windows and doors of new units will feature a 20% factory tint to reduce internal light spill onto the bat corridor and bat foraging habitats at either end of the site.

Ecological enhancements

To ensure the proposed development is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy, the following ecological enhancements will be included as part of the development (see Appendix 6 for locations, specifications and designs, nest boxes and bat boxes may be purchased from websites such as www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk):

- A total of two bee bricks for solitary bees will be installed within the barn. The bricks are designed to accommodate solitary bees (non-aggressive/non-swarming types).
- One 'Schwegler Type 25 Nest Box' (or similar, integrated nest box) will be installed at eaves level on the western elevation of the barn. The box will benefit species such as swifts (and other non-target species such as sparrows) and will be installed as close to the eaves level as possible. The box is designed to be integrated into the masonry of the buildings and can be faced with a bespoke render (provided the entrance holes are left unobstructed), leaving a more inconspicuous finish whilst also being built in and secure to ensure health and safety.
- Two 'wooden cladding access gaps' for crevice dwelling bats will be built into the southern gable end which will be clad in wood. Each gap will measure approximately 40mm x 25mm and will be achieved by cutting a notch out of a board. The bat access gaps are integrated and provide an inconspicuous finish, once installed the access gap is completely self-contained and maintenance free. **Any lining used behind the cladding must be bituminous 1F felt as breathable membranes kill bats.**
- One new fruit tree will be planted on site which will support local birds and foraging for bats. The tree will comprise a fruit such as an apple, pear, cherry or plum.
- Any new landscaping will comprise a healthy mixture of native British-grown species such as hawthorn; blackthorn; field maple; privet; dogwood; rowan; and spindle. This will encourage species diversity and long-term resilience, providing good foraging opportunities for bats, birds and hedgehogs.
- Any new fencing proposed as part of the scheme will be 'hedgehog-friendly'. Gravel boards/holes will be installed every 5m of any new fencing and will measure a minimum of 13cm x 13cm.

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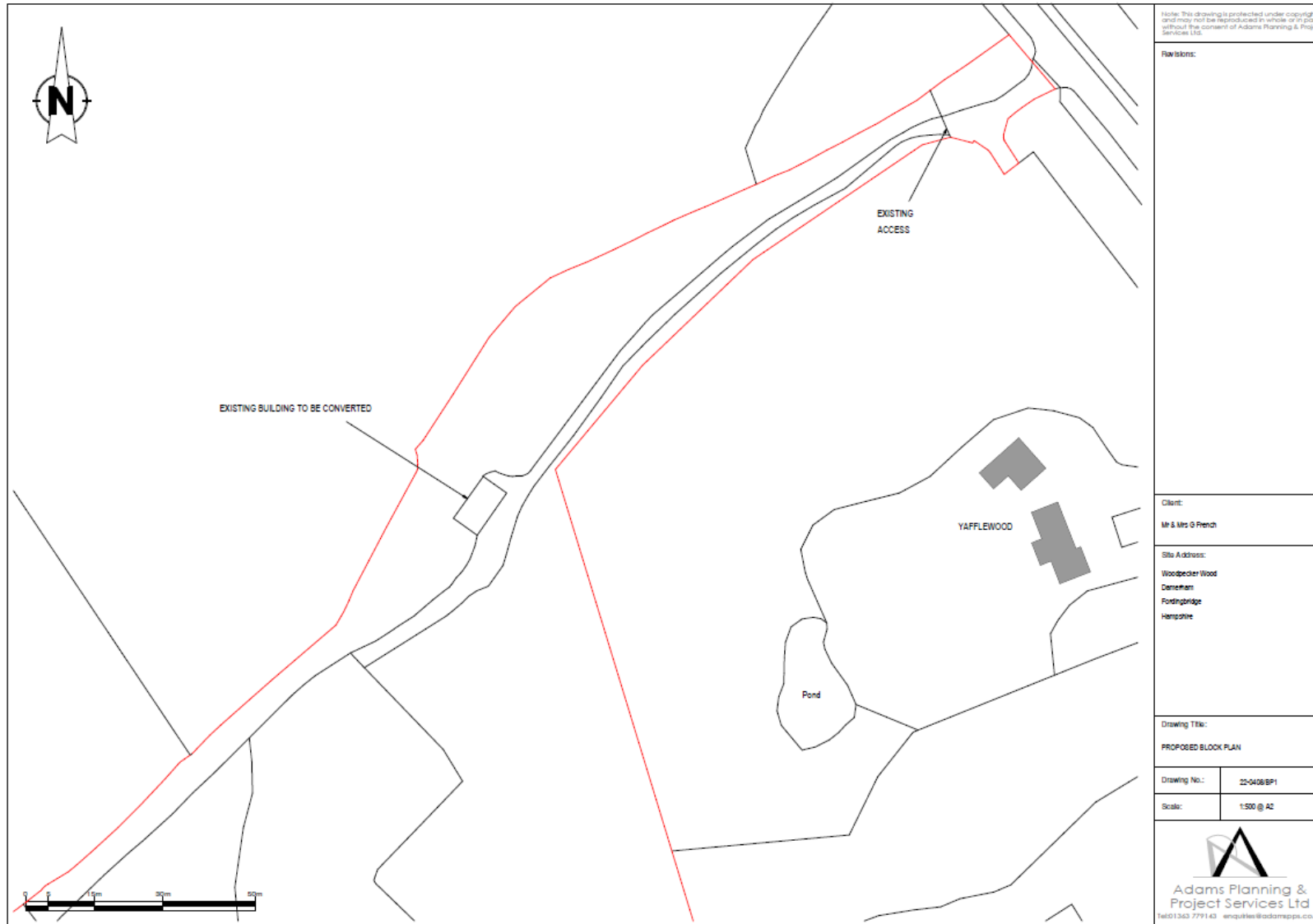
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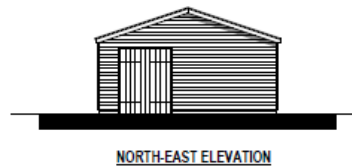
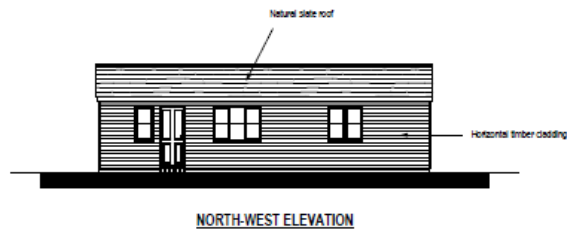
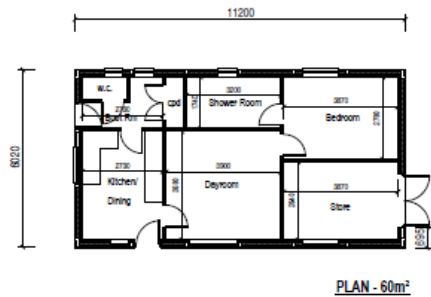
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Appendix 1: Proposed site plan





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Revisions:

Client:
Mr & Mrs G French

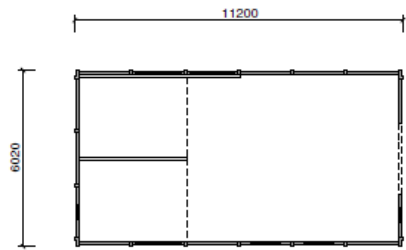
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Woodpecker Wood
Denmeads
Fordingbridge
Hampshire

Drawing Title:
PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

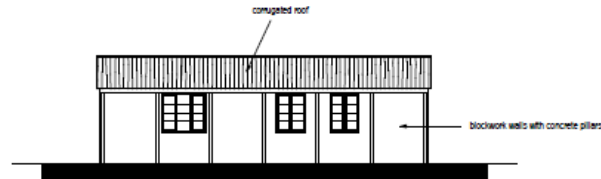
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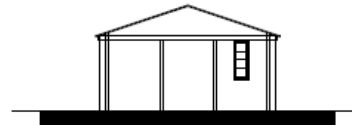
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Project Services Ltd
tel:01302 779143 enquiries@adamppsa.co.uk



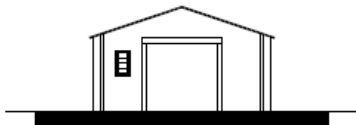
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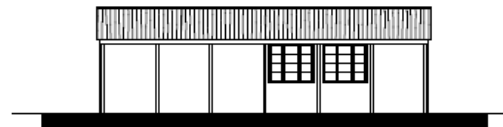
NORTH-WEST ELEVATION



NORTH-EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION



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Revisions:

Client:

Mr & Mrs G French

Site Address:

Woodpecker Wood
Deneham
Fordingbridge
Hampshire

Drawing Title:

EXISTING PLANS AND ELEVATIONS

Drawing No.:

22-0408/E1

Scale:

1:500 @ A2















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Appendix 2: Phase 1 Habitat map



Phase 1 Habitat map key

Habitat code	Description
	Poor semi-improved grassland
	Mixed broadleaved woodland
	Replanted woodland
	Barn
	Pond
	Badger sett
	Snuffle hole
	Latrine
	Mammal track
	Target note
	Fencing/gate
	Application site boundary

Target Note References

Target Note Reference	Description
T1	Rhododendron (Schedule 9 invasive species)
T2	Brash pile
T3	Log pile

Appendix 3: Photographs



Photo 1: Woodland ride to the north (driveway).



Photo 2: North elevation of barn.



Photo 3: East and south elevations of barn.



Photo 4: Barn owl pellets in the barn.



Photo 5: Poor semi-improved grassland.



Photo 6: Brush and log piles.



Photo 7: Mixed broad-leaved woodland.



Photo 8: Replanted woodland.



Photo 9: Under storey of woodland.



Photo 10: Pond 1.



Photo 11: Rhododendron.



Photo 12: Active badger sett at the northwest of site.



Photo 13: Badger latrine.

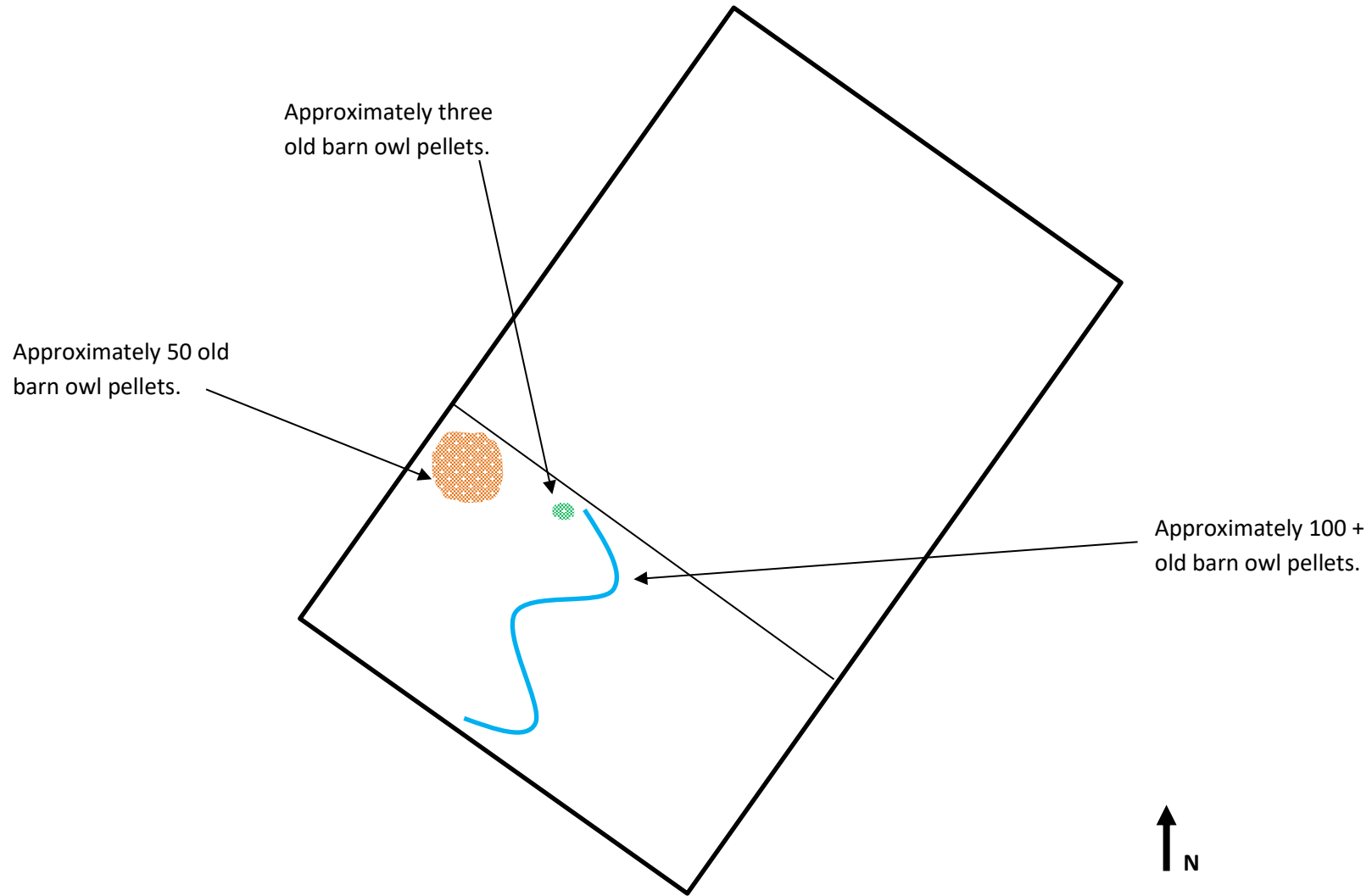


Photo 14: Woodland ride to the south within the replanted woodland.



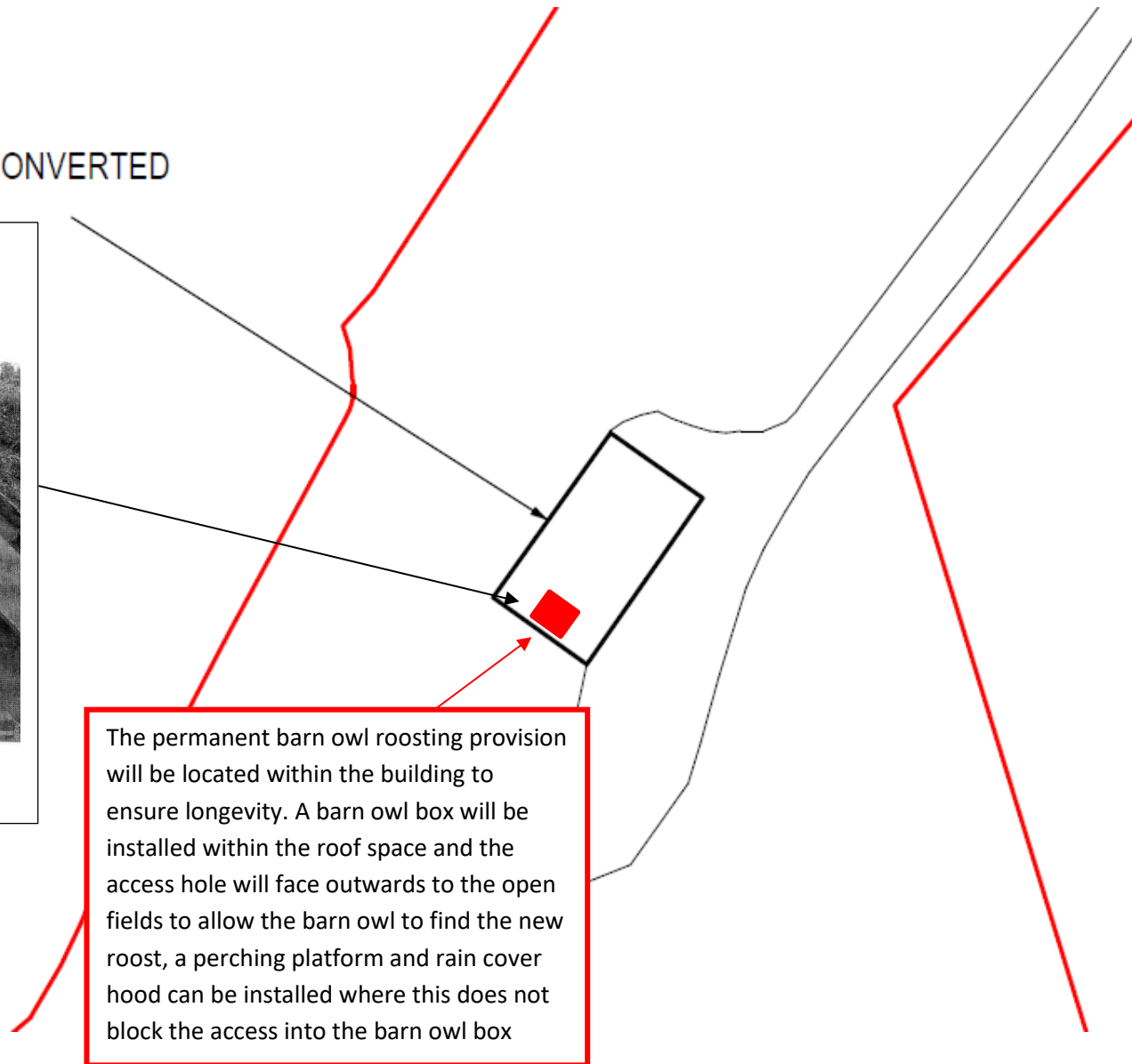
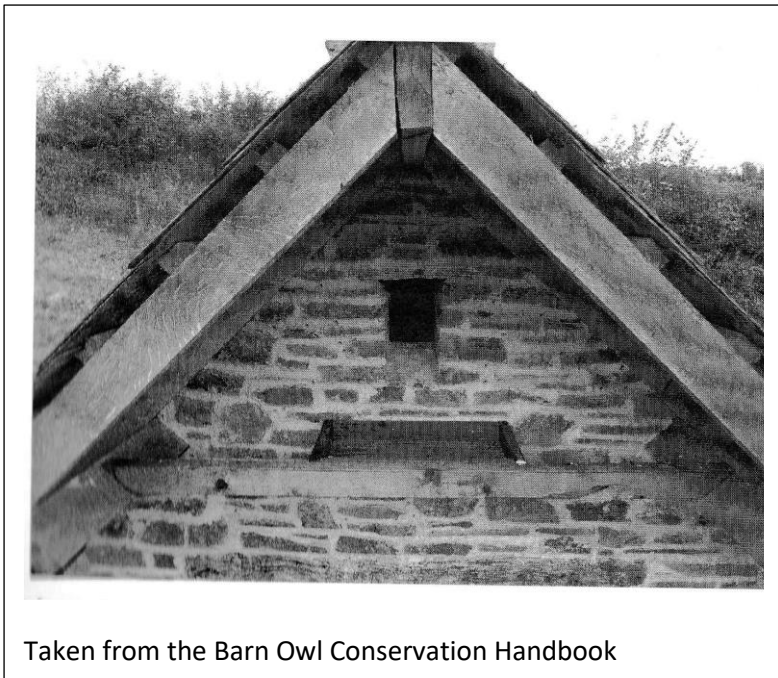
Photo 15: Pond 2 within neighboring property 'Yafflewood'.

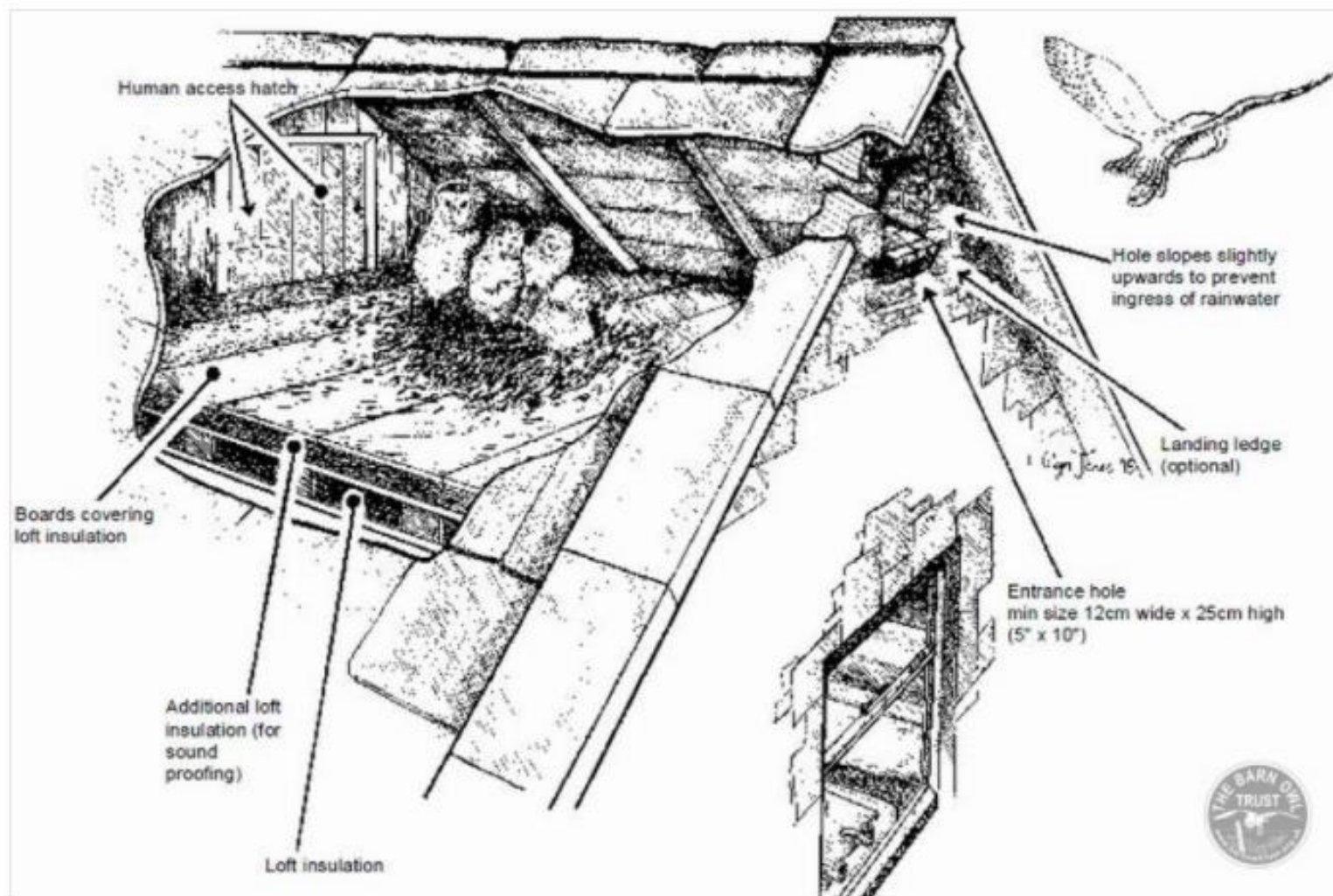
Appendix 4: Barn owl evidence



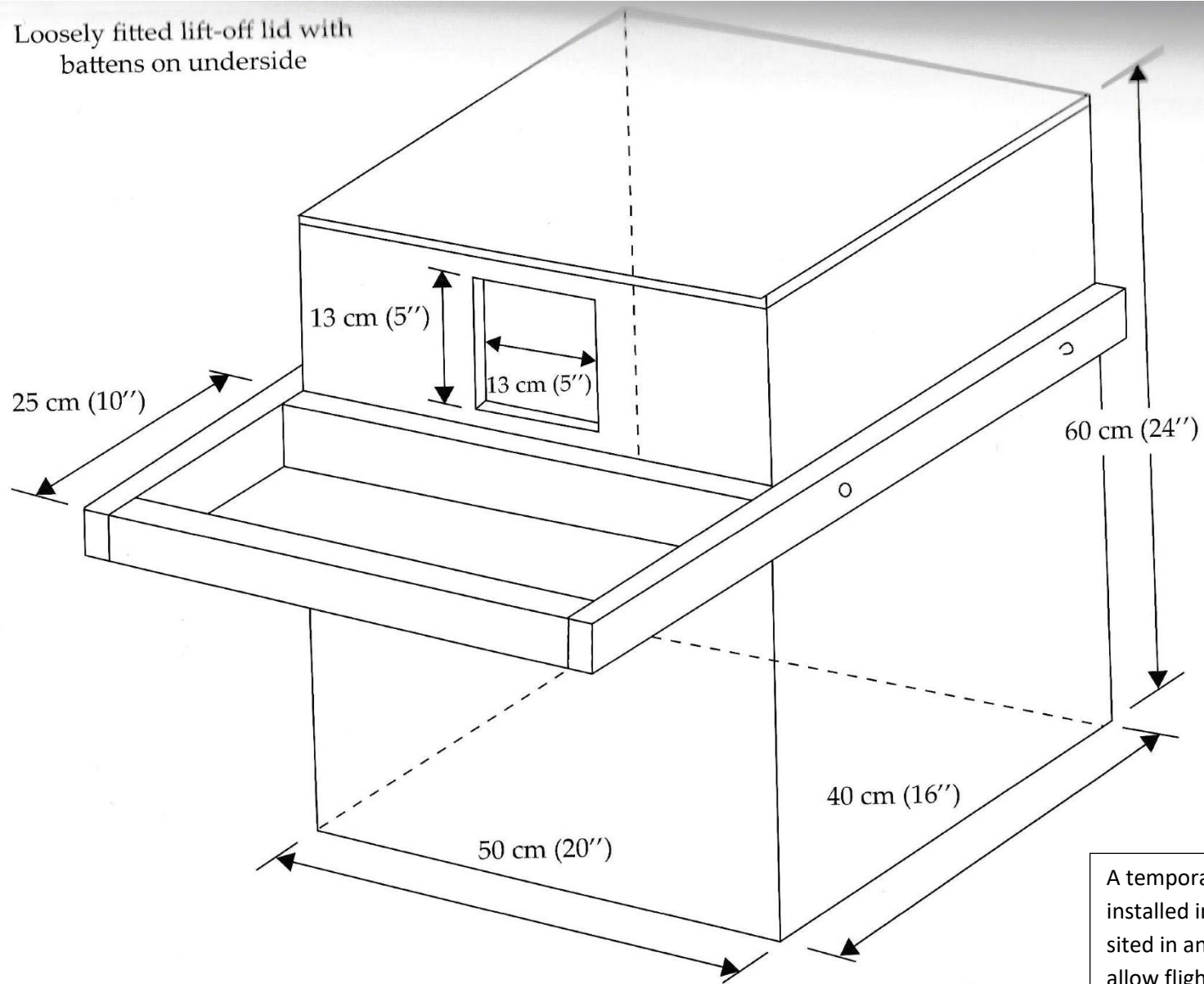
Appendix 5: Barn owl mitigation and compensation

EXISTING BUILDING TO BE CONVERTED





Loosely fitted lift-off lid with
battens on underside



A temporary barn owl box will be installed in a tree on site. This will be sited in an area free from clutter to allow flight in and out of the box and where possible resting upon a horizontal branch to support the base and strapped to the trunk.

Appendix 6: Ecological enhancements

A total of two bee bricks for solitary bees will be built into the southern facing wall between 0.25-0.5m from ground level.



One 'Schwegler Type 25 Nest Box' (or similar, integrated nest box) will be installed at eaves level on the western elevation of the barn.



Two access gaps will be made in the horizontal wooden cladding to allow bats to roost in the crevice between the wooden cladding and the wall behind.

