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## **Ecological Method Statement**

Gooseacre, Markyate

<b>Site</b>	<i>Gooseacre, Markyate</i>
<b>Project number</b>	<i>80818</i>
<b>Client name / Address</b>	<i>Michael Osman</i>

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#### Declaration of compliance

This document has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 "Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development". The information which we have provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Aims and scope of method statement

A planning application was approved by Dacorum District Council for the construction of a new residential dwelling at Gooseacre, Markyate, planning reference: 4/01283/19/FUL. This method statement will aid to discharge the ecological aspects of condition 6 in the planning notice, which states;

*6. "Prior to the commencement of any below ground construction works, including the erection of any foundations, other than by foundation trenches and erection of any foundations approved under this permission, a Construction Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*The construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Construction Management Plan which shall include details of:*

- a) a method statement for any site clearance and construction activities upon the site to minimise any harm to protective species,*
- b) measures for the protection of hedgerows and other landscaping features around the site for the duration of construction,*
- c) details of measures to ensure that service routes, foundations or other service trenches are covered or protected from access by wildlife outside of construction hours*

The purpose of this document is to describe the general working procedure and methodology to comply with recommendations 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (MKA Ecology Ltd., 2019):

- Recommendation 1: Retain and protect the west and south hedgerows during the construction phase of development;
- Recommendation 2: Undertake site clearance and construction activities at the Site under a strict method statement to minimise risk of harm to reptiles; and
- Recommendation 5: Retain and protect the west hedgerow using fencing to avoid impacts on badgers *Meles meles*.
- Recommendation 6: Undertake a pre-commencement badger survey to ensure there are no impacts on badger setts and badgers occupying setts during the construction phase of the development

This will ensure that no reptiles and badgers are accidentally killed or injured during site clearance and ground works. The approaches outlined in this method statement will minimise the risk of any offence occurring under legislation.

Additional mitigation measures for protected species and habitats (including hedgerows, bats, brown hare *Lepus europaeus* and hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*) are set out in the PEA (MKA Ecology Ltd., 2019). The approaches outlined in this method statement will also ensure that no negative impacts such as accidental killing or injury occurs to these species groups. This will be achieved by retaining and protecting the hedgerow.

## 1.2. Background

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment (including a desk study, Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Scoping Survey), was completed at Gooseacre, Markyate in November 2018. The habitats identified onsite are shown in Figure 1 with the Site found to comprise predominantly of improved grassland, bound by hedgerows.

Very few records of reptiles were returned within 2km of the Site, with two slow-worm from Dedmansey Woods. Suitable habitat for reptiles for all stages in the life cycle are present at the site, the unmanaged grassland providing suitable foraging habitat and the mature hedgerow providing opportunity for hibernation. Overall, the PEA concluded that there is a **low** risk of reptiles being present onsite.

The presence of an active outlying or satellite sett was **confirmed** during the PEA, this being located at the base of a mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior* within the west hedgerow boundary. Several signs of badger activity (droppings, tracks and feeding signs) were also identified, as were two disused setts, each with multiple entrances.

Suitable habitat was also identified for a suite of additional protected species including nesting birds, bats, brown hare and hazel dormouse. The hedgerow to the west of the Site was highlighted as an important ecological feature for bats, badger, nesting birds and hazel dormice and as such it was recommended that to avoid impacts to these species it must be retained and protected with Heras fencing throughout the development.

## 1.3. Description of works

The proposed development is shown in Figure 2 and is for a single dwelling house centrally positioned in the northern half of the field. Access to the dwelling would be from the existing access track running along the southern boundary. The design and landscaping are based around a principle of benefitting local biodiversity, with several areas being given over to either the creation of new habitats or the enhancement of existing ones. An orchard is proposed in the south-west and extensive tree planting

will form part of the east boundary. The hedgerows to the west and south will be enhanced to increase their value as wildlife corridors and the present *Photinia* boundary feature in the east replaced with a native species hedgerow.

The new dwelling, a four-block arrangement centred around a courtyard, will incorporate green roofs, 'living walls' and enhancements for roosting bats, nesting birds and invertebrates.

#### 1.4. Legislation and policy

##### *Reptiles*

Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) as amended by the CROW Act (2000), and are subject to part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5) which makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally kill or injure (Section 9(1))
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publishing advertisements to buy or sell a protected species (Section 9(5))

Smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* are afforded further protection within the UK, however their presence within Hertfordshire is considered to be highly unlikely.

Furthermore, all reptile species are designated as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (Act (2006). This sets out a duty for decision makers, including local planning authorities, to contribute towards maintaining, and where possible enhancing the conservation status of any Section 41 Species of Principal Importance found on a site.

##### *Nesting birds*

In the UK, all wild birds (defined as any species listed on Category A, B or C of the British Ornithologist Union's British List (BOU, 2019)) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully or recklessly kill or injure any species of wild bird;
- Wilfully or recklessly damage or destroy an active bird's nest or bird eggs; and
- Intentionally take any wild bird, their nests or their eggs.

In addition, some species, listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, are afforded additional protection from wilful or reckless disturbance of adult birds at an active nest site or whilst with dependant young.

### Badgers

Badger setts and badgers occupying a sett are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Potential impacts of the development on Badgers include:

- The loss of active badger setts;
- Disturbance of badgers in an active sett.

It is an offence to:

- Damage a sett or any part of it;
- Destroy a sett;
- Obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a sett; or
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett

A sett is defined legally as any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger (Natural England 2009).

### 1.5. Summary of required activities

The hedgerow to the west will be retained and protected with Heras fencing to ensure no impacts on bats, badger, nesting birds and hazel dormice. To remove the residual impacts on reptiles, nesting birds and badger at the Site, the following activities will be undertaken:

- Sensitive timing of works;
- Briefing of all onsite contractors;
- Nesting bird check (if required)
- A hand search of suitable habitats within the development footprint for reptiles;
- Supervised clearance of habitats on site (by a suitability qualified ecologist);
- Suitable storage of materials on site; and
- Pre-commencement badger check.

The appropriate timings of these activities is outlined in Table 1: Appropriate timing of activities at below.

**Table 1: Appropriate timing of activities at Gooseacre, Markyate**

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Vegetation clearance to avoid sensitive period for												

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
reptiles (i.e. hand search)												
Vegetation clearance to avoid sensitive period for nesting birds			Vegetation clearance requiring a nesting bird check						Optimal time avoiding impacts upon breeding birds and reptiles			
Vegetation clearance to avoid sensitive period for brown hare												
Pre-commencement badger check												



Figure 1: UK Habitat Classification map of Gooseacre, Markyate

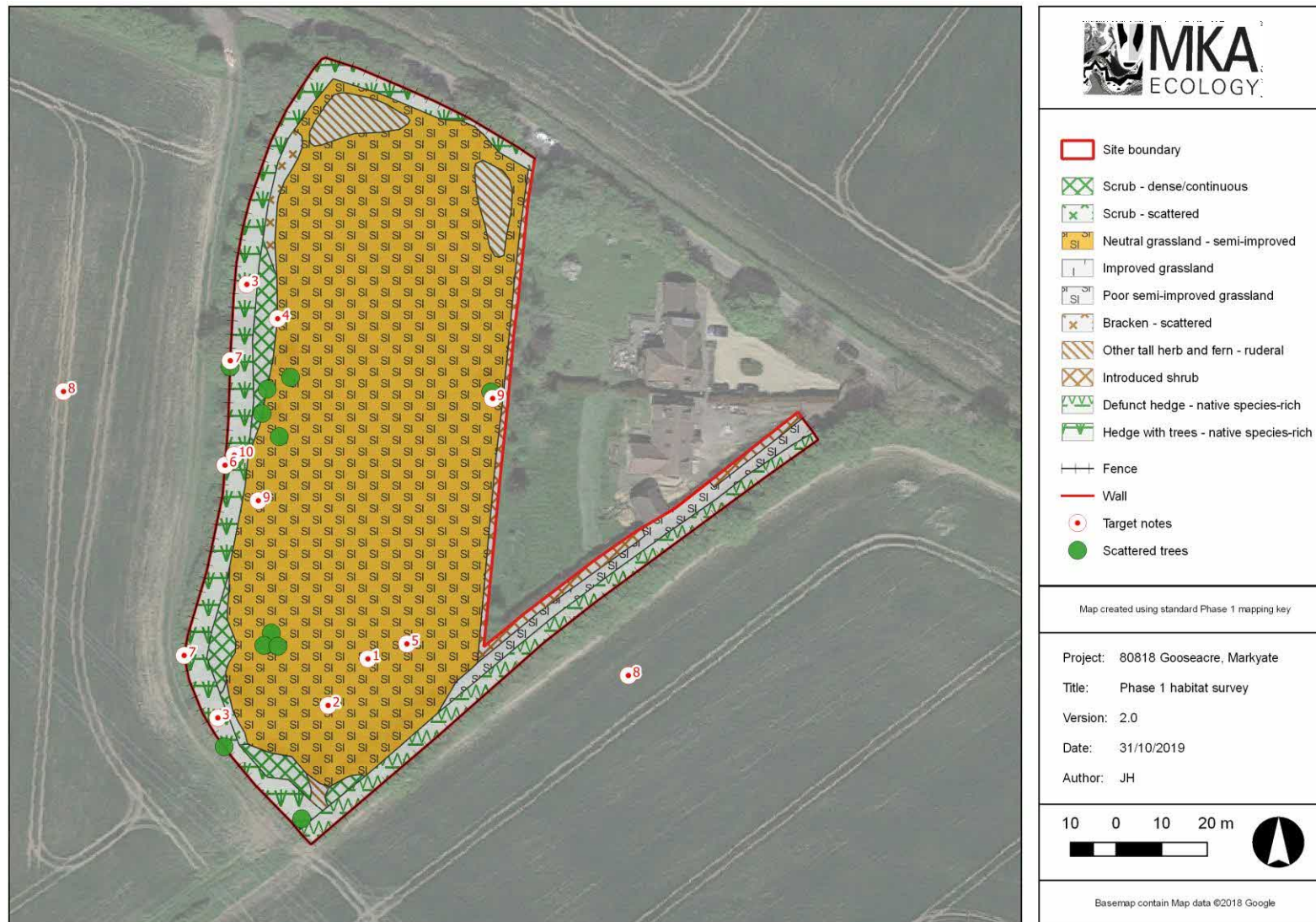
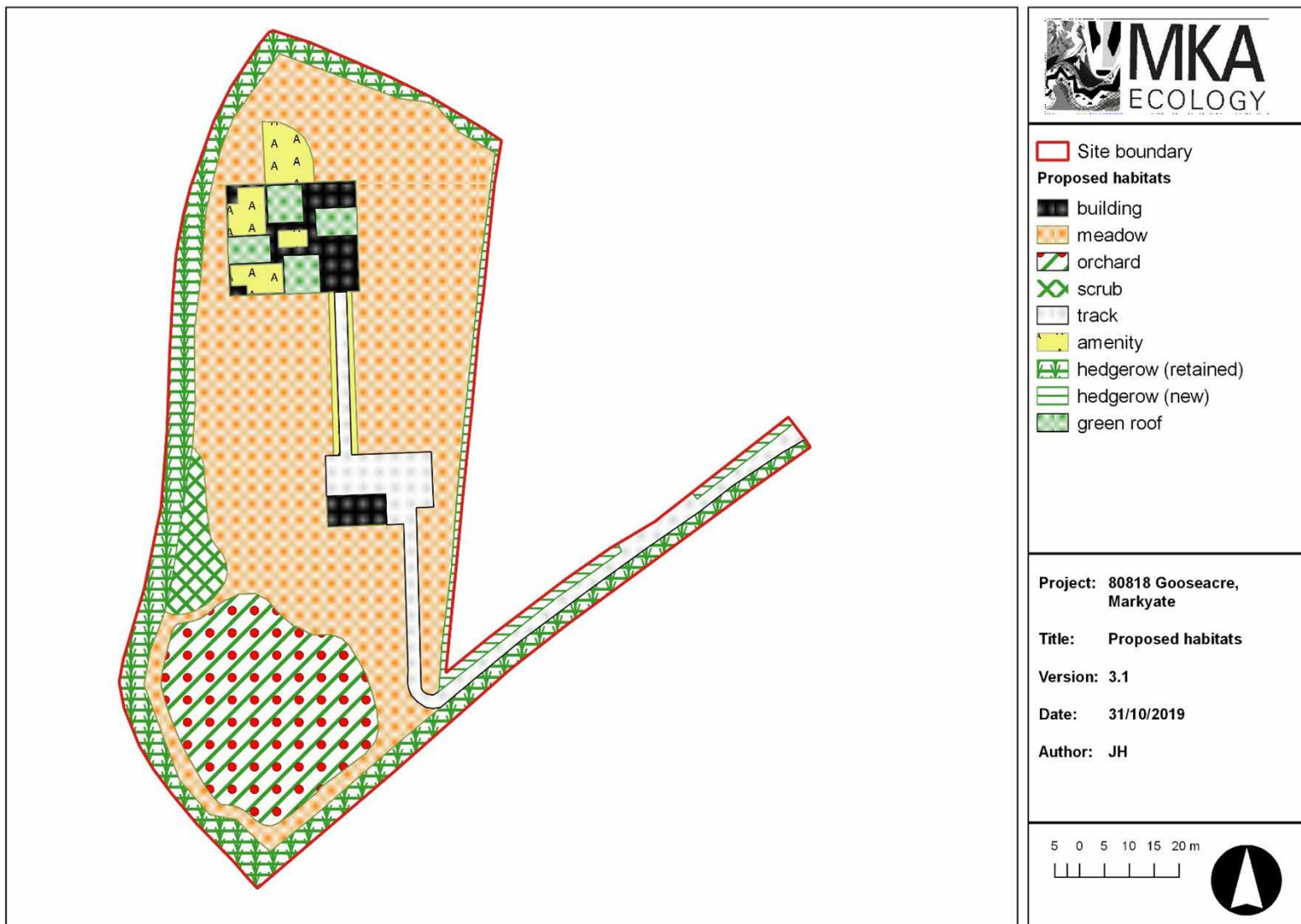


Figure 2: Site Plan for Gooseacre, Markyate



## 2. ECOLOGICAL CLERK OF WORKS (ECoW)

### 2.1. ECoW role and responsibility

As per the recommendations made within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (MKA Ecology Ltd, 2019), an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) is required to be present onsite to monitor the development project to reduce the likelihood of disturbance to habitats and protective species. The role of the competent ecologist who will supervise the ecological works are outlined below.

An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) is required to monitor a development project where there is a likelihood of disturbance to sensitive species and/or habitats and as such, must be aware of all relevant legislation regarding species that may be found on site. The nature and complexity of the ECoW role varies considerably between sites but often involves:

- Supervising the implementation of planning conditions, licenses and best practice guidance through the construction and operational phases of developments.
- Ensuring that works on site comply with legislation regarding protected species. Non-compliance with environmental and ecological legislation, licenses or consents can result in delays to a project, heavy fines and even custodial sentences in some circumstances. The role of the ECoW can add significant value to a project, not just by avoiding fines and delays, but through enhancing the reputation of clients and their projects through good publicity.
- Providing guidance and advice on how to avoid or minimise on-site ecological impacts through, for example, the design and supervision of ecological mitigation and compensation measures.

Before any work can proceed on site, the ECoW must ensure that any ecological issues have been identified and that adequate protection measures are put into place. These have been identified in both the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (MKA Ecology Ltd, 2019).

### 2.2. Onsite induction

The ECoW will provide a brief induction for contractors on site prior to commencement of works, detailing the contents of this document. All onsite contractors will be made aware of the presence of badgers and reptiles within the wider area and the potential presence at the Site. A copy of this method statement should be available onsite at all times. All contractors should be aware of the need to stop work should reptiles or a badger sett be discovered at the Site. **Although MKA Ecology Ltd will be present for vegetation clearance on site, they should be called on 01763 262211 if a reptile or**

**badger sett is found during unsupervised works.** See Appendix 2: Species identification and ecology for photographs of these species to assist with identification of reptiles and badger setts.

Any new contractors starting at the Site will be made familiar with the contents of this document before starting any works at the Site. Ideally the key messages in this method statement should be included in the general site induction for new contractors.

### 2.3. Communication

Good communication and close liaison with other contractors, project managers and designers is an essential part of this type of work. The ECoW should not 'police' the site or give instruction but must ensure that sensitive ecological issues are identified early and managed according to Best Practice. The role of ECoW is to take all the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of planning conditions, licenses and best practice guidance through the construction and operational phases of developments.

During site operations that may impact upon the ecology of the site, the ECoW will work closely with site operatives and operators of machinery to provide advice and be at hand in case any issues arise during works.

The ECoW and site manager should agree a procedure of work before any works commence with regard to avoiding harm, damage or destruction to any species and habitats protected by law and/or relevant planning guidance.

Agreements should be put into document form and all site operatives should be briefed and sign the document to confirm that they agree to adhere to the procedures and methodologies outlined. An example of a written formal agreement would be a Method Statement such as this, outlining the methods and constraints that site operatives must adhere to so that the work on site complies with planning conditions, licenses and best practice guidance.

### 2.4. Close-down report

A report summarising the outcome of the ecological works on Site will be issued once site clearance has been completed. When works are in progress, accurate records should be kept of ecological issues or constraints and a note made of their location on site (GPS or Chainage number).

## 3. METHODOLOGY FOR WORKS

### 3.1. General information

Condition 6 states that ‘a method statement for any site clearance and construction activities upon the site to minimise any harm to protective species,’ and ‘details of measures to ensure that service routes, foundations or other service trenches are covered or protected from access by wildlife outside of construction hours’.

The following sections detail the working methods required to minimise the risk to and safeguard sensitive receptors. While the main focus of this section is preventing impacts to reptiles, vegetation clearance will also be undertaken in a manner that is also sensitive to nesting birds, brown hare and hazel dormouse.

The ECoW should carry out the vegetation and ground clearance searches. The aim is to find sheltering individuals, if present, and which are otherwise difficult to detect.

Hand searches and destructive searches will be carried out on all locations on Site that are scheduled to be cleared for development. Reptiles, will become less active during the winter (November – February) and will use brash/ rubble and log piles as locations to shelter during this period. Reptiles are particularly vulnerable to disturbance during this period. Therefore, disturbance of the ground layer should avoid November to February inclusive.

### 3.2. Searching methodology

Ground clearance work within the development area will begin with a destructive search under an ecological watching brief. This will involve hand searches of vegetation before it is removed to ensure that no reptiles are present. Any rubble piles or log piles should be removed by hand and led by an ecologist. The surface of the soil should then be slowly stripped by mechanical means under supervision of the ecologist.

If the vegetation clearance works is undertaken between March and August, it will be preceded by a nesting bird check. If required, this will involve a period of observation, where an experienced ornithologist will record bird behaviour within the vegetation to identify active nests, with particular reference to breeding behaviour such as carrying nesting material, carrying food and the calls of young.

Following the observation period and assuming no nesting birds are present, a destructive search under an ecological watching brief will occur. Any rubble piles or log piles should be removed by hand and inspected by an ecologist.

### 3.3. Protocol to follow if a reptile is found

A licence is not required to capture or disturb certain reptiles such as grass snake and slow-worm. However, these species are protected from killing or injuring, so there is a risk of committing an offence if damaging the habitats causes harm to reptiles.

Should any of these protected species be recorded work should cease and proposed methodologies should be reviewed.

### 3.4. Protocol to follow if a nesting bird is found

If a nesting bird is found during any of the searches then a suitable buffer zone must be implemented around each active nest to ensure that no damage to the nest could occur prior to young fledging. Depending upon the species and the stage of the nesting attempt, this may result in a delay of several weeks during which time other species may start nesting within the vegetation.

### 3.5. Storage of materials

To prevent reptiles and other wildlife from using stored site materials as a refuge, materials will be stored on pallets raised from the ground surface.

Once dismantled structures have been thoroughly searched, the resultant materials should be removed from the area of disturbance, so that they can no longer act as attractive shelter for species in the area.

### 3.6. Trenching

All trenches should be covered or backfilled to prevent trapping animals. Where this is not feasible ramps should be provided to allow animals to disperse of their own accord. This will allow reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife to escape should they fall in the trenches. All trenches should be checked for the presence of reptiles or other wildlife before backfilling.

### 3.7. Protection of hedgerow features

As per recommendation 1 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal:

*'The species rich hedgerow on the west boundary provides a large portion of the ecological value of this site. Hedgerows are a National Habitat of Principal Importance (NERC Act, 2006) and come under the Local Habitat Action Plan for Farmland.'*

*The hedgerow and adjoining scrub at the development site shows demonstrable value to nesting and foraging birds, and badger, as well as likely value to commuting and foraging bats and invertebrates. We endorse the recommendations implied from the Outline Landscape Masterplan that this hedgerow and scrub should be retained. Furthermore, it should be protected at all stages of the construction process by the erection of suitable fencing (e.g, Heras or similar) at a distance of 10 metres from the hedgerow.'*

As such the hedgerow must be protected by Heras fencing during construction to avoid damage or accidental removal. In line with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal a minimum 10m buffer from the hedgerow edge should be provided to ensure the stability of the hedgerow is not comprised. This should be put in place before works commence and the extent of all fencing should be agreed with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

This will also comply with recommendations 5 and 7 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which outline that the hedgerow must be retained and protected in order to prevent impacts to badger and hazel dormouse (MKA Ecology Ltd, 2019).

### **3.8. Methodology for badger safeguarding during construction**

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identified the presence of an active outlying or satellite sett at the base of a mature ash within the west hedgerow boundary (MKA Ecology Ltd., 2019). Several signs of badger activity (droppings, tracks and feeding signs) were also identified, as were two disused setts, each with multiple entrances.

Given the size of the identified sett and the likelihood, given its status as an outlying sett, it was considered to be sufficient to avoid impacts to the sett through the use of protective fencing. Protective fencing has been recommended for the entire hedgerow and we reiterate the need to use such fencing to avoid impacts on badger.

Badger activity can change significantly over a short period of time and therefore there is a low risk of badgers creating new setts onsite, or within the 30m zone of influence, during construction works.

#### *Pre-commencement badger check*

A pre-commencement badger check was undertaken on 07 November 2023 to confirm whether any active badger setts were present on site in order to inform any mitigation or licensing measures that may be required.

No current evidence of badger activity was recorded on site or within the 30m buffer zone. The active badger sett that was identified in 2018 was covered in leaf litter and no signs of active badger were

recorded near the hole or onsite. The tree underneath which the badger hole was dug also appears to have fallen over slightly causing the tunnel within the base of the tree to narrow.

No active badger setts, or evidence of badger activity were recorded on site or within the 30m buffer zone. Therefore, active badger setts are considered to be absent. As such, no Natural England licence is required and badgers do not present a significant constraint to the development.

#### *Protocol to follow if a badger sett is found*

If a badger sett is found onsite or within the 30m zone of influence then construction works will have to cease immediately and a licence from Natural England will need to be obtained.

#### *General measures to minimise risk to badgers*

If development works do not commence within six months, it is recommended that a further walkover badger survey is undertaken to obtain up to date data on the current distribution of active badger setts in and around the Site. This is because badger activity can change significantly over a short period of time.

There is some potential for badgers to create new setts on site during the course of development works. Any new badger setts created during the course of development works may require additional mitigation and, potentially, licensing from Natural England. As a precaution, areas of retained green space should be monitored weekly by site workers for the presence of new badger setts.

Efforts should be made to make sure that badgers utilising the site during construction are not injured or killed. Several simple measures can be taken to ensure that this does not happen.

In order to safeguard badgers and other mammals during construction, the following measures will be implemented:

- Any trenches or pits that are left exposed overnight will require a ramp to the surface to allow badgers to escape.
- In addition to this, the storage of topsoil or other building materials will be given careful consideration. Mounds of topsoil will be kept to a minimum to prevent badgers using them for sett building. Any mounds of topsoil left overnight will be covered when not in use and will be inspected prior to removal to ensure no temporary badger setts have been created.
- Unsecured food, litter or chemicals will not be left within the working area overnight to ensure that badgers are not attracted to the construction site.
- Stacks of pallets and other building materials may offer resting places and should be inspected daily prior to works commencing.



## 4. REFERENCES

MKA Ecology Ltd. (2019) *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Gooseacre, Markyate Hertfordshire*. MKA Ecology, Cambridge. January 2019.

MKA Ecology Ltd. (2020) *Biodiversity Management Plan, Gooseacre, Markyate Hertfordshire*. MKA Ecology, Cambridge. January 2019.

Natural England. 2004. *Reptiles: guidelines for developers. (IN151)* English Nature, Peterborough.

## 5. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy.

Please note that the following is not an exhaustive list, and is solely intended to cover the most relevant legislation pertaining to species commonly associated with development sites.

Subject	Legislation (England)	Relevant prohibited actions
<i>Amphibians</i>		
Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberately capture or kill, or intentionally injure;</li> <li>• Deliberately disturb or recklessly disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection;</li> <li>• Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;</li> <li>• Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection; and</li> <li>• Possess an individual, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully.</li> </ul>
	Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	
<i>Reptiles</i>		
Common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>  Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>  Slow-worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>  Grass snake <i>Natrix helvetica helvetica</i>	Part of Sub-section 9(1) of Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentionally kill or injure individuals of these species (Section 9(1)).</li> </ul>

Subject	Legislation (England)	Relevant prohibited actions
<i>Mammals</i>		
Badger <i>Meles meles</i>	Protection of badgers act 1992	<p>Under Section 3 of the Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage a sett or any part of it;</li> <li>• Destroy a sett;</li> <li>• Obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a sett; or</li> <li>• Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett.</li> </ul> <p>A sett is defined legally as any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger (Natural England 2007).</p>

#### The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Full legislation text available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/contents/made>

#### The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Full legislation text available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>.

#### Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Full legislation text available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

#### Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Full legislation text available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>

#### Section 41 of Natural Environments and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Full legislation text available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/41>

Many of the species above, along with a host of others not afforded additional protection, are listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC Act 2006) requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list (including 56 habitats and 943 species) has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England and draws upon the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) List of Priority Species and Habitats.

The S41 list should be used to guide decision-makers such as local and regional authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their normal functions – as required under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006. The duty applies to all local authorities and extends beyond just conserving what is already there, to carrying out, supporting and requiring actions that may also restore or enhance biodiversity.

### **Schedule 9 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**

In addition to affording protection to some species, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) also names species which are considered invasive and require control. Section 14 of the Act prohibits the introduction into the wild of any animal of a kind which is not ordinarily resident in, and is not a regular visitor to, Great Britain in a wild state, or any species of animal or plant listed in Schedule 9 to the Act. In the main, Schedule 9 lists non-native species that are already established in the wild, but which continue to pose a conservation threat to native biodiversity and habitats, such that further releases should be regulated.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Full text is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

The revised NPPF was updated in September 2023 setting out the Government's planning policies for England and the process by which these should be applied. The policies within the NPPF are a material consideration in the planning process. The key principle of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with sustainable development defined as a balance between economic, social and environmental needs.

Policies 170 to 183 of the NPPF address conserving and enhancing the natural environment, stating that the planning system should:

- Contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes;
- Recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services; and
- Minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity.

Furthermore there is a focus on re-use of existing brownfield sites or sites of low environmental value as a priority, and discouraging development in National Parks, Sites of Specific Scientific Interest, the Broads or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty other than in exceptional circumstances.

Where possible, planning policies should also

“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”.

## Appendix 2: Species identification and ecology

### *Common lizard*

Common lizards are long-bodied and short legged with a pointed snout and can measure up to 140mm in length. They are variable in colouration, with predominately green or brown shades but occasionally can be black, grey, blue or yellowish. Dark markings, often bordered with white, line and spot their backs creating an array of patterns. The belly is lighter with shades from white to red and dark spots in males in particular. They predominately occupy habitats consisting of grassland and heathland.

### *Slow-worm*

Slow-worms are a widespread legless lizard that can grow up to 50cm in length. They are typically much smaller than UK snake species and have much smoother skin. They are golden-grey in colour. Males are typically paler whereas females may have darker flanks and a dark stripe down their backs. They can be found in heathland, tussocky grassland and woodland edges, but are also found in gardens and allotments, particularly around compost heaps.

### *Grass snake*

This species can grow up to 1m in length and are the longest snake in Britain. They are also variable in colour and pattern with varying shades of green, brown or grey, but with a distinct 'collar' behind their heads of a light yellow colouration. Black markings also run along the sides of the snake in regular patterns.



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Figure 2: Top: Common lizard. Middle: Slow worm. Bottom: Grass snake (left, male; right, female).



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