

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

of the land at

Primrose Hill Farm, Hemingstone, IP6 9RL,

Suffolk

Carried out for:

Marie Mayhew

1st

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1. Background to Commission

- 1.1 Abrehart Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Marie Mayhew to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the land for the proposed development, at Primrose Hill Farm, Hemingstone, Suffolk, IP6 9RL (central grid reference TM15483 53701; Fig. 1; hereafter referred to as the Site).
- 1.2 The survey was required to inform a planning application at the Site; to include the construction of three new residential dwellings and associated landscaping and parking.
- 1.3 The approximate size of the site was 0.2 ha, with the entire site included in the planned construction.

Aims of Study

- 1.4 This report provides an ecological appraisal of the Site following the completion of a desk study and site visit. The aim of this study was to:

Provide a description of existing habitat types;

To determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas;

To identify the potential (or actual) presence of protected and/or notable species;

To provide the legislative and/or policy protection afforded to any habitats present or any species assessed as likely to be associated with the site; and

To recommend any further ecological surveys considered necessary to inform mitigation requirements for the planning application within the Site.

To provide an assessment of potential impacts to protected species, habitats, or protected sites.

Site Description

- 1.5 The survey area was located to the east of Hemingstone, Suffolk. The proposed construction zone is approximately 0.2 hectares and consisted predominantly of a former boarding kennels/cattery. The kennels were surrounded by concrete hardstanding with some limited vegetation regrowth. Within this hardstanding area were also several smaller storage-type buildings. To the east of the kennels was a small walled courtyard consisting of a garden area, which had been left unmanaged at the time of survey, surrounded by hardstanding pathways. Adjacent this courtyard to the east was a disused and derelict piggery, this had dense ivy (*Hedera helix*) cover along the eastern aspect. To the east of the piggery was a small area of managed improved grassland and an area of bare earth.
- 1.6 The site was situated within the wider ownership boundary associated with Primrose Hill farm, the ownership boundary contained a residential dwelling and several agricultural buildings. Surrounding these buildings were large areas of modified grassland and hardstanding for access and parking areas.
- 1.7 The wider landscape was dominated by the residential buildings within Hemingstone as well as large areas of agricultural land with associated hedgerows, arable verges, ditches and mature standard trees (see Figure 1).

MAGiC

Site location

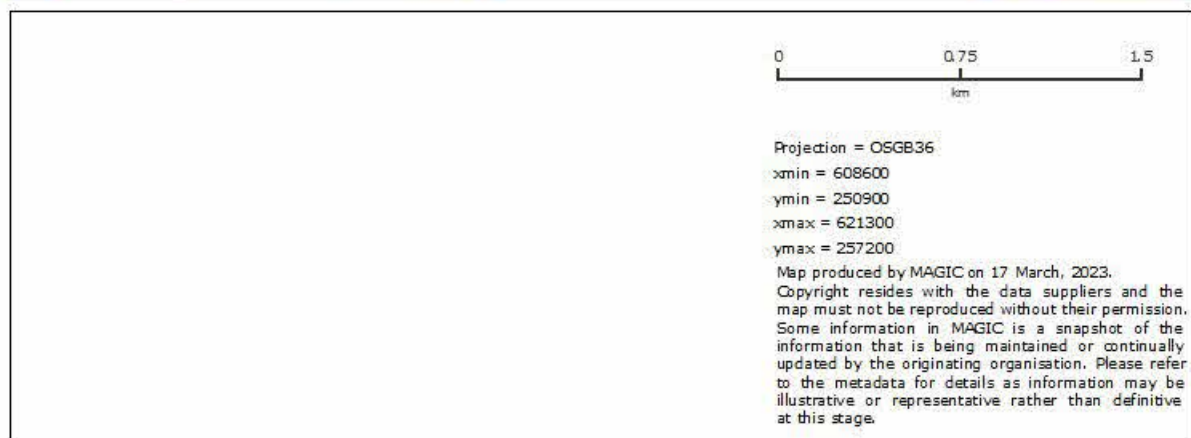
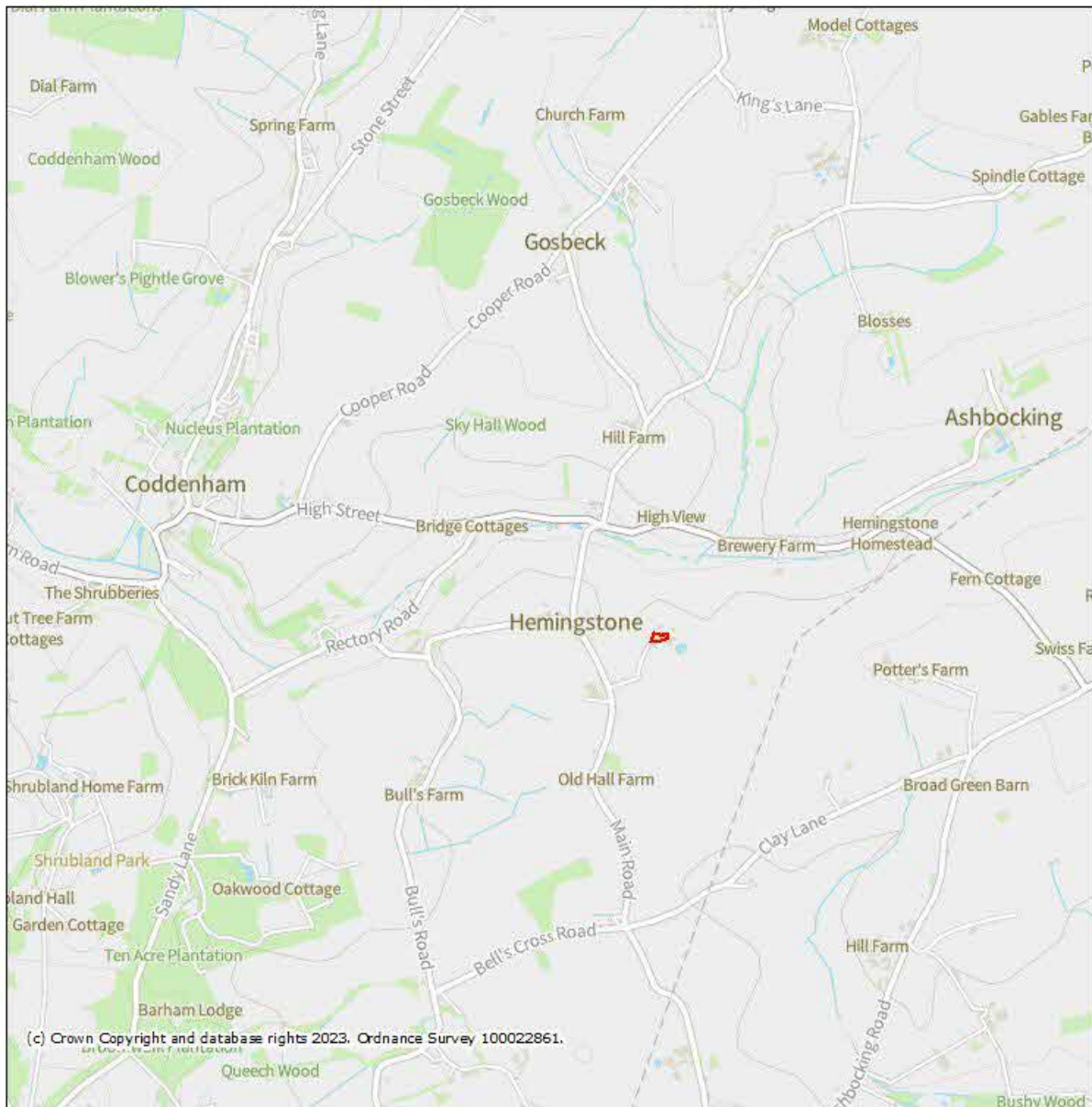


Figure 1. Site location

Relevant Legislation

- 1.8 Protected species, as referred to within this report, are taken to be those protected under European Legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended) and UK legislation (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Protection of Badgers Act 1992).
- 1.9 Public bodies have a duty of responsibility to consider species of principle importance in England as listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006).
- 1.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 places responsibility on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity in and around developments. Section 40 of the NERC Act requires every public body to “have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. Biodiversity, as covered by the Section 40 duty, is not confined to habitats and species of principal importance but refers to all species and habitats. However, the expectation is that public bodies would refer to the Section 41 list (of species and habitats) through compliance with the Section 40 duty.
- 1.11 “The Local Plan seeks to protect, retain, and enhance the high-quality natural environment and designated landscapes and sites found across the Local Plan area which contribute to the overall success of the area and provides economic and social benefits for all..The Local Plan will seek to foster in new developments and to protect, retain, and enhance in existing developments.”
- 1.12 “Development proposals should be accompanied by sufficient information to assess the effects of development on priority habitats and species, protected sites, protected species, biodiversity or geology, together with any proposed prevention, mitigation, or compensation measures..”
- 1.13 Appendix IV details legislation which protects species and groups relevant to the Site (bats, reptiles, birds, and badgers).

2. Methods

Desk Study

- 2.1 Data obtained from the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) were used to conduct a standard data search¹ for any information regarding statutory and non-statutory sites and records of protected and priority species within a 2km radius of the Site. The data were received on the 20th of March 2023.
- 2.2 A 7km radius search for conservation areas part of the National Site Network, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsars was undertaken using MAGIC (<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/>).

Field Survey

- 2.3 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out by Thomas Jordan BSc (Hons) (Natural England Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence WML-CL08) on the 6th of April 2023 in accordance with standard best practice methodology for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys set out by the JNCC (JNCC 2010). Weather conditions during the survey were 100% cloud cover, a gentle breeze (Beaufort Scale 2-3), with a temperature of 10°C, and good visibility. The Site was traversed slowly by the surveyors, mapping habitats, and making notes on dominant flora and fauna. The survey was extended to identify the presence of invasive species and included an assessment of the potential for the habitats in and around the Site to support protected species.

Survey Limitations

- 2.4 There were no limitations to the survey.

¹ The standard data search identifies designated sites including:- Ramsar; Special Areas of Conservation; Special Protection Areas; Sites of Special Scientific Interest; National Nature Reserves; Local Nature Reserves; County Wildlife Sites; Regionally Important Geological Sites; Ancient Woodland; and protected and priority species identified by the:- Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Schedules 1, 5 & 8; Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 Schedules 2 & 5; Protection of Badgers Act 1992; Bonn Convention Appendix 1 & 2; Bern Convention Annex 1 & 2; Birds Directive Annex 1; Habitats Directive Annex 2, 4 & 5; NERC Act 2006 Section 41; UKBAP (both local and national); IUCN Red List species; Red & Amber Bird List; Nationally Scarce / Rare; Locally Scarce / Rare; and Veteran trees.

3. Results

- 3.1 The following section details the results of the desk study and field survey. Consideration has been given to species likely to be found in the habitats recorded on site and potential impacts to designated sites within the local area.

Data Search (for maps see Appendix III)

- 3.2 The following section details the results of the desk study and field survey. Consideration has been given to species likely to be found in the habitats recorded on site and potential impacts to designated sites within the local area. Several protected species have been 'scoped out' of the report, as the Site was not considered suitable to support them. Species scoped out were dormice, water voles, and otters.

Data Search

- 3.3 There was a single statutory designated site within 2 km of the Site, this was;

Gosbeck Wood SSSI –an ancient coppice-with-standards site with small additions of well-established secondary woodland. It lies on a plateau of calcareous boulder clay soils with pockets of sand. The wood contains a complex mosaic of stand types and is a good example of the type of ancient woodlands found in central Suffolk. The ground flora is typical of woods of this type and locality and includes several uncommon species.

- 3.4 There are four County Wildlife Sites within 2km of the Site. These are:

Blosses Meadow –This meadow is a good example of unimproved species-rich grassland, which is a Priority habitat. The grassland includes many species typically found on boulder clay such as agrimony, cowslip, ox-eye daisy, pepper saxifrage and field woodrush. Uncommon species such as sulphur clover (nationally scarce) and adder's tongue fern (found most often in older, undisturbed sites) have also been recorded here. The meadow is divided in to two by a hedge, blackthorn thicket and large pond, all of which add habitat diversity to the site, increasing its wildlife value.

Borley's Wood –One of a number of ancient woodlands in the parish of Barham which are listed in English Nature's Ancient Woodland Inventory. It is surrounded by a ditch and bank which is likely to date from medieval times. In addition it is enclosed in part by a dense mixed hedge composed of blackthorn, hawthorn, dogwood and hazel. Borley's Wood has a typical coppice with standards structure. Ash and field maple coppice together with scattered oak standards form the main tree canopy. In addition there are small amounts of sweet chestnut coppice and aspen. A dense layer of hazel coppice and hawthorn forms the understorey. A number of waterlogged rides cross the wood. Although rather neglected and overshadowed they support an interesting flora including a number of wetland species, for example creeping-Jenny and ragged-robin. Hairy St John's-wort is amongst a number of scarce ancient woodland indicator plants which have also been recorded in the wood. Recent management work in the wood has included the clearing of some areas of dead elm and the recoppicing of a small section in the north western corner. Ash coppice is regrowing well here and has not been damaged by deer browsing.

Bulls Wood –Located on a gently sloping plateau and lies adjacent to another large area of woodland which is part of the Shrubland Estate. It is an ancient woodland and listed in

the Suffolk Ancient Woodland Inventory, compiled by English Nature. A number of very old trees and stumps are signs of the medieval status of this wood. A large proportion of Bull's Wood has been densely planted with conifers to the detriment of the native flora and fauna. Semi-natural vegetation is therefore restricted to the woodland margins. Field maple, wild cherry, ash and small-leaved lime are present here. The ground flora consists of dog's mercury and bluebell with some patches of early-purple orchid and primrose. A single main ride runs from east to west in the wood and is well vegetated with grass. Bull's Wood is a neglected woodland apart from some small scale felling in one compartment.

Oak Wood/Broomwalk Covert –Oak Wood and Broomwalk Covert are listed in English Nature's Ancient Woodland Inventory. This extensive area of woodland is situated north of Barham and is separated from the adjacent woodland of Shrubland Park by Sandy Lane. Some remnants of the original woodland can still be found. Cherry, field maple, hazel coppice, crab apple and small-leaved lime are present in small quantities, the latter species being strongly associated with ancient woods. An unusual feature which is evidence of the wood's antiquity is a double bank and ditch, thought to be medieval in origin and situated on the western side of the site.

- 3.5 There are no National Site Network conservation areas (Ramsar, SAC, or SPA) within 7km of the Site.
- 3.6 The data search showed records of protected species in the area, which could potentially occur on the Site. These are detailed within the relevant sections below.

Field Survey Results

- 3.7 The Site comprised of a former boarding kennels/cattery with an adjacent derelict piggery. The buildings were surrounded by areas of hardstanding with a small, neglected amenity garden area. Buildings will be detailed further in section 4.10.

Areas within the Construction Boundary

- 3.8 Grassland: There was a small area of modified grassland to the east of the former piggery. This grassland was heavily managed with a fairly consistent sward height of approximately 5cm, the grass had a limited forb diversity but did include some common species such as dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg), cranesbill (*Geranium* sp.) and red deadnettle (*Lamium purpureum*). There was a small rubble/spoil pile noted within the grass. To the north of the grass was an area of bare earth which ran to the corner of the site. There were three early mature/mature trees growing within this area of grass and bare earth.
- 3.9 Garden area: There was an amenity garden area between the kennel buildings and the piggery, this had been left unmanaged at the time of survey. The garden contained patches of modified grass with a varying sward height of over 20cm, there was some ruderal vegetation, including bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) and nettles, growing through. At the time of survey the garden predominantly consisted of overgrown ornamental shrubbery with several semi-mature trees growing throughout. There was a small man-made pond, surrounded by reeds (*Phragmites* sp.), within the grass. This pond had extremely poor water quality and was devoid of aquatic vegetation. The garden area was totally enclosed by well-sealed buildings and brick walls.
- 3.10 Hardstanding: the southern portion of the site consisted of areas of concrete hardstanding, used for access within the wider ownership boundary. The area of hardstanding to the south of the garden area had been overgrown with ruderal vegetation including bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg), nettles, grasses, and mosses.
- 3.11 A map showing the habitat types on Site can be seen in Appendix II.

4. Protected and Priority Species Within the Site & Potential Impacts and Recommendations

Statutory Designated Areas


- 4.1 The Site does fall within the Impact Risk Zone for the SSSI site; however it does not contain the species or habitats for which the protected areas are designated and will not significantly increase footfall or disturbance through the conservation areas.
- 4.2 Given the small size of the development and screening provided by surrounding residential dwellings, tree belts, and agricultural land it was not considered necessary to carry out a Habitats Regulation Assessment for the development. As with the SSSI, the proposed construction area does not contain the habitat for which the other protected sites are designated or the potential to support features of interest. The areas contain extensive footpath networks, and the proposed construction will not significantly increase visitor footfall along these.

Flora

- 4.3 No species of interest were recorded during the survey and the managed area of modified grassland was considered unlikely to support a rich flora.
- 4.4 The desk study highlighted a number of species of rare plant have been previously recorded within 2km of the Site, this included those listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and classified as 'Vulnerable' and 'Endangered' on the England Red List. Almost all the rare and protected species highlighted within the data search are associated with marshland, arable land, heathland, and species-rich meadows.
- 4.5 The proposed development includes the demolition of all existing buildings within the works area, followed by the erection of a new single story residential dwelling. The construction area covers an area of species-poor modified grassland, buildings, introduced shrubbery and hardstanding; this will not result in the loss or change of use of these habitats. The lost habitat is not listed within the Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as being of principal important to the conservation of biodiversity within the UK and was not considered suitable to provide opportunities for protected species.
- 4.6 **No further botanical surveys are required.**

Bats

4.10 There were several buildings within the construction area, consisting of an old piggery, several dog kennels, a cattery, and small storage structures. All existing buildings within the construction area are to be demolished as part of the development. The former piggery (detailed in the table below) was the only structure considered to have bat roost potential, the storage structures kennels and cattery had a single skin, corrugated sheet metal roof and the buildings were of brick construction. All the brickwork appeared in good condition and was well sealed, the metal roofs meant that the structures were highly unlikely to maintain a suitable constant temperature for roosting bats. Therefore, all other structures (excluding the piggery) were considered to have negligible bat roost potential and their demolition will not impact roosting bats.

Photos	Notes
	<p>Building A</p> <p>This building consisted of the derelict, former piggery. The building had breezeblock footings with a wooden board and timber frame construction. The roof consisted of pitched, corrugated asbestos type panels. The building was disused at the time of survey.</p> <p>There were many gaps between boards, around doorframes and between roofing panels. These could either be used as points of ingress or as roosting points for bats.</p> <p>There was dense ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>) cover on the western aspect of the building and in the north-east corner of the building's interior. This would provide ideal roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>There were many exposed rough wooden beams within the building which could be utilised by bats.</p> <p>Gaps were seen along the soffits, these appeared to lead into the roof void and would provide roosting opportunities.</p> <p>No droppings or feeding remains were found within the interior. The roof space could not be inspected at the time of survey.</p> <p>This building was considered to have moderate bat roost potential.</p>

- 4.11 The data search returned 12 bat records of at least 4 species within 2km of the Site; these were barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Chiroptera (*Chiroptera sp.*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats within 2km of the Site.
- 4.12 **As the piggery building is considered moderate roost potential, two bat surveys will be necessary. These surveys must be carried May and September with at least one survey between May and August.**
- 4.13 **The Site will incorporate sensitive lighting –ensuring the site is not illuminated during works during and post construction.** This will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust (Bats and Lighting in the UK, 2009), to ensure foraging and commuting bats using adjacent habitats are not negatively impacted. Lighting measures should also be applied to temporary security lighting used during the construction phase. This will include low pressure sodium lamps, with hoods, cowls, or shields, to prevent light spillage.

Birds

- 4.14 The bramble and ivy scrub growing over the old piggery provided suitable nesting habitat for a range of common species. However, the modified grassland lacked a suitable structure for ground nesting species and appeared regularly disturbed and was in very close proximity to a vehicle parking area and main road.
- 4.15 The data search returned a high number of records of common and protected species that have been observed in the local landscape. Notable species in the area include cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), and nightingale (*L uscinia megarhynchos*).
- 4.16 **Due to the minimal amount of vegetation lost from the construction zone, no further survey is necessary. When the existing scrub is cleared then this is to be done outside the nesting bird season or following a nesting bird check** (carried out by an experienced ornithologist/ecologist); should any active nests be found, then clearance will stop until young have fledged.

Great Crested Newts & Reptiles

- 4.17 Habitats recorded throughout the Site were not suitable for herptiles. The grassland was managed and did not provide suitable foraging habitat such as tussocks or scrub. The grassland was also surrounded by well used hardstanding access tracks. The unmanaged garden area in the centre of the site contained suitable habitat for amphibians however, this was completely surrounded by well-sealed brick walls, and buildings. Therefore, it was considered highly unlikely to support populations of herptiles. There were two agricultural reservoir type ponds within the wider site ownership boundary approximately 60m south-east of the site. These were assessed for their suitability as amphibian breeding ponds, and they were found to have poor water quality and lacked suitable macrophyte cover therefore they were considered unsuitable as GCN breeding ponds. There were two other ponds within 500m of the site which were highlighted with OS maps, these were not able to be accessed at the time of survey.
- 4.18 There were 6 records of GCN returned in the data search, the nearest of these was from approximately 1.37km south-east of the site with the most recent record being from 2019. Other amphibians recorded in the local area were common frog (*Rana temporaria*), smooth newt (*L. issotriton vulgaris*), and common toad (*Bufo bufo*) –a NERC S41 species of principal importance in England. There were no records of any reptiles returned within the data search.

- 4.19 **Due to the lack of potential habitat found on or adjacent to the site, GCN or reptile surveys are not considered necessary. The grassland should continue to be maintained so habitat is not created, and potential reptiles move onto Site.**

Hedgehogs

- 4.20 The amenity grassland habitat within the Site offered potential foraging habitat for hedgehogs; the shorter grassland provided good access to potential prey items. However, the adjoining scrub was not connected to other habitats so was unlikely to be utilised as a commuting corridor.
- 4.21 Although no evidence of hedgehogs was recorded during the survey, the data search returned 24 records of hedgehog within 2km of the Site from 2003 to 2016. The nearest record was from approximately 45m west of the site and several other records were from within 500m of the Site boundary.
- 4.22 **No further survey is necessary; however, as the Site provides suitable foraging habitat for foraging mammals, and hedgehogs and badgers have been recorded in the local area, construction works will implement several precautionary measures, including the following:**
- Covering excavations overnight to prevent animals falling in, or the provision of an escape ramp;
 - Safe storage of materials that may harm animals; and
 - Security lighting to be set on short timers to avoid disturbing nocturnal animals using the Site and immediate surrounding area –it will be directional to avoid boundary features (trees and hedgerows).

Invertebrates

- 4.23 The hardstanding and maintained grassland areas were unsuitable for supporting assemblages of common and rare/protected terrestrial invertebrates. Much of the habitat was disturbed, and there was very limited forb, ruderal, or scrubby/woody species.
- 4.24 The data search included records of several S41/UKBAP, moths, hymenopteran, and rare butterflies –such as white-letter hairstreak (*Satyrus w-album*), bryony mining bee (*Andrena florea*), and centre-barred sallow (*Atethmia centrago*).
- 4.25 **No further survey is necessary due to the overall size and types of habitats being lost.**

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The preliminary ecological appraisal found the Site contained habitats suitable for supporting protected species – bats and breeding birds. Hedgehogs are listed as a Species of Principal Importance in England (and listed on Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – making it illegal to kill or injure through certain methods) and so should also be considered as part of this application. The following measures will be implemented to minimise the risk of harm to individual animals:

Two bat surveys are required of the disused piggery. These surveys must be carried May and September with at least one survey between May and August.

Sensitive lighting measures to prevent disturbance to foraging bats or other nocturnal species. An experienced ecologist will liaise with construction staff to inform these measures.

Covering of excavations and/or provision of exit ramps is recommended during works to prevent harm to mammals such as hedgehogs.

If vegetation clearance (scrub and trees) is required then this is to be carried out outside the breeding bird season or following a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist.

- 5.2 In addition to having a negligible impact to biodiversity within the construction boundary, the development will not negatively impact species or habitats within the wider ownership boundary or adjacent land. There will be no impact on SSSIs or National Site Network conservation areas and no requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

6. References

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Stace, C. (1997). New Flora of the British Isles (2nd Edition). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

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<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Appendix I: Site Photos



Exterior of the former boarding kennel buildings.



Area of hardstanding and brick wall surrounding the unmanaged garden area.



Dense ivy and bramble cover along the eastern aspect of the piggery.



Area of bare ground adjacent the mown, modified grassland.



Hardstanding surrounding the kennel buildings.



Interior of the kennels.



Storage buildings in the corner of the site.



The cattery structure on site.



Unmanaged amenity garden, in the courtyard area.



Western aspect of the former piggery.



Interior of the former piggery.



Interior of the former piggery.

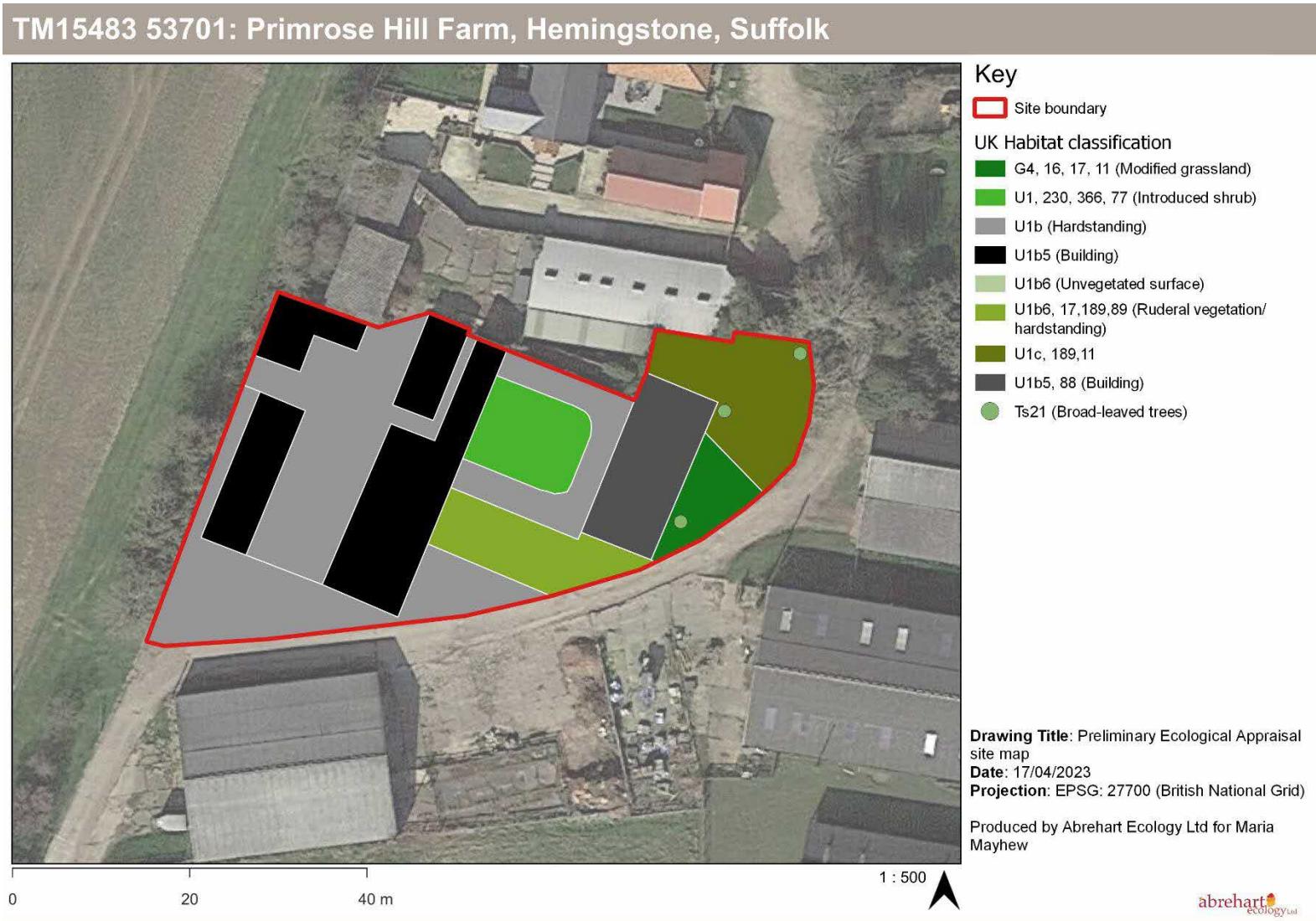
Appendix II: Species Lists

Plants

<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
<i>Betula pennis</i>
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
<i>Epilobium sp.</i>
<i>Galium aparine</i>
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>
<i>Geranium molle</i>
<i>Hedera helix</i>
<i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
<i>Iris sp.</i>
<i>Lamium album</i>
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
<i>Phragmites sp.</i>
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
<i>Salix sp.</i>
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>
<i>Tulipa sp.</i>
<i>Urtica dioica</i>
<i>Veronica sp.</i>

Appendix III: Figures

Phase 1 Habitat Map

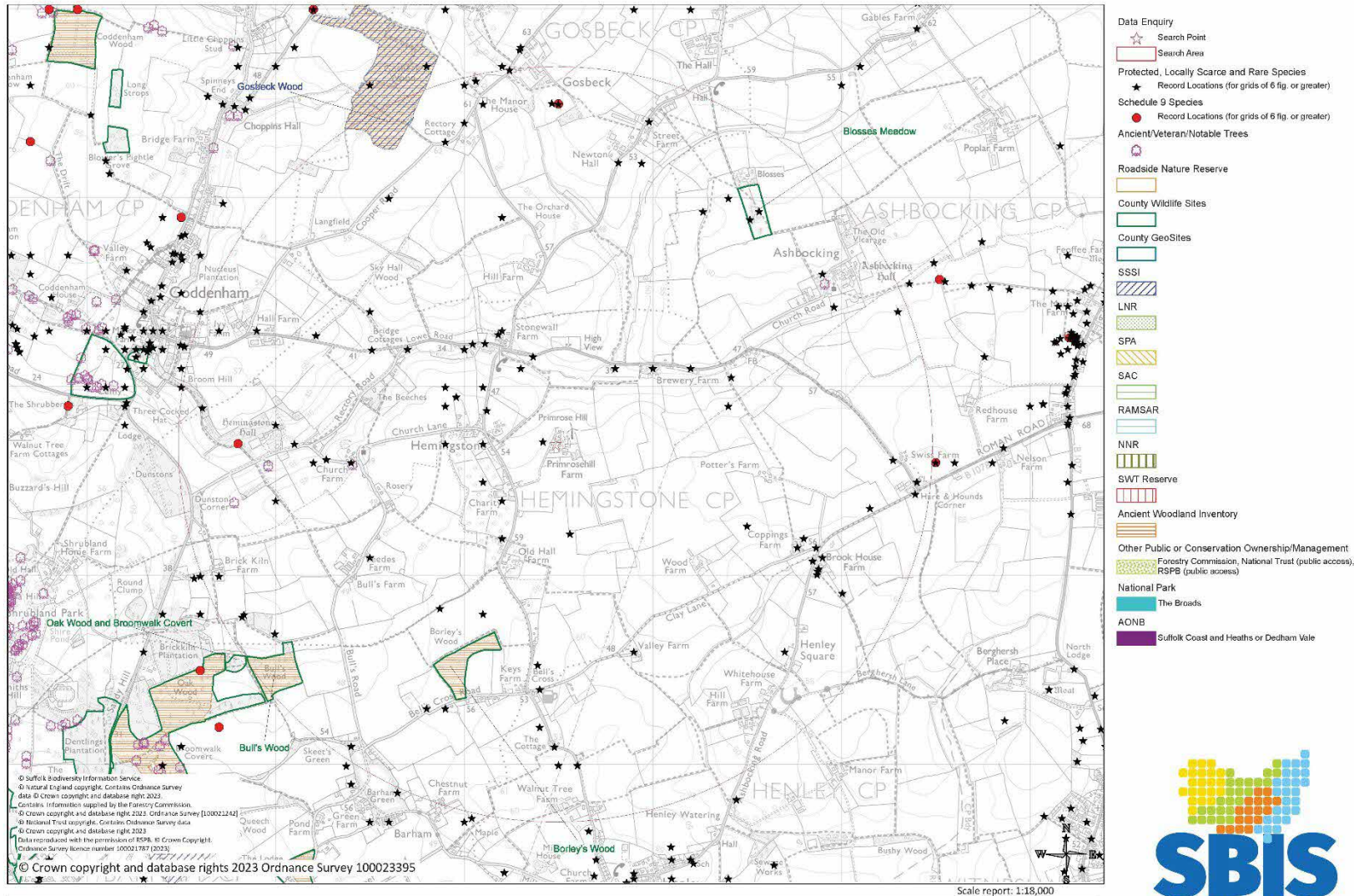


Phase 1 habitat map key

Primary codes	
G4	Modified grassland
Ts11	Tree single (broadleaf tree)
U1	Built up areas and gardens
U1b	Developed land; sealed surface
U1b5	Buildings
U1b6	Other developed land
U1c	Unvegetated, unsealed surface

Secondary codes	
11	Scattered trees
16	Tall herb
17	Ruderal/ ephemeral
77	Neglected
88	Barn
89	Car park
189	Scattered grass
230	Garden
366	Artificial

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites within 2km of the Site



Abrehart Ecology (Land at Primrose Hill, Hemingstone TM15484 53698) 2km Data Enquiry



Date: 20/03/2023 | Drawn by: Andy Mercer

Appendix IV: Relevant Protected Species Legislation

Species	Legislation	Protection
Bats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) ▪ Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981), Schedule 5 (as amended) ▪ Wild Mammals Act (1996) 	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentionally kill, injure or take any bat ▪ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat ▪ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost
Widespread Reptiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981), Schedule 5 (as amended) 	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentionally kill or injure a reptile ▪ Sell, offer or expose for sale, have in possession or transport for the purpose of sale any live or dead reptile or any part of, or anything derived from, a reptile
Birds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended) 	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird ▪ Intentionally take, damage or destroy nests in use or being built ▪ Intentionally take, damage or destroy eggs <p>Species listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA (1981) are afforded additional protection, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb such species at, on or near an active nest</p>