



HYBRID ECOLOGY LTD

joined up thinking

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal/Low Impact EcIA:

135-137 Fronks Road, Dovercourt, Essex
CO12 3TL

On behalf of:

Tim Snow Architects

Prepared by:

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Report version:

Version 1:

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Summary

Land to the rear of 135-137 Fronks Road, Dovercourt, Essex (the site) was visited on 12th June 2023 in relation to a proposal for residential development.

This report provides the results of an updated ecological baseline survey and makes recommendations for further survey, mitigation and enhancement measures in the context of the proposal, referring to planning policy and best practice guidance where appropriate.

The report is required to provide the Local Planning Authority (LPA) with certainty on impacts to designated sites, Priority Habitats and legally protected species. This report will enable the LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 of the NERC Act 2006.

Designated sites/Priority Habitats

The site is not designated for any conservation reason. The site lies approximately 1km from Hamford Water (SPA, SAC, Ramsar, SSSI) which is designated at international level for its important assemblage of habitats and species. Residential development in this location will reasonably contribute to recreational pressures, therefore a financial contribution is required to comply with the Essex Coast RAMS. This will be secured via legal agreement once planning consent has been granted.

Habitats

The site spans two domestic gardens which are maintained and tidy. Boundary trees, including an oak tree and retained vegetation to the east will be protected in accordance with the AIA and arboricultural best practice.

Legally protected species (summary)

Bats: The sheds across both rear gardens have negligible bat roost suitability (BCT, 2016) and require no further survey effort. There are no trees with potential roost features on/adjacent to the site.

Nesting birds: The site contains several sheds, hedgerows and trees. To avoid impacts to active nests, any work that could impact an active nest will be carried out between October and February inclusive to avoid impacting active nests. If this is not possible, an ecologist will carry out a nest check prior to works.

Enhancement proposal

The development will include tree and hedgerow planting. Integrated features for nesting birds and bats will be included on houses. These measures will contribute to Government aims under Paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 which encourages all development to demonstrate biodiversity net-gain.

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1.0 Introduction

Personnel

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Gemma Holmes; Consultant Ecologist at Hybrid Ecology Ltd. Gemma is a qualified ecologist with 16 years' experience in professional survey work and is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Gemma holds licences to survey for great crested newt and bats in the UK (Licence numbers 2015-19096-CLS-CLS and 2016-27305-CLS-CLS respectively).

Brief

- 1.2 Tim Snow Architects instructed Hybrid Ecology to produce a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal/Low Impact EclA for Land rear of 135-137 Fronks Road, Dovercourt (grid reference TM2457930790). The proposal involves construction of 5 no. houses. The site plan / Tree Protection Plan taken from the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) (Tree Planning Solutions reference TPSQU0058) is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) or "Low Impact EclA" is the term used to describe a rapid assessment of the ecological features present, or potentially present, within a site and its surrounding area (the zone(s)) of influence in relation to a specific project. A PEA comprises a desk study and a walkover survey, the methods for which are further defined later in this report. The key objectives of a PEA are to:
- Identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project
 - Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required, following the 'Mitigation Hierarchy'
 - Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)
- Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.

Limitations

- 1.4 Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. Wildlife is transient and mobile, and results of a survey can reasonably vary from one day to the next or across the seasons.
- 1.5 The protected species assessment provides a view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on the site based on the known distribution of species in the local area and the suitability of the habitat. However, it should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species/group.
- 1.6 In accordance with CIEEM Report Writing Guidelines (December 2017), this report is valid until December 2024. Beyond this, this report should not be used in support of any planning application unless an updated survey has taken place.
- 1.7 This report is intended for the client only, in support of a planning application for five houses. Any deviation from this proposal will require a review and updated report.

Figure 1. Location plan

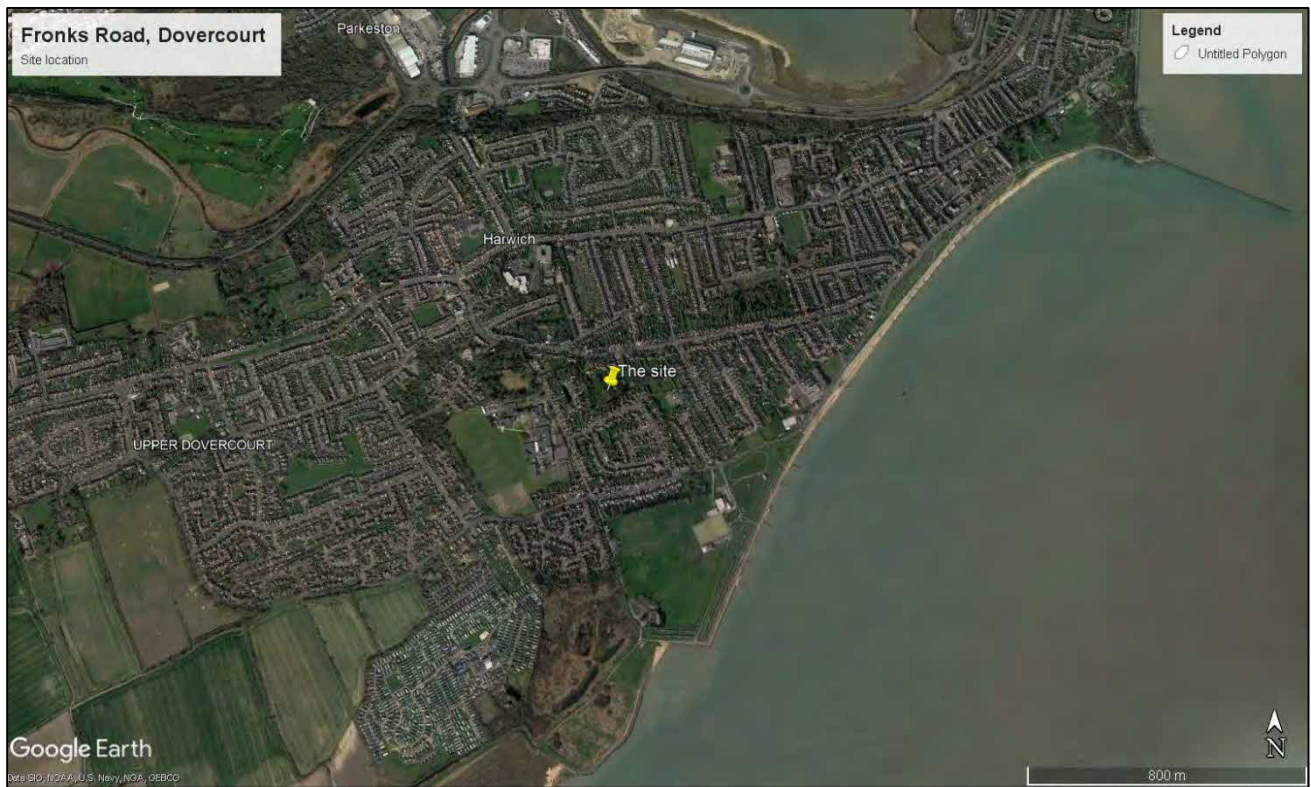


Figure 2. Survey boundary (approximate)



2.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

National Planning Policy Framework (2021): Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Please note the below policies have been taken directly from the National Planning Policy Framework, which can be found here: [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520712/nppf-2021.pdf)

Paragraph 174

- 2.1 Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - e) Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans;

Paragraph 179

- 2.2 To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
 - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 180

2.3 When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) 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; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Paragraph 181

2.4 The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 182

2.5 The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

Legislation: Protection of Designated Sites, Habitats and Species

Please note this section is a summary of legislation only and should not be taken as a definitive interpretation of any wildlife law. UK wildlife legislation can be found here: [Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Designated sites

RAMSAR

- 2.6 Ramsar sites are designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Wetlands are designated, protected and promoted in order to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands, which are broadly defined to include marsh, fen, peatland and water.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

- 2.7 Special Areas of Conservation are sites designated by Member States under the EC Habitats Directive. The aim is to establish a network of important high quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving habitats and species considered to be most in need of conservation at an international level.

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

- 2.8 Special Protection Areas are designated under the EC Birds Directive, to conserve the habitat of certain rare or vulnerable birds and regularly occurring migratory birds. Any significant pollution or disturbance to or deterioration of these sites has to be avoided.

National Nature Reserves (NNR)

- 2.9 National Nature Reserves are statutory reserves established for the nation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. NNRs may be owned by relevant national body (e.g. Natural England in England) or established by agreement; a few are owned and managed by non-statutory bodies. NNRs cover a selection of the most important sites for nature conservation in the UK.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 2.10 Sites of Special Scientific Interest are areas notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as being of 'special interest for nature conservation'. They represent the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in Great Britain supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. Notification as a SSSI is primarily a legal mechanism organised by Natural England and selected according to specific criteria.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

- 2.11 Land owned, leased or managed by Local Authorities and designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. A site of some nature conservation value managed for educational objectives – no need for SSSI status. Some reserves are managed by a non-statutory body.

Local Wildlife Site / Wildlife Sites

- 2.12 Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) are non-statutory sites designated at a county level as being of conservation importance and often recognised in Local authority development plans. The aim of this identification is to protect such sites from land management changes, which may lessen their nature conservation interest, and to encourage sensitive management to maintain and enhance their importance. Although LoWS have no statutory protection they are a material consideration in the planning process.

Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Site (RIGS)

- 2.13 Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites are non-statutory earth science sites. The RIGS networks are locally based voluntary groups drawing on both professional and interest groups identifying sites using a methodical and rational approach. RIGS are analogous to non-statutory biological sites – they are not a second tier but sites of regional or local importance in their own right.

Legally protected species

- 2.14 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019, EU Exit) affords protection to various species/species groups including bats (all species), great crested newt, otter and dormouse.
- 2.15 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the main source of legal protection for wildlife in England and was strengthened by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Species protection is provided under Schedules 1, 5, 6 and 8 to species including bat, great crested newt, water vole, otter and nesting birds. Badgers are protected separately under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

Species and Habitats of Principal Importance in England (or Priority habitats/species)

- 2.16 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance certain habitats and species. The species that have been designated to be of “principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity” are those that are most threatened, in greatest decline, or where the UK holds a significant proportion of the world’s total population. They mainly derive from lists originally drawn up for the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Similarly, the list of habitats of principal importance in England also derive from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.0 Methodology: Desktop Study

Mapping exercise

3.1 Aerial imagery (Google Earth Pro, 2023) was used to examine the landscape context of the site in relation to significant ecological assets such as woodland, established hedgerows, grassland and any naturalised features that would allow wildlife use and dispersal.

3.2 Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) mapping was used to:

Determine the proximity to international, national and locally designated sites and whether the site lies within the Zone of Influence/Impact Risk Zone, as appropriate.

Identify any areas of land mapped by Natural England as Priority Habitat within 250 metres of the site.

Identify any European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licenses granted by Natural England for great crested newt or bats within a 2km radius of the site that could be relevant.

Biological Records Search

3.3 A records search was organised via Essex Field Club (EFC) which included all protected and notable species recorded within a 2km radius of the site. The file size is large and therefore the full EFC report is not contained within this assessment, it can be provided separately if required by the Local Planning Authority.

4.0 Methodology: Habitats and Species

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

4.1 An ecological walkover survey was carried out on 12th June 2023 by ecologist Gemma Holmes (BSc Hons). The survey included all land shown in Figure 2. The survey was undertaken broadly in accordance with the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC 2010).

Protected/priority species scoping

4.2 The survey also included an assessment of the site’s potential to support any legally protected species; or Species and Habitats of Principal Importance (Priority Species), as identified by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Where best practice guidelines exist, these have been used to assess the likelihood that individual species will be present, for example Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (BCT 2016) and Habitat Suitability Index for Great Crested Newt (Oldham et al, 2000).

4.3 In accordance with BCT, 2016, the buildings (sheds) were inspected internally and externally to identify any suitable voids or crevices that could provide roosting habitat for bats, and for any field signs such as droppings, staining, insect remains. Vegetation on the site was also subject to Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats - this involved a ground-level assessment of trees for features that could reasonably provide bat access/support a roost – such as flaking bark, woodpecker holes, open cavities, woodpecker holes etc. The surrounding landscape was assessed for foraging/commuting suitability.

Figure 3. Guidelines for assessing potential suitability of development sites for bats (BCT, 2016)

Table 4.1 Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement.		
Suitability	Description Roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ¹ and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation ²). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential. ³	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ¹ and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ¹ and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

The Mitigation Hierarchy

- 4.4 All development is expected to meet the highest planning standards and follow the Mitigation Hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate and enhance to ensure that significant natural environment impacts are avoided.

Avoid - Avoiding any loss of or damage to wildlife sites or to protected / Priority species – development must not damage or destroy important national and Local Wildlife Sites.

Mitigate - Impacts considered unavoidable should be mitigated at the site where the impact occurs, if at all possible.

Compensate - Any remaining significant biodiversity loss should be compensated for, as close to the area of loss as possible.

Enhance: Improve degraded ecosystems/return an area to original ecosystem including creating new habitat - habitat creation should be a standard feature of all new development, wherever it is.

Evaluation criteria

- 4.5 Ecological features (designated sites, habitats, and species) were evaluated where possible in relation to a geographical context (i.e. International, National, Regional, Metropolitan, County, District, Borough, Local and Site), in accordance with CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment Guidelines (2016). Criteria include designations, quality of habitat in relation to the site context, ability to support notable assemblages of species, contribution to habitat connectivity, dispersal opportunities or providing intrinsic ecological value.

5.0 Results: Desktop Study

Landscape context

- 5.1 The site is 700 metres from the Essex coast, and approximately 500 metres to the south of Harwich. Residential properties and gardens border the site on all boundaries. The wider landscape is dominated by residential gardens.

Designated sites and Priority Habitats

Please see maps provided in Appendix 2.

- 5.2 The site is not the subject of a conservation designation. The closest designated site is Hamford Water, approximately 1km to the south of the site. The SSSI citation describes Hamford Water as follows:

Hamford Water is a tidal inlet whose mouth is about three miles south of Harwich. It is a large and shallow estuarine basin comprising tidal creeks, intertidal mud and sand flats, saltmarshes, islands, beaches and marsh grasslands. The site is of international importance for breeding Little Terns and wintering Dark-bellied Brent Geese, wildfowl and waders, and of national importance for many other bird species. It also supports communities of coastal plants which are rare or extremely local in Britain, including Hog's Fennel *Peucedanum officinale* which is found elsewhere only in Kent.

- 5.3 The Stour and Orwell Estuaries is 1.1km to the north-east. The SSSI citation describes the Stour and Orwell Estuaries as follows:

The Stour Estuary is nationally important for 13 species of wintering waterfowl and three species on autumn passage. The estuary is also of national importance for coastal saltmarsh, sheltered muddy shores, two scarce marine invertebrates and a vascular scarce plant assemblage.

- 5.4 The development comprises 5 houses. Whilst the proposal will not result in a direct detrimental impact on either of the above designated sites, it is reasonable that residents will visit the coast for recreational purposes. This increased pressure over time can degrade habitats and lead to damage to qualifying features (habitats and species). The Essex Coast Recreational Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (Essex Coast RAMS) was designed to establish the level of developer contribution required to ensure sufficient funding could be generated to make coastal habitats sites more resilient to these changes. As a result, developers are required to pay a one-off financial contribution which is calculated per unit. This is secured via legal agreement and will provide sufficient mitigation for recreational impacts.

- 5.5 There is no Priority Habitat on or adjacent to the site.

EPS licenses

5.6 There are no EPS licenses within 2km.

Desktop study evaluation: Increased residential development will result in increased recreational use of the coast and will result in cumulative pressure on habitats/species. To mitigate, the developer will be required to pay a per-unit financial contribution to comply with the Essex Coast RAMS.

6.0 Results: Phase 1 Habitat Survey

Photographs from the site visit are provided in Figure 4. For full details on legally protected species, please refer to Section 7. Latin names appear in the text once.

The surveyed area spans two domestic gardens which are maintained and tidy. There are several small sheds along the southern edge. Vegetation is limited to an ornamental hedge through the centre, and scattered trees to the east. A mature oak tree exists to the north-west. There are several apple trees in the western garden.

Amenity lawn

- 6.1 Both gardens are dominated by maintained improved grassland.

Buildings

- 6.2 The only buildings on site are a series of timber sheds along the southern boundaries, in both gardens. All are simple timber designs with felt roofs and have negligible bat roost suitability. A shed in the western garden has a damaged roof and walls.

Hedgerows

- 6.3 There is an ornamental cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* hedge running between the two gardens. There is a maintained yew *Taxus baccata* hedgerow along the western aspect.

Trees

Trees have been surveyed by Tree Planning Solutions, this section should be read alongside the full AIA and the TPP provided in Appendix 1.

- 6.4 There is a mature oak *Quercus robur* tree beyond the north-western corner and a cherry *Prunus* sp. tree on the northern boundary. We understand both will be retained.
- 6.5 To the east of the site is an unmanaged row of trees with a mix of ornamental and native species. Species include hazel *Corylus avellana*, box *Buxus* sp. field maple *Acer campestre*, eucalyptus sp., weeping willow *Salix babylonica*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and cherry *Prunus* sp.
- 6.6 To the south-east of the site is a group of self-seeded cherry trees with false acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia* and a young horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*. These trees will be removed.
- 6.7 To the west of the site is a group of apple *Malus* sp. trees with 13 viable trees. These trees will be removed. We recommend, where possible that their loss is compensated for in the re-planting scheme.
- 6.8 There is a row of mature conifers overhanging the southern boundary.

Tall ruderal

- 6.9 There are narrow margins around the garden with longer grass and tall ruderal species including green alkanet *P. sempervirens*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, sow thistle *Sonchus* sp., cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, cleavers *Galium aparine* and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*. These are common, widespread species typical of unmanaged grassland.

Habitats evaluation: The surveyed habitat is typical of a domestic situation, dominated by well-maintained gardens. There are no habitats of note in legislative or policy terms. We recommend the loss of apple (and other small trees) is compensated for. All retained trees will be protected in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and arboricultural best practice.

Figure 4. Photographs



a) Mature oak tree to the north-west, to be retained and protected.



b) Timber shed on southern boundary.



c) Shed close to southern boundary – damaged roof and walls.



d) Apple trees to be removed/replaced.



e) South-eastern corner, maintained lawn, overhanging trees.



f) Cherry laurel hedgerow defining garden boundaries.

Figure 5. Target notes



Target note (TN)	Description
1	Mature oak tree, to be retained and protected.
2	Mature cherry tree, to be retained and protected.
3	Unmanaged row of trees and shrubs along eastern boundary.
4	Mature field maple, to be retained and protected.
5	Group of self-seeded cherry trees, to be removed.
6	Small brush pile.
7	Timber shed.
8	Timber shed with holes in roof and walls.
9	Row of conifers overhanging southern boundary.
10	Maintained yet hedgerow along western boundary.
11	Group of apple trees, to be removed and replaced.

7.0 Results: Protected/Priority Species Scoping

This section includes data search results, habitat requirements for species/species groups and an assessment in the context of the proposal.

Bats

Data search results:

- 7.1 EFC returned records for serotine, Daubenton’s bat, leisler’s bat, soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat within 2km.

Habitat requirements:

- 7.2 Bats require safe, sheltered internal spaces in which to roost. In buildings, roosts are typically found in loft spaces, under fascias, weatherboards, lead flashing, under roof/ridge or hanging tiles. In trees, bats are typically found in woodpecker holes, flaking bark, wounds and hazard beams. The largest roosts are found close to foraging resources such as woodland and water.

Assessment:

- 7.3 The sheds on site have negligible roost suitability. There are no suitable internal/external crevices or voids and no evidence of bats was identified.
- 7.4 There are no trees on/adjacent to the site with potential roost features.
- 7.5 Low numbers of foraging bats may use the site, particularly around established vegetation. Therefore, we recommend the following in relation to any proposed lighting to ensure bat foraging/commuting behaviour is maintained:

Brightness of lights should be as low as possible.

Lighting should not be directed at retained vegetation, linear features or newly installed bat boxes.

Directional lighting and/or fittings with hoods and cowls should be utilised.

Where possible, security lighting should be motion sensitive and on timers.

Where possible, directional low impact solar bollard lighting should be used to illuminate roads, paths and parking areas.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	Ensure lighting is kept to a minimum.
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	Integrated bat roost features are recommended, one per house. Bat boxes could be installed on the mature oak tree.

Great crested newt

Data search results:

7.6 No great crested newt records were returned.

Habitat requirements:

7.7 Great crested newt (GCN) requires both terrestrial and aquatic habitats. They return to aquatic habitat to breed March-June, using small to medium-sized ponds with no fish and suitable marginal vegetation, including watercress and float grass (Froglife 2001).

7.8 Terrestrial habitat includes refuges and foraging and dispersal opportunities as well as hibernation sites such as rubble piles or mammal burrows. It is rare to find GCN over 250 metres from a breeding pond (Cresswell & Whitworth 2004).

Assessment:

7.9 There are no ponds to be lost or directly impacted and according to aerial imagery (MAGIC, 2023) no ponds exist within 250 metres. As there are no ponds within the recognised maximum dispersal distance, there is negligible risk of great crested newt being present on site now or colonising the site in the future. Therefore, it is not reasonably likely that great crested newt would be affected by, or be at risk from, the development proposals. Consequently, it is considered that the risk of potential impact of the proposals upon the conservation status of great crested newt is negligible and the risk of committing a criminal offence is highly unlikely. No further surveys are considered necessary or appropriate in respect of this species at this site.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	None
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	None

Dormouse

Data search results

7.10 Dormouse records were returned for locations 1.1km and 1.2km from the site.

Habitat requirements:

- 7.11 The hazel dormouse requires wooded habitats, usually semi-natural woodland containing hazel coppice and oak, and a rich understorey cover through which to disperse safely between trees (English Nature 2006).

Assessment:

- 7.12 There is no suitable dormouse habitat on the site nor connecting to it. The habitats present on the site hold negligible value to this species.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	None
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	None

Otter and water vole

Data search results:

- 7.13 Water vole has been recorded 1.5km from the site. No records were returned for otter.

Habitat requirements:

- 7.14 Both species require flowing water, deep enough to support foraging behaviour and with connectivity into the wider landscape.

Assessment:

- 7.15 There is no suitable aquatic habitat on or adjacent to the site.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	None
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	None

Reptiles

Data search results:

- 7.16 Slow worm, grass snake, common lizard and adder have been recorded within 2km. The closest recorded reptile is a grass snake, 0.5km from the site.

Habitat requirements:

- 7.17 Reptiles (common lizard, slow worm, grass snake and adder) require mosaic habitats with features in which to bask, forage and shelter. These habitats need to have onward connectivity for dispersal. Suitable habitats include grassland with scrub edges or small woodland coppices (Edgar et al. 2010).

Assessment:

- 7.18 Gardens are often suitable receptors for slow worm, however in this situation the gardens are tidy and regularly mown. The habitat is sub-optimal – the grass doesn't provide any value for shelter, there are no log piles nor any mammal burrows or buried rubble that could reasonably provide opportunities for shelter/hibernation. Based on the domestic setting, lack of habitat diversity, maintenance regime and limited connectivity off-site, reptiles are unlikely to be present and affected.
- 7.19 To reduce the risk of colonisation, the site must be maintained through mowing until development commences. This will reduce the risk of matured habitat attracting reptiles that might disperse onto an unmanaged site. Failure to maintain the site could result in suitable habitat developing and reptile surveys becoming necessary.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	Continue mowing regime to discourage colonisation.
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	None

Birds

Data search results

- 7.20 There are extensive local bird records. The site is only suitable for generalist, common garden birds.

Habitat requirements:

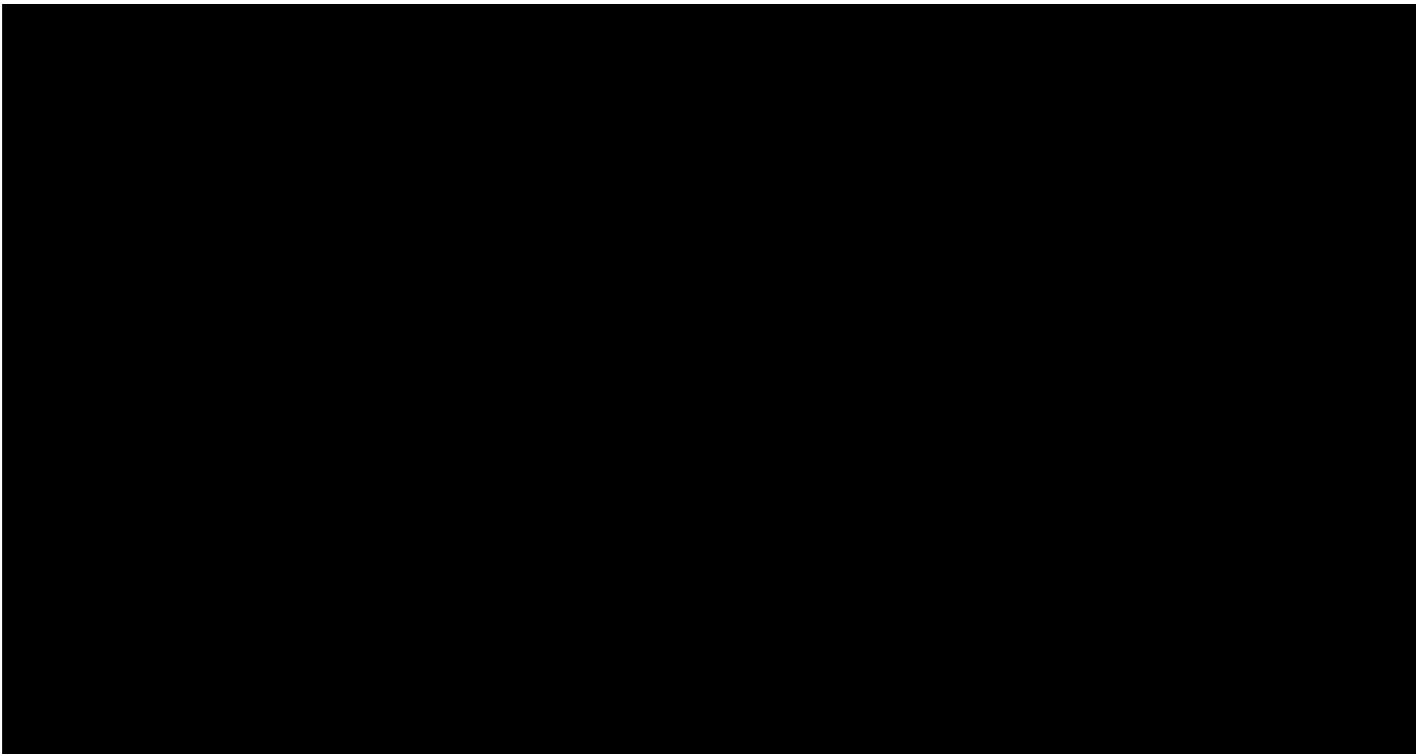
- 7.21 Nesting birds can be found in scrub, trees and buildings between March and September inclusive (note some species, including pigeon, will nest all year round).

Assessment:

7.22 Open sheds, trees and hedgerows around the rear garden provide good habitat for nesting birds. To avoid impacts to active nests, removal of open sheds and any required hedgerow management or tree removal will be undertaken during the period October to February inclusive to avoid the bird nesting season. If this is not possible, no more than 48 hours prior to commencement of works on site, a check for nesting birds must be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist and any active nests will need to be left in situ until any young have permanently left.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	Ensure any work that could impact an active nest including removal of open sheds and removal/management of trees and hedgerows takes place outside nesting season.
Mitigation	In the unlikely event that active nests are encountered during clearance, a suitable buffer will be created around the nest (> 5 metres) and work will only commence once the young have fledged.
Compensation/enhancement	A variety of bird nest boxes will be included in the development to create permanent nesting opportunities.



Legally protected plants/invertebrates

Data search results

7.27 No plants listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) have been recorded on the site.

Assessment:

7.28 The site is a typical domestic garden, with limited habitat diversity and a lack of opportunities for pollinators. The site does not show a high risk of supporting any notable insect assemblage due to the lack of diversity.

7.29 To enhance the site, it is recommended that soft landscaping includes native or wildlife-friendly planting, e.g. with nectar-rich flowers will be attractive to a range of invertebrate species including bees and butterflies.

Requirements for further survey, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement

Further survey requirement	None
Avoidance	None
Mitigation	None
Compensation	None
Enhancement	The development should include wildlife friendly planting, particularly to attract pollinators.

8.0 Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints:

- 8.1 A per-unit financial contribution will be required to ensure the development complies with the Essex Coast RAMS, specifically relating to recreational pressures at Essex coastal sites.
- 8.2 All retained trees, notably the mature oak tree beyond the north-western corner will be protected in accordance with arboricultural best practice.
- 8.3 There are limited constraints in relation to protected species, other than ensuring nesting birds are protected through appropriate timing of works or pre-works nest checks. As a general measure, the site should be maintained to discourage wildlife colonisation ahead of development commencing. Failure to maintain the site could result in further species surveys becoming necessary.

Opportunities:

- 8.4 Biodiversity net-gain is now encouraged under Paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). The following measures are reasonable and proportionate, they could be secured in a Biodiversity Enhancement Layout/Strategy, as required:

Bat boxes: It is recommended that one integrated bat roost feature is included per house, facing south and installed as high as possible (above 2 metres). These features could comprise bat tiles, tubes or bricks.

Bird boxes: It is recommended that one integrated bird nest feature, including a sparrow terrace is installed per house, facing north or east and installed above 2 metres.

See Appendix 3 for recommended boxes.

Hedgerow planting: The site could be enhanced through planting native mixed species hedgerows to improve connectivity and opportunities for wildlife to forage and shelter. A recommended species/ratio is: Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* (50%), field maple *Acer campestre* (20%) dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* (10%), hazel *Corylus avellana* (10%) and field maple *Acer campestre* (10%). Small trees will be included to compensate for the loss of apple trees, ideally apple, pear, cherry should be replanted in a suitable location off-site.

Wildlife friendly planting: The development will include shrub planting to attract wildlife, including pollinators. Recommended species include:

Shrubs:

- Aubretia sp.
- Currant *Ribes* sp.
- Lungwort
- Primrose
- Sweet violet

- Winter aconite
- Wood anemone
- Purple toadflax
- Honeysuckle
- Red valerian

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Hybrid Ecology was instructed to carry out an ecological assessment in relation to a residential development in Dovercourt, Essex.
- 9.2 A mapping exercise and desk study were undertaken to determine constraints relating to designated sites, Priority Habitats and protected species. A survey was carried out in June 2023 to map habitats and identify any potential for, or evidence of, legally protected species. The survey also identified opportunities for ecological enhancement.
- 9.3 The site comprises low ecological value, with limited habitats and limited scope for protected species, other than nesting birds. Further surveys are not considered to be necessary.
- 9.4 Provided all measures included in this report are followed, we consider the development can proceed in compliance with planning policy, legislation and best practice.

Enhancement opportunities

- 9.5 The development provides opportunities for biodiversity enhancements, including hedgerow planting, tree planting, bat boxes, bird boxes and planting for pollinators (where possible). These measures will contribute to biodiversity net-gain in accordance with Paragraph 174(d) of the NPPF (2021). The design, maintenance and management of these features could be secured by condition.

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Appendix 1. Site plan (Tree Protection Plan)



19.2m

Fronks Road

Presby

Our Lady Queen of Heaven RC Church

Orchard Close (under construction)

Road as approved 22/01227/VOC

shared surface private drive 5.5m wide

root protection areas

cycle store

T1 garden area 93 sq.m
cycle store

T2 garden area 80 sq.m
cycle store

T3 garden area 130 sq.m
cycle store

size 5 turning head

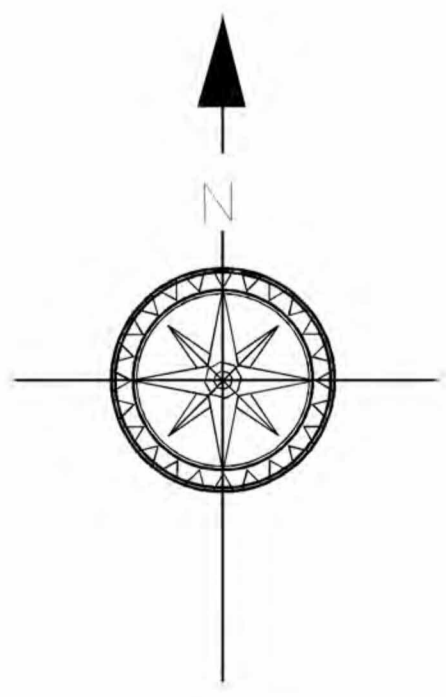
T4 garden area 180 sq.m

T5 garden area 190 sq.m

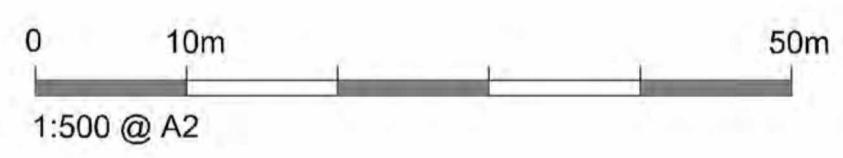
T6 garden area 150 sq.m

T7

T8



Indicative



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Land to rear of
135 / 137 Fronks Road
Dovercourt
Essex

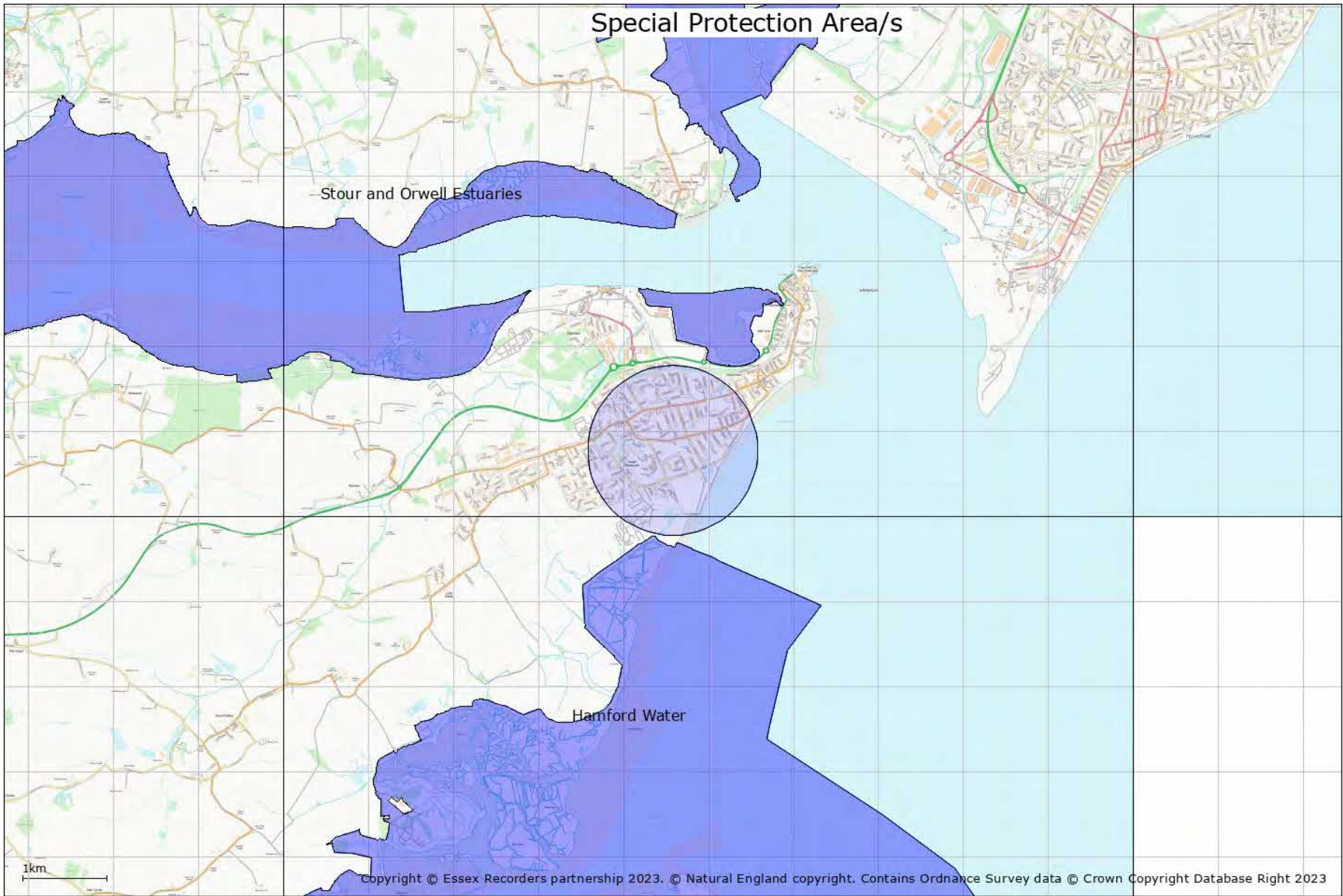
SITE PLAN

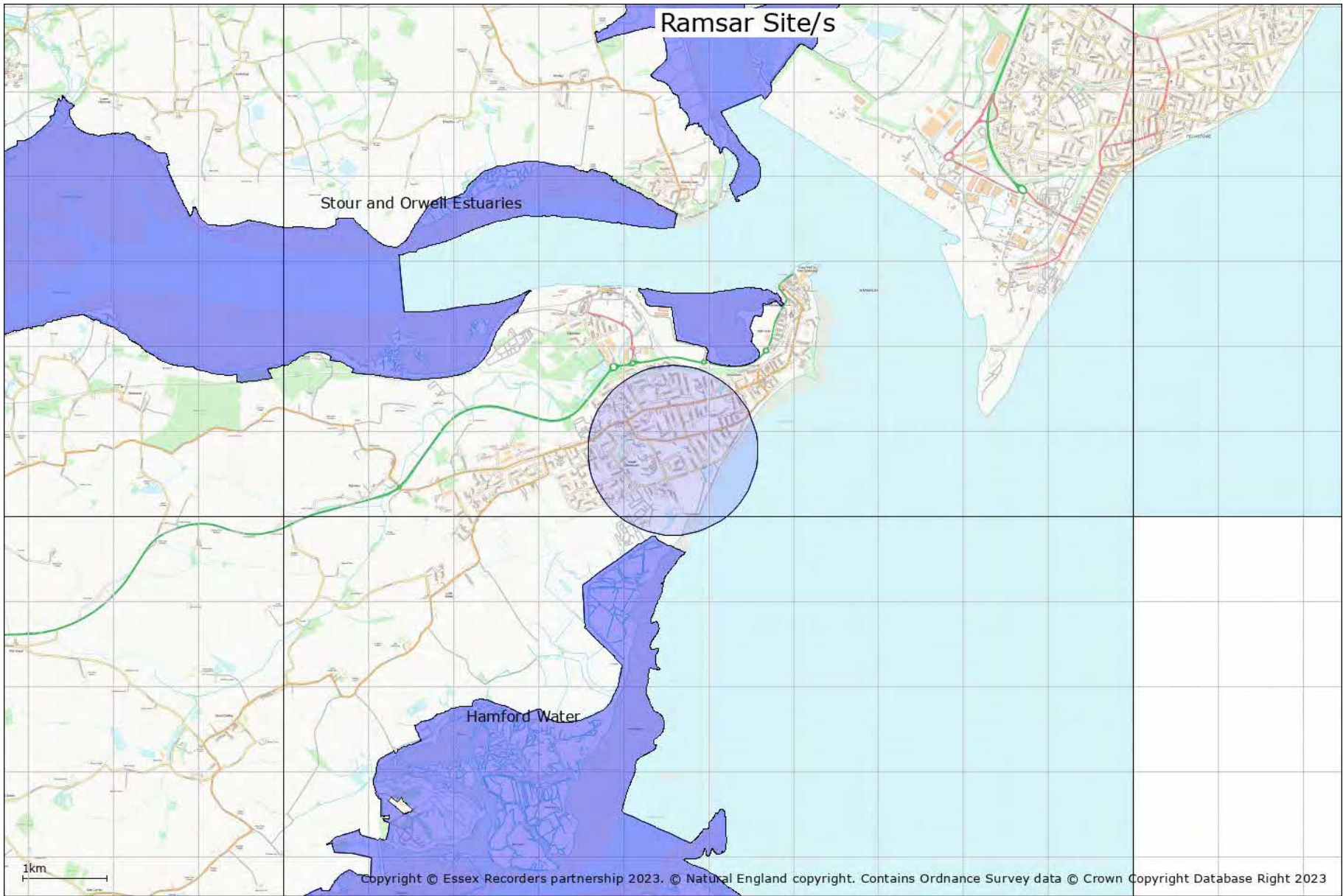
Tim Snow Architects
9A High Street, Brightlingsea
Colchester, Essex CO2 0AL

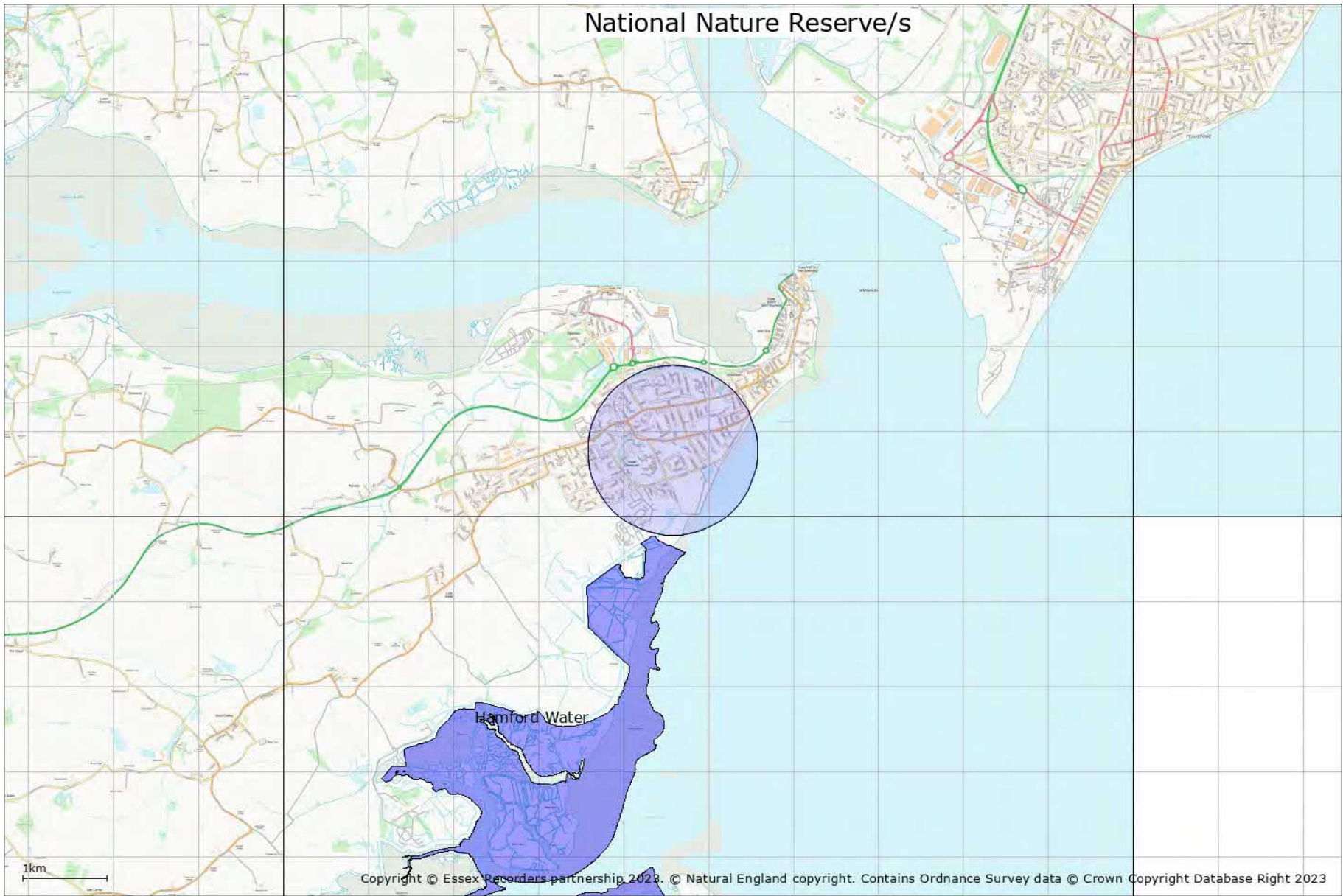
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Date	JUNE 2023
Drawing No.	988/01

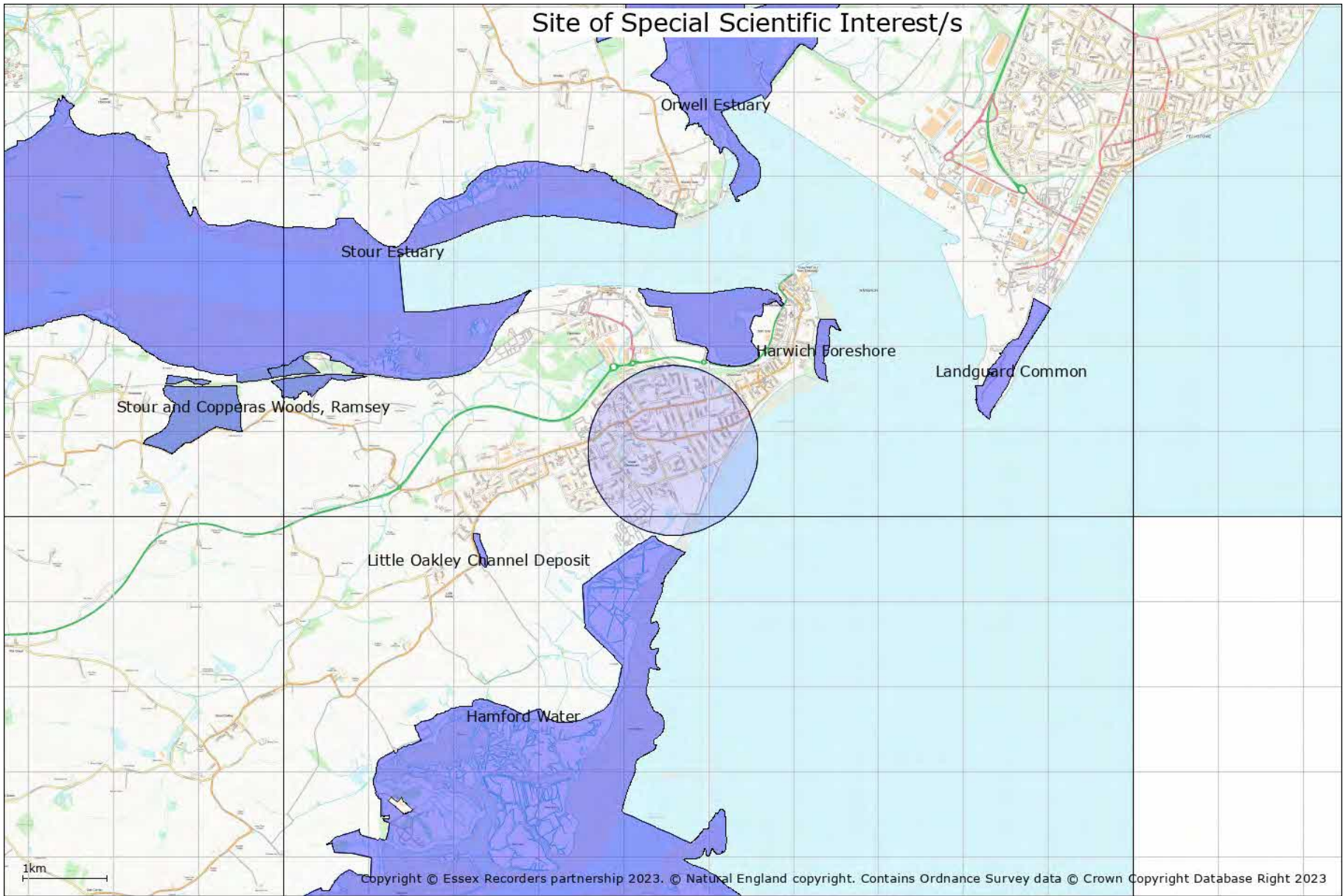
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Appendix 2. Maps showing designated sites within 2km (Essex Field Club)







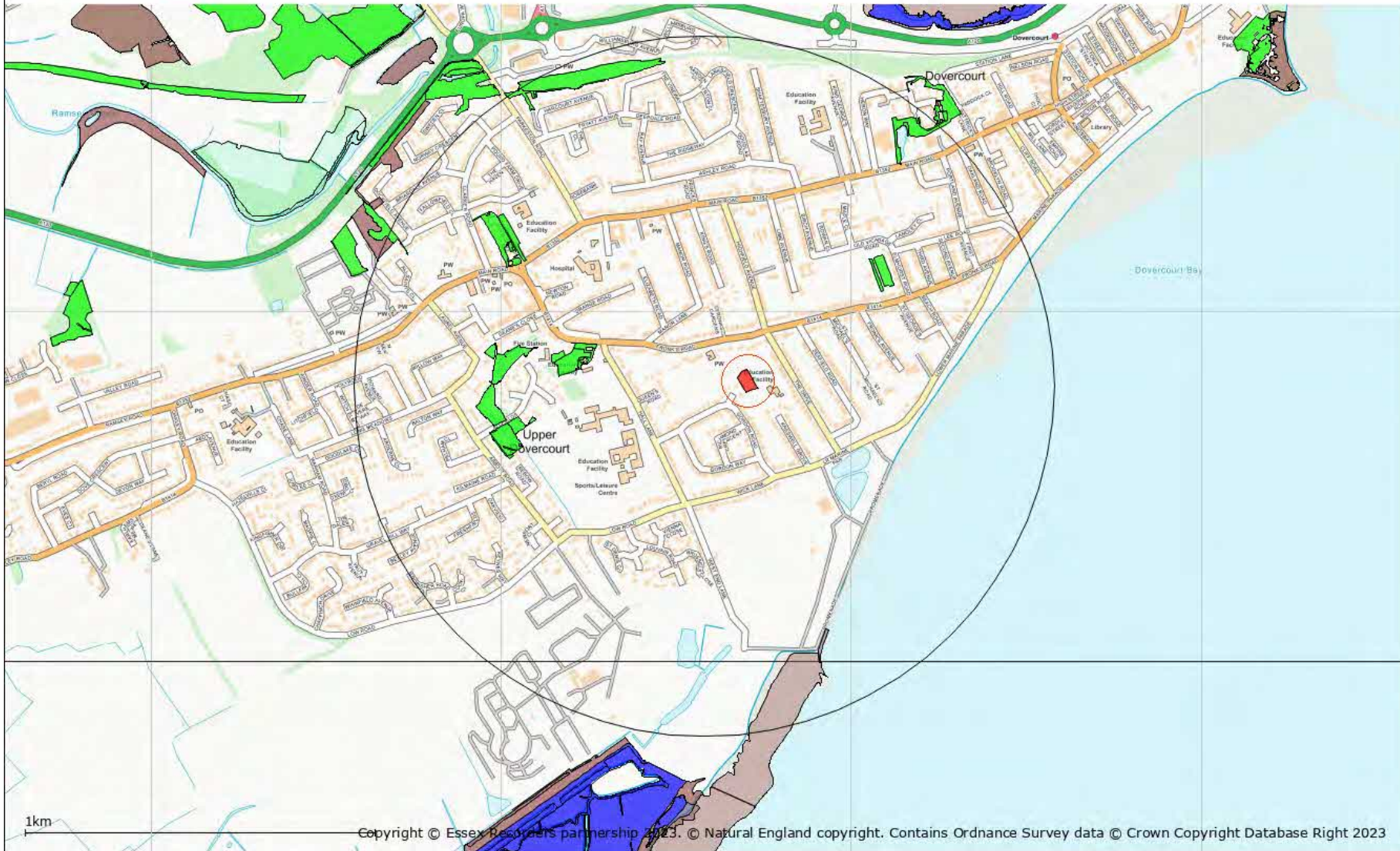






Priority Habitat Inventory

- Mudflats
- No main habitat but additional habitats present
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchard
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Deciduous woodland



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Appendix 3. Habitat boxes



Integrated Eco Bat Box for buildings – [Integrated Eco Bat Box | NHBS Practical Conservation Equipment](#)

Integrated Bat Boxes

Integrated Bat Boxes



Habibat 3S Bat Box Range



Habibat Unfaced Bat box



**Habibat 001 Bat Box
Standard Facing**

Habibat integrated bat roost feature designs [Integrated Bat Boxes | Habibat](#)



Vivara Pro woodcrete open-fronted bird box



Vivara Pro woodcrete 32mm bird box



Vivara Pro sparrow terrace

All Vivara Pro boxes can be found here - [Search results \(wildcare.co.uk\)](https://www.wildcare.co.uk/search-results)