
Preliminary Ecological Assessment

Farmside, Shotley, Ipswich, IP9 1EY.

November 2021



Project: Farmside, Shotley, Ipswich, IP9 1EY.

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1.0 Non-technical summary

1.1 To understand the ecology, an appraisal has outlined the likely impacts and opportunities for mitigation, compensation, and enhancement.

1.2 A desktop search for designated sites and habitats was undertaken using the Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website and Promap. In addition, an extended Phase I Habitat Survey of the land and the likely presence of protected species.

1.3 The site itself is not designated, and the habitats found on-site are common and widespread throughout the UK and are of site value only.

2.0 Introduction

Purpose of the report

2.1 The survey's purpose was to assess potential ecological features, including the likely presence of rare or protected habitats and species and the zone of influence concerning the project. The key objectives are:

- Identify the potential ecological constraints associated with the project;
- Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required;
- Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA); and,
- Identify the opportunities offered by the project to deliver ecological enhancement.

2.2 As advised by the British Standard BS 42020:2013,¹ an appraisal by a suitably qualified professional ecologist is undertaken to ensure a rigorous and thorough independent review. The assessment and report have followed the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Guidelines,² which is proportionate to the scale of the project.

2.3 The preliminary ecological appraisal outlines likely impact and opportunities for mitigation, compensation and enhancement. The assessment also considers whether consultation with statutory bodies is necessary and whether consent or licences are required.

¹ Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, BS 42020:2013.

² CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition, and CIEEM (2017) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

2.4 The preliminary ecological report also determines whether other information is required, such as an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). An EclA is a more detailed process of identifying, quantifying and evaluating the potential impact on species, habitats and ecosystems for submission with a planning application. The impact considers impacts within the development site, the surrounding locality, and appropriate regional and national ecological resources. An EclA is usually submitted with a planning application unless the planning authority agrees that a preliminary ecological appraisal is sufficient.

Qualifications and Competence of the Author

2.5 The author has over 25 years of conservation experience. Founder of a new conservation charity and previously worked as Head of Conservation for a Wildlife Trust, Director of Studies for the Field Studies Council and Course Director and Lecturer for the University of Essex and Cambridge.

2.6 The author has been recognised by nationally respected organisations and has been awarded various fellowships for his '*outstanding or significant contribution*' towards these disciplines, including conservation and biodiversity for the delivery of landscape-scale conservation projects.

2.7 Currently on the external advisory board for the University of Essex and University of Southampton, representing Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management judging ecological projects and as an ecological expert for the Southwood Foundation. Founder of a new conservation charity.

3.0 Scope of works

3.1 The UK Government and devolved administrations have placed regulations on Local Planning Authorities to take the lead in responding to biodiversity losses by adopting clear environmental and planning policy requirements that encourage developers to take account of biodiversity impacts.

Planning policy and legislation

3.2 National policy guidance is by the National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.³ The policy includes a requirement for local authorities to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide a

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021

net gain in biodiversity when deciding planning applications. In addition, planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined following the development plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise.

4.0 Methodology

Desk Study

4.1 A search for designated sites and habitats was undertaken using the Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.gov.uk) and Promap. The data collated will inform the impacts of the proposed works, ensuring that suitable mitigation and protection measures are considered.

4.2 A desktop study search was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites. In addition, internet-based aerial mapping services were used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features into the broader landscape.

4.3 No biological records were requested at this stage. Instead, a search on Natural England's magic website for any European Protected Species licence that has been granted. These licences allow the licence holder to safeguard European Protected Species from adverse impacts associated with the development and other potentially damaging activity.

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

4.4 An evaluation of the habitats within the site and, where possible, of the immediate surrounding environs. The methodology followed the standard survey criteria set out in the JNCC Survey Handbook⁴ and an assessment of the site to support protected species.

Protected Species

4.5 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site, based on the habitat suitability and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a complete and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time of the study. Additional surveys may be

⁴ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: a technique for environmental audit.

recommended if, based on this assessment, it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

Habitat Suitability for Badger (*Meles meles*)

4.6 Badger setts are excavated in woodland, scrub, hedgerows, gardens and beneath buildings and embankments. Badgers live in groups between two and twenty, feeding mainly on earthworms; however, they also consume insects, carrion, fungi and small mammals. When fruit is taken in the autumn, the seeds may be seen in the dung deposited in latrines, one of the characteristic field signs of this species.

4.7 A Badger assessment was conducted to evaluate the level of badger activity on-site and locate any badger setts within the site boundary and, if possible, within a 30m radius. The evaluation of badger activity was based on the methodology developed for the National Survey of Badgers⁵ and includes searching for badger field signs such as setts, badger pathways, tracks, dung piles with latrines, badger hairs and feeding signs such as snuffle holes:

- Setts: several sett types may be present within a social group territory, ranging from a single hole to numerous interconnecting tunnels. Particular attention to areas where the vegetation and/or the topography offered suitable sett sites such as embankments and wooded areas. Setts can be main, annexe, subsidiary and outlier.
- Latrine sites: badgers characteristically deposit dung in pits located along the boundaries and within the social group territory. These sites serve as means of inter- and intra-group communication.
- Paths and runs: well-used routes between setts and/or foraging areas. Generations of badgers often use them.
- Snuffle holes: areas of disturbed vegetation often formed by badgers foraging for ground-dwelling invertebrates such as earthworms and larvae and the underground storage organs of plants.
- Hair: often found among spoil and bedding outside entrances to setts or snagged on fences along with well-used runs.

⁵ Cresswell, P., Harris, S., & Jeffries, D.J., (1990). The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the Badger in Britain. Nature Conservancy Council.

- Footprints: these are easily distinguishable from other large mammal species. Often found along paths and runs or in spoil outside sett entrances.

Habitat Suitability for Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

4.8 The Hazel Dormouse is a specialist feeder needing a habitat that can provide high protein food ranging from pollen and nectar to insects and nuts. Such food is only seasonally available, leading to a Dormouse strategy of hibernation. The Dormouse favours deciduous woodland with secondary growth and scrub, especially edible seeds like hazel and beech.⁶ Frequent in the coppice, sometimes in species-rich hedgerows spending most of its time above ground. In Essex, the Dormouse occur where Oak and Hazel abound and sufficient woodland or overgrown hedgerow are present to protect it.⁷ The main problem with Dormouse tends to be associated with a lack of woodland management leading to uniform structure with little re-growth and understorey.

4.9 A Dormouse assessment was to evaluate the level of activity on-site. The hedgerows were assessed for their potential to support dormice. This involved evaluating potential food species, diversity, and the structure, form, and management of features for Dormice. Visual searches for nests and opened nuts were undertaken. Habitat connectivity was assessed from desk-based resources.

Habitat suitability for Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibious*)

4.10 Water Voles are usually found on the margins of slow-flowing rivers, streams, ditches and water bodies and spend most of their time foraging through vegetation. They leave a vole-sized length of cuttings piled up wherever they feed, and these can provide distinctive signs of their presence. They favour steep banks, into which they burrow with their teeth, but they can also live in open reedbeds by weaving football-sized nests into stems above the water-line. In addition, they burrow into tussocks of aquatic plants along exceptionally shallow margins and are surprisingly tolerant of polluted water.

Habitat suitability for Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

4.11 Otters have been part of the British fossil record for half a million years. Of the thirteen species in the world, the Eurasian Otter is the only one native to Britain. Otters are generally

⁶ The Handbook of British Mammals.

⁷ Mammals of Essex.

nocturnal, and the majority of their prey are fish and shellfish. They hold large territories, typically covering many kilometres, with male territories overlapping two or three females.

4.12 Activity of Otters is found by searching the stream banks for evidence of spraints, tracks, feeding remains, holts and couches.

Habitat suitability for Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

4.13 Barn Owls are found in rural Britain where rough grassland in fields, field margins, ditches, dykes and riverbanks are available for foraging. They generally select nest and roost sites free from excessive human disturbance; most commonly those associated with agricultural buildings and mature trees which stand alone in fields or those in a hedgerow or along the woodland edge with trunks of a sufficient girth:

- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*): 0.5 m diameter or more (>80 years old),
- Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*): 0.75 m diameter or more (>150 years); and,
- Oak (*Quercus robur*): 1.5 m diameter or more (>250 years).

4.14 Barn Owls can utilise a variety of different habitat types. Fields of rough grassland provide the majority of prime foraging habitat in mainland Britain. In particular, rough grassland corridors along watercourses, roadsides, arable field margins, woodland edge and occasionally along with wide woodland rides. The type of grassland can influence the suitability as a feeding resource which the structural composition can define:

a) Optimal habitat:

These habitats are associated with the optimum habitat to Field Voles (*Microtus agrestis*) for breeding, foraging, and shelter. In turn, they are of the highest value to Barn Owls. These habitats are usually permanent, unimproved or semi-improved grassland, rank and heterogeneous. The grasslands tend to be of a mixed height and with a high abundance of raised tussocks coupled with a small litter layer or 'thatch'. They tend to receive periodic management.

b) Sub-optimal habitat:

Habitats are sub-optimal to field voles and are of intermediate and often transient value to Barn Owls. This type of improved or semi-improved grassland is characterised by having a homogeneous, more even-height sward, sometimes

displaying some lush and emerging tussock structure but little sign of a litter layer or 'thatch'. It can sometimes constitute a mature clover/grass ley and usually receives some level of farm management such as occasional fertilisation, annual topping or light grazing.

c) Poor habitat

These habitats offer very poor habitat for field voles and most other small mammals and are of low value to Barn Owls. These improved grasslands are characterised by a homogeneous sward, often kept short throughout the year, with no tussock structure and devoid of any litter layer at their base. They are usually mown closely for hay or silage, heavily grazed by sheep, horses or cattle or used for public amenity. Grasslands overgrown with scrub can restrict Barn Owls from hunting, also fall into this habitat category.

d) Other Habitats

Non-grassland habitats, such as arable fields and mature woodland, generally have little or no value as a permanent foraging resource to Barn Owls. Arable fields containing cereals, rapeseed, or other food crops do not provide suitable habitat for field voles. However, at certain times of the year, such as during harvest, they can, for short periods, expose Wood Mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and temporarily attract Barn Owls.

Habitat suitability for Breeding Birds

4.15 Birds breed in a wide range of habitats, e.g. woodlands, hedgerows, parks and buildings. Some birds will lay eggs directly on the ground without building a nest.

4.16 A visual survey was undertaken to evaluate the habitats associated with potential activity for breeding birds. In addition, a search for any disused bird's nests along the hedgerow was conducted.

Habitat suitability for Bats

4.17 Bats use various landscapes or habitats throughout the year as they feed, roost and travel. They use hunting grounds or foraging habitats to find food and commuting habitats to travel between roosts and foraging habitats.⁸ All UK bat species eat insects. Some bats prefer

⁸ Bat Conservation Trust

waterways; others prefer woods or grassland. Habitat choice can be species-specific, and some bats will journey further to seek the habitat they prefer.

4.18 Bats utilise woodland edges, rivers, hedgerows and other linear features as corridors to commute from one area to another. e.g. roosts to foraging areas. If these commuting routes are severed, it prevents movements and possible links to foraging habitats.

4.19 Besides roosting in buildings, bats can use trees to rest, give birth, raise young and/or hibernate. Roosts may be in the following features:

- Woodpecker holes, natural cracks and rot holes in trunks and branches;
- Frost cracks;
- Trunk and branch splits;
- Hollow sections of trunk and branches;
- Loose bark;
- Cavities beneath old root buttresses and coppice stools;
- Dense epicormic growth; and,
- Dense ivy cover.

4.20 Roosts of bats in trees may be identified from the following field signs:

- Black stains beneath cracks, splits, and other features where bat droppings have fallen;
- Dark marks at entrance points where bats have rubbed against the wood and left natural body oils;
- Feeding remains beneath roosts, such as insect wings;
- Chattering of bats;
- Bat droppings under access points;
- Scratch marks around a feature (cavity or split) caused by bat claws;
- Urine stains below the entrance or end of split;
- Large roosts or regularly used sites may produce an odour; and,
- Flies around the entrance, attracted by the smell of guano.

4.21 Veteran trees typically exhibit many of these features. They are sites with clear potential, but any tree possessing one or more such features may host bats. Any tree species can be suitable, but oak and beech often seem to be the preferred option. However, bats rarely

restrict themselves to one tree. They change their roost sites frequently, sometimes every two to three days, looking for minor differences in temperature and humidity.

Habitat Suitability for Reptiles

4.22 A habitat suitability assessment involved looking for the presence of factors that would increase the suitability of the site for reptiles, such as:

- Habitat heterogeneity ~ reptiles occupy a dynamic, successional habitat. Consequently, their requirements are met only in certain stages, e.g. a grass/scrub mosaic provides an ideal combination of micro-habitats for thermoregulation. Significant features include uniformity of habitat structure and increased shading.
- Topography ~ the shape and structure of the ground and its features are vital components of any reptile habitat, e.g. providing south-facing basking opportunities.
- Vegetation structure ~ the structural complexity of vegetation will impact upon prey availability, basking opportunities as well as sheltering, e.g. a good grassland structure will show a variation from short sward to scrub;
- Hibernation sites ~ a lack of hibernation sites means that reptile occupancy of a site may be seasonal. Hibernation sites are a crucial part of a reptiles life cycle;
- Prey availability ~ an essential aspect of whether reptiles will be present at a site will be prey availability;
- Predators ~ areas with high numbers of predators can have an impact on the likely presence of reptile species even if the habitat affords good cover;
- Public pressure ~ site with public pressure may be prone to influence the management.
- Management ~ grazing/mowing intensity can have a significant positive or negative impact on the suitability of the habitat for reptiles; and,
- Connectivity ~ colonisation of remote sites may occur very slowly or not depending on the dispersal abilities of different species.

Habitat Suitability for Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*)

4.23 A habitat suitability assessment assessed the potential of the site to hold Great Crested Newts.⁹ Before visiting the site, searches on Google Maps and Magic Maps evaluated the habitat types within the broader landscape. In addition, the presence of factors suitable for Great Crested Newts that would increase the suitability of the site for Great Crested Newts was assessed, such as:

- The presence of suitable breeding place (water bodies) on-site and within 500m of the site in the broader landscape;
- Habitat connectivity between ponds (if present) in the broader landscape and on-site;
- The condition of the ponds whether there were factors that would render them unsuitable for Great Crested Newts such as fish;
- Land uses surrounding the site that may affect the potential of the site to hold Great Crested Newts such as agriculture;
- Type of suitable habitat on-site such as scrub/grassland mosaic;
- Patches of woodland in the broader landscape that can provide terrestrial habitat;
- Any barriers between known populations of Great Crested Newts such as roads; and,
- Hibernation features on-site for Great Crested Newts such as log and rubble piles.

White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

4.24 The White-clawed Crayfish is the only native species of freshwater Crayfish in Britain. Although locally abundant in some areas of England and Wales, the White-clawed Crayfish has declined dramatically in recent years. As a result, it is under threat throughout its range in Britain and other regions of Europe. The principal causes of decline are competition from non-native Crayfish and a lethal disease carried by introduced species.

⁹ Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155

4.25 Habitat deterioration and loss can also have significant impacts on remaining populations. Maintenance and enhancement of habitat form an essential part of the conservation strategy for White-clawed Crayfish. Habitat can be a factor in isolating populations. A feature in reach of the watercourse may form a partial, or even a complete barrier to the movement of White-clawed Crayfish, for example:

- a large weir, dam or waterfall;
- a length of highly modified watercourse lacking in suitable habitat;
- a fast-flowing flume or culvert;
- a dried-up section of a channel; or,
- poor water quality in a reach.

4.26 A refuge is only suitable while it stays free of material, or the Crayfish can push out the material. Accumulation of soft, loose silt makes refuges unfavourable for Crayfish. The fine sediments clog and irritate the gills of Crayfish and other gill breathing invertebrates. Bacterial decomposition of organic fines can lead to localised de-oxygenation.

4.27 White-clawed crayfish of all ages need refuges. Juvenile Crayfish are especially vulnerable to predation by fish, ducks and other water birds, otter and mink, carnivorous dragonfly larvae and other predatory invertebrates, including adult crayfish.

4.28 Acceptable methods for surveying Crayfish include manual searching and hand netting when the water is clear and has low flow.

Buildings and other structures

4.29 Any buildings or other structures on site were surveyed. The surveys comprised an external visual inspection and an internal search (where safety allowed) to look for signs of, or potential for, protected species. Indicators of use could consist of live animals, carcasses, droppings, feeding remains and nesting material. A ladder, high-powered torch, angled mirror was available for use as required.

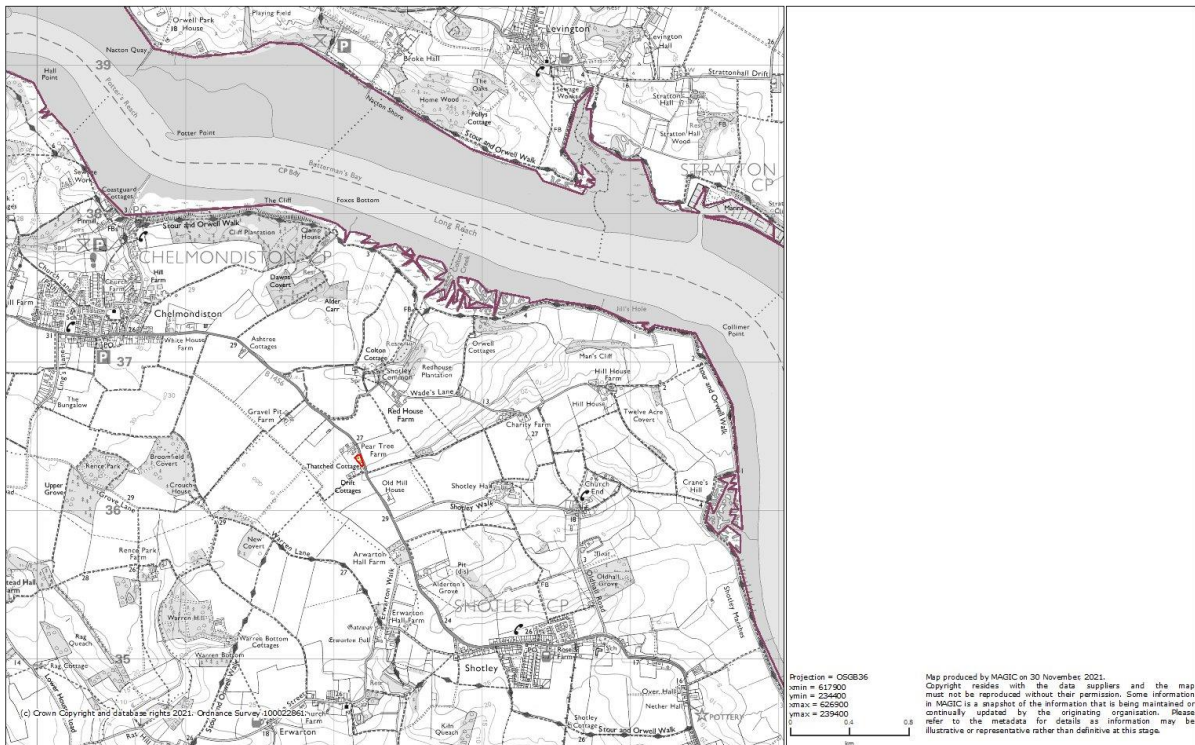
5.0 Results

Site location and description

5.1 The site is around 0.2 hectares off the B1456. The proposed land for development is surrounded by arable, residential land and a road. The current location is for residential purposes.

5.2 The site was surveyed on the 25th of November, 2021. The weather was sunny intervals with a gentle breeze, with a temperature around 5°C. A risk assessment was completed, and all appropriate PPE was worn. The client granted access to the site.

Map 1: Location of the proposed development site



Desk Study

Designated sites and habitats of principal importance

5.4 The following habitats were recorded:

- Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation within 3km: Yes, Stour and Orwell Estuaries.
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km: Yes, Orwell Estuary.
- Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland within 1km: Yes, New Grove.
- Priority habitat within 50 metres: Yes, traditional orchard.
- Ponds within 500 metres: None
- River, streams or water-filled ditches within 100 metres: None

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

5.5 Most of the vegetation growing on the site resembles poor semi-improved grassland. Species include Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Rough Meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*), Nipplewort

(*Lapsana communis*), False Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Bristle ox-tongue, Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Broad-leaved plantain (*Plantago major*).

5.6 Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) with Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) dominated small patches of scrub.

5.7 A small hedge running parallel to the road included Field Maple (*Acer campestre*). Whilst a Leylandii hedge abutted both ends of the land.

5.8 Several small trees scattered the land, including Apple (*Malus* spp.), Cheery (*Prunus* spp.) and Sallow (*Salix* spp.).

5.9 A small privet hedge was present.

5.10 The garden included a Chicken hut, trampoline, demolished building/shed, motorcycles, cars and an open fire.

5.11 A Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) was disturbed.

Protected Species

5.12 Natural England granted a European licence for bats within 1 km.

Habitat Suitability for Badger (*Meles meles*)

5.13 No active Badger setts or activities are within the red line. Therefore, this species will not require further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

5.14 There is no suitable habitat to support Dormice within the site boundary. Therefore, this species will not require further consideration or survey.

Habitat suitability for Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibious*)

5.15 There is no suitable habitat to support Water Vole. Therefore, this species requires no further consideration or survey.

Habitat suitability for Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

5.16 No evidence of Eurasian Otter was recorded on-site and therefore required no further consideration or survey.

Habitat suitability for Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

5.17 There were no roosting, feeding or breeding opportunities for Barn Owls within the site. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat suitability for Breeding Birds

5.18 Birds were observed on-site. As such, it is considered likely that breeding birds may be using the trees. Therefore, this group requires no further consideration or survey. However, any works must be outside the breeding season.

Habitat suitability for Bats

5.19 There was no evidence of the potential for indirect impacts on the potential bat roost. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Reptiles

5.20 The site contains no features for reptiles to be present. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Habitat Suitability for Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*)

5.21 The site contains limited features for amphibians to be present. Therefore, this group of species needs no further consideration.

White Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

5.22 There was no suitable habitat for White Clawed Crayfish on-site. Therefore, this species needs no further consideration or survey.

Buildings and other structures

5.23 The bungalow and shed had no potential bat roosts. The demolished building/shed was lying on the floor.

Survey Constraints

5.24 The survey was undertaken during the sub-optimal survey season. Given the nature of the site, an accurate record of the habitats and species present was recorded. It may be that additional plant species were present, which were not visible at the survey time. It is important to note that species diversity and dominant plant assemblages may increase or change throughout the season.

5.25 Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. Nevertheless, species that potentially occur within the area have been

recorded. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of the potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.

5.26 Not all areas could be accessed surrounding the site as the land was in private ownership.

6.0 Conclusion

Habitats

6.1 The site is not designated or located adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site or potentially a Local Wildlife Site. The site itself and the habitats found on-site are common and widespread throughout the UK. The habitats are of limited ecological value and are of site value only.

Protected species

6.2 The on-site habitats were evaluated for their likelihood of providing shelter, roosting, foraging, basking and nesting habitat. The likelihood of occurrence of protected species is considered negligible, and no further investigation is required.

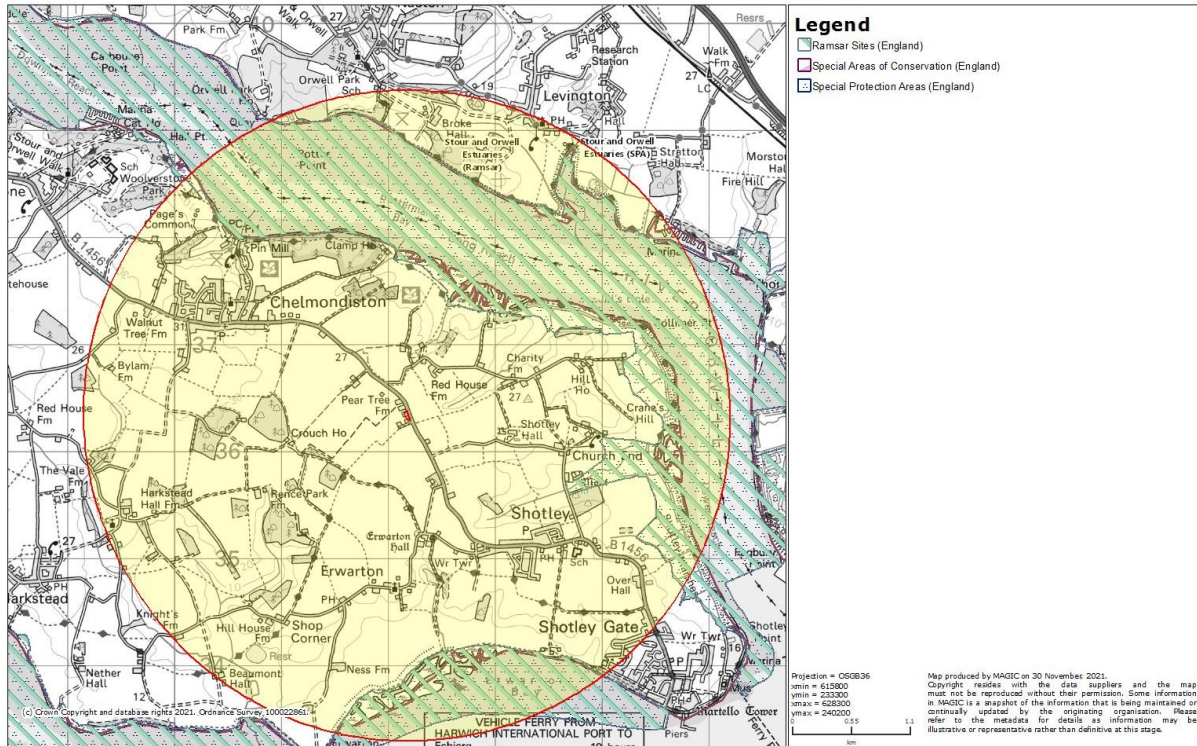
6.3 No nests were identified at the time of the survey. However, nests may be present but not visible.

7.0 Recommendations

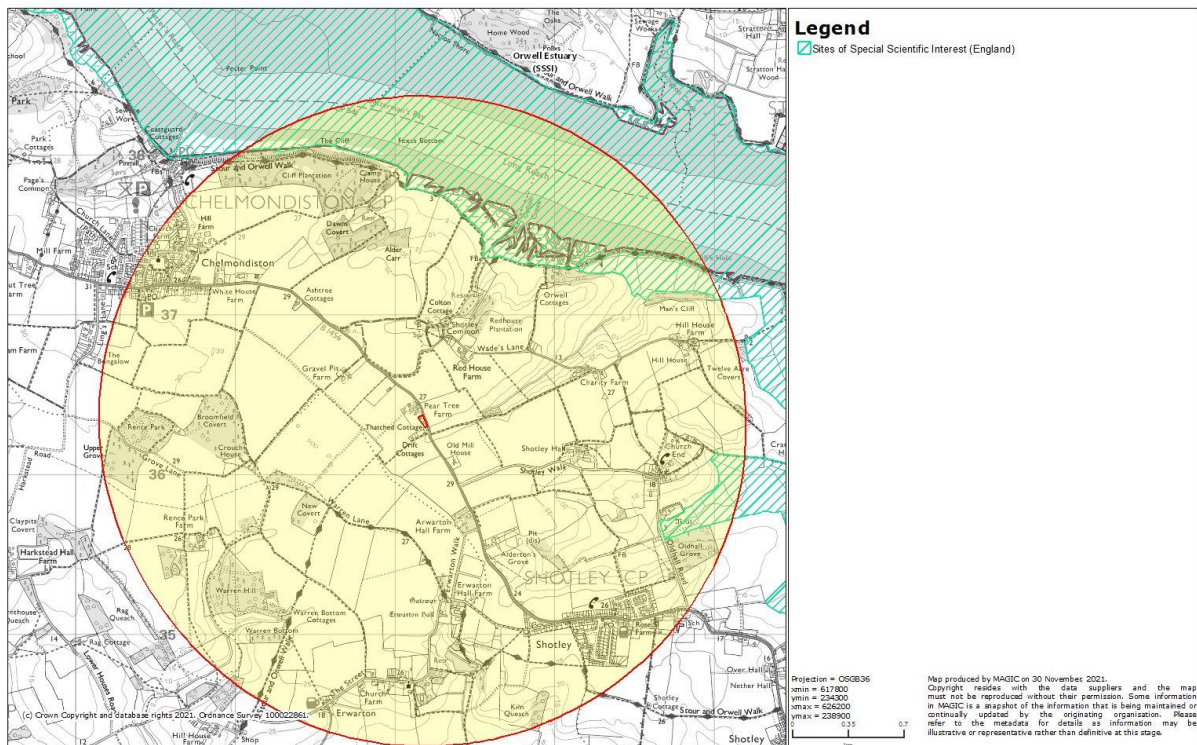
7.1 Biodiversity net gain should be proportionate to the scale of development.¹⁰ Any biodiversity improvements will be at a local level. Any planting should include native species mixed to improve the diversity and adaptive to climate change.

¹⁰ Biodiversity net gain: Good practice principles for development (2019)

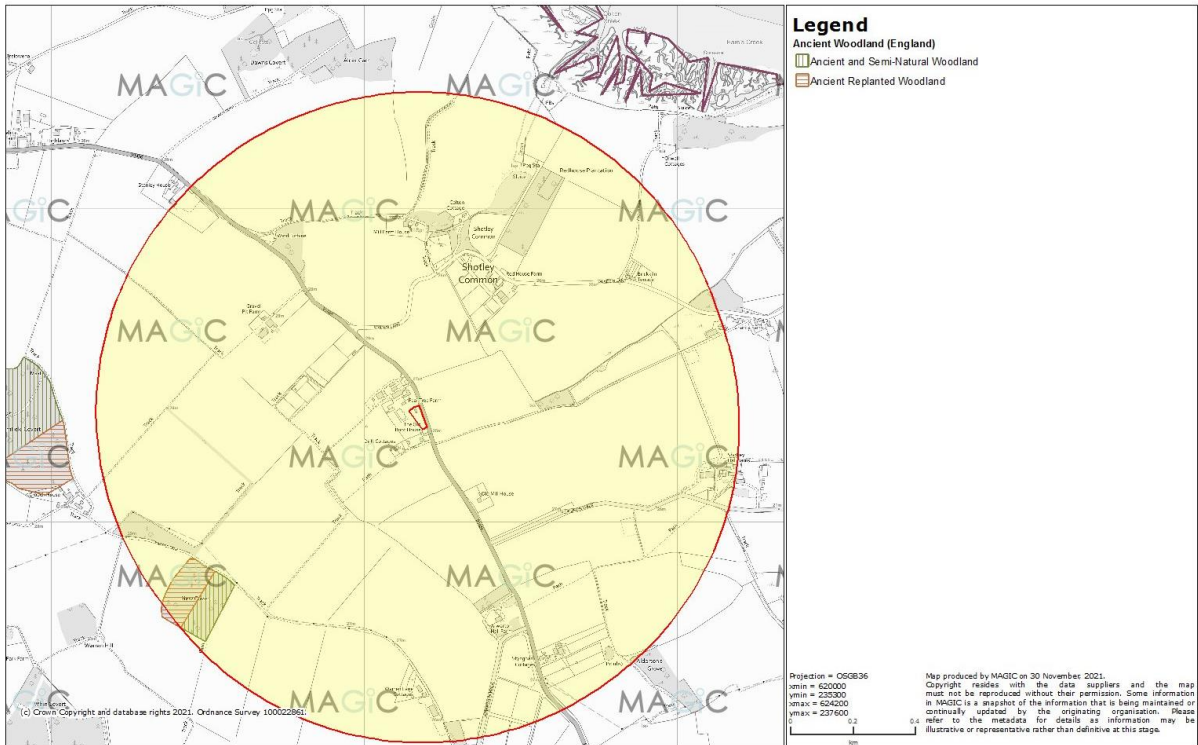
Appendix 1: Designated sites



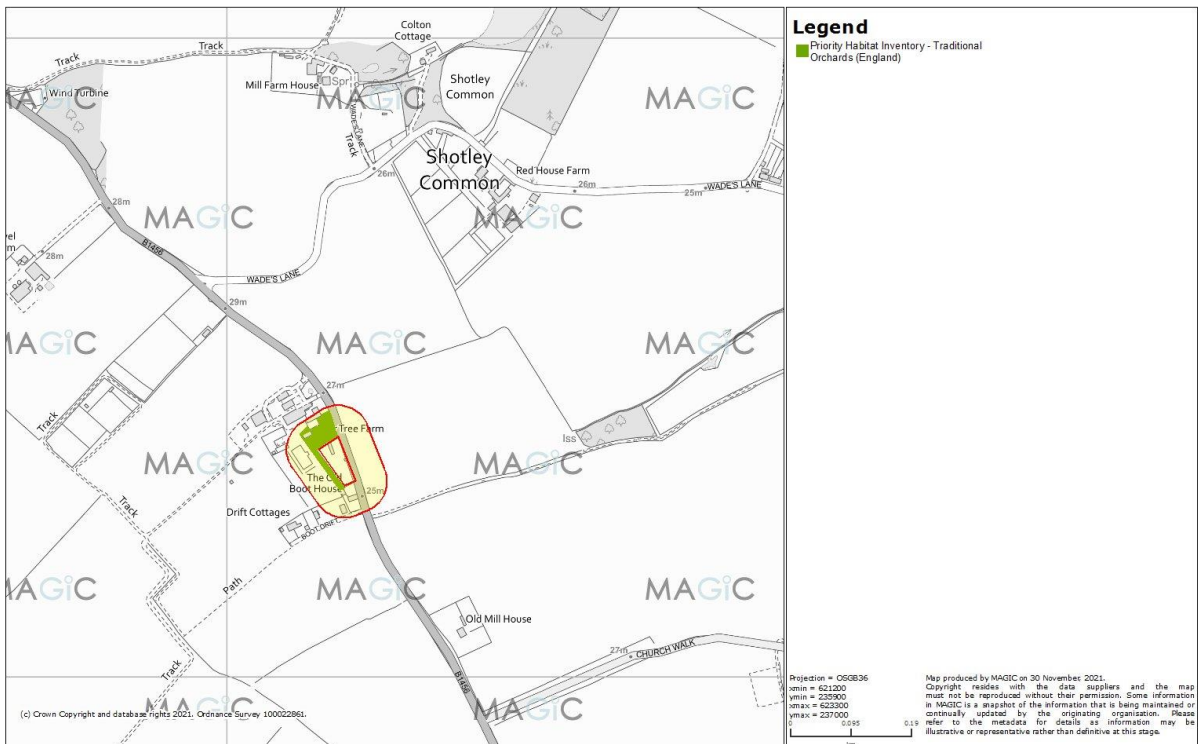
Appendix 2: SSSI



Appendix 3: Ancient Woodland



Appendix 4: Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat



Appendix 5: Photographic evidence

Photograph 1: Current use



Photograph 2: Shed



Photograph 3: Poor semi-improved grassland with multiple uses



Photograph 4: Outside fire remains

