

# Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

of

West End Farm Kennels, Buxhall, Suffolk

Carried out for:

Ben Elvin

1<sup>st</sup>

Prepared by:

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# 1. Background to Commission

- 1.1 Abrehart Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Ben Elvin to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the land for the proposed new accommodation cabin, off Worlds End Lane in Buxhall, Suffolk, IP14 3ED (central grid reference TL 99158 55129; Fig. 1; hereafter referred to as the Site). The development area is approximately 0.1 ha, within a wider ownership boundary.

## *Aims of Study*

- 1.2 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;
- To recommend any further ecological surveys considered necessary to inform mitigation requirements for the planning application within the Site; and
- To provide an assessment of potential impacts to protected species, habitats, or protected sites.

## Site Description

- 1.3 The survey area is located on World's End Lane to the south of the village of Buxhall, Suffolk. The proposed construction zone is approximately 0.1 hectares and consisted of sealed concrete hard standing to the south, forming an existing access driveway, and an area of managed shortly mown grassland in the north. The grassland had a short sward height of around 5cm and was dominated by Perennial Rye-Grass (*Lolium perenne*) with a very limited forb diversity consisting of sparse scatterings of Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Common Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Greater Plantain (*Plantago major*), and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*). There were areas with machinery damage, such as deep tire furrows. In the wider grassland there were several semimature field maple (*Acer campestre*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) standards. In the north of the wider ownership boundary there was an area of rough grassland surrounded by woodland with log and brick hibernacula piles. The southern boundary of the grassland consisted of a dense Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) scrub bank.
- 1.4 Habitats surrounding the Site and wider landscape was dominated by wide areas of agricultural land surrounding the site as well as hedgerows, farm buildings and small area of woodland in the north and southwest (see Figure 1).

MAGiC

## Site Location

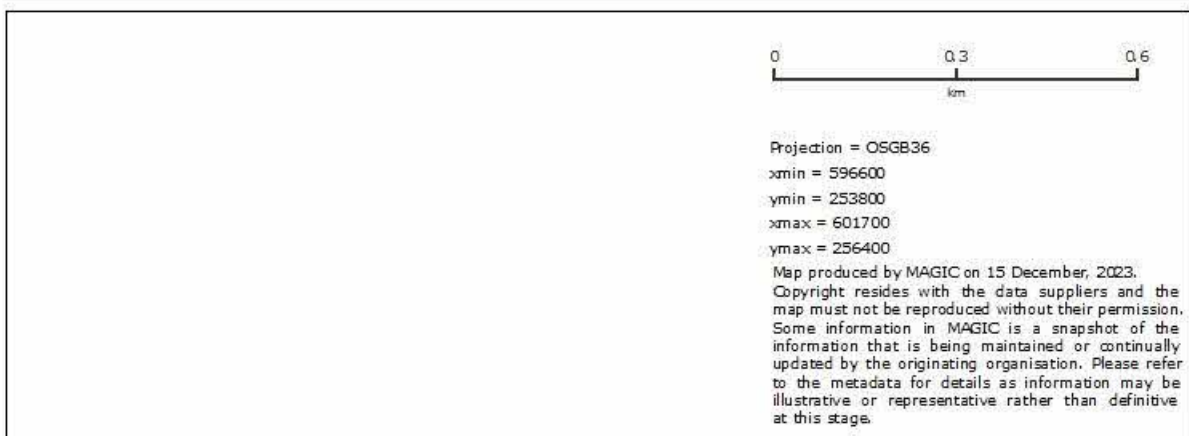
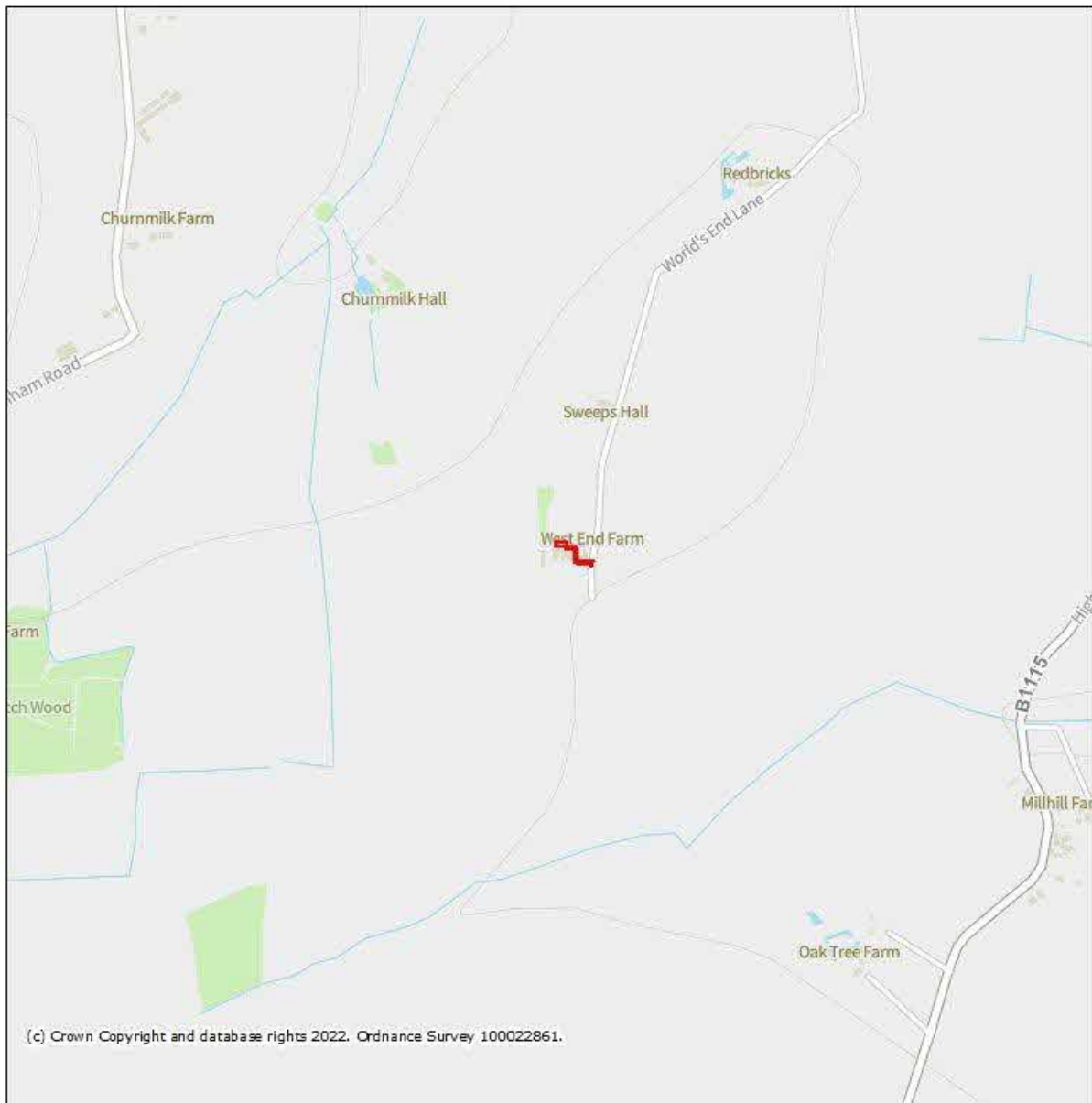


Figure 1. Site location

### ***Relevant Legislation***

- 1.5 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).
- 1.6 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).
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 “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.”
- 1.9 “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..”
- 1.10 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 standard data search<sup>1</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> of December 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) and James Roberts BSc (Hons) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 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 light breeze (Beaufort Scale 1-2), a temperature of 6°C, and good visibility. The Site was traversed slowly by the surveyor, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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; UKBA P (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 II)*

- 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 water voles, and otters.

### *Data Search*

- 3.3 There are no statutory designated sites within 2 km of the Site and the works area does not fall within the impact risk zone for any SSSI sites.

- 3.4 There is one County Wildlife Sites within 2km of the Site, this is:

Pie Hatch Wood – Pie Hatch Wood is listed in the Suffolk Inventory of Ancient Woodland, compiled by English Nature. Studies carried out by the historical botanist Dr Oliver Rackham, have shown that Pie Hatch Wood has an interesting history. The wood adjoins Pye Street, a fragmentary Roman road, the remnants of which can still be seen to the north of the wood. The narrow clearing between the wood and the road is an anti-highwayman trench and proves the wood to be medieval in origin. Pie Hatch Wood is predominantly a wet ash and field maple wood with some hornbeam coppice. Occasional alder are also present. Beneath the tree canopy is a shrub layer dominated by hazel coppice. Despite its relatively small size, Pie Hatch Wood supports an excellent diversity of woodland species. In addition to common plants, for example dog's mercury the wood contains a significant number of rare ancient woodland indicators. Herb-Paris, wood sorrel, oxlip, yellow archangel and yellow pimpernel, to name a few. Furthermore in 1985 the rare bird's-nest orchid was recorded in the wood. Recent management work has included the opening up of old rides and the cutting of new ones through the wood. In 1986 a management plan for Pie Hatch Wood was written by Suffolk County Council.

- 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 survey area is located on World's End Lane to the south of the village of Buxhall, Suffolk. The proposed construction zone is approximately 0.1 hectares and consisted of sealed concrete hard standing to the south, forming an existing access driveway, and an area of managed shortly mown grassland in the north.
- 3.8 The grassland had a short sward height of around 5cm and was dominated by Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) with a very limited forb diversity consisting of sparse scatterings of Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Common Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Greater Plantain (*Plantago major*), and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*). There were areas with machinery damage, such as deep tire furrows. In the wider grassland there were several semi-mature Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) standards.
- 3.9 In the north of the wider ownership boundary there was an area of rough grassland surrounded by woodland with log and brick hibernacula piles. The southern boundary of the grassland consisted of a dense Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*), and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) scrub bank.
- 3.10 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 is not within the Impact Risk Zone for any SSSI sites. Furthermore, the site does not contain the species or habitats for which the other protected sites 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 fields, it was not considered necessary to carry out a Habitats Regulation Assessment for the development. The Site is not close to any National Site Network conservation areas (of European importance) and does not have the potential to support features of interest.

### *Flora*

- 4.3 No species of interest were recorded during the survey and the low quality managed grassland was considered unlikely to support a rich flora. The desk study highlighted several species of rare plant have been previously recorded within 2km of the Site, this included Lizard orchid (*Himantoglossum hircinum*) listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Also recorded were; Stinking Chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*), Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*), and Sulphur Clover (*Trifolium ochroleucon*) which are classified as 'Vulnerable' 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.
- 4.4 The proposed development includes the creation of a cabin. The construction area covers an area of species-poor grassland which will 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.
- 4.5 **No further botanical surveys are required.**

### *Bats*

Ben Elvin

- 4.10 There were no buildings within the Site boundary and no mature trees within the construction boundary; therefore, there will be no impacts to roosting bats.
- 4.11 The works area offered limited foraging potential as the overall extent of the grassland is small and the habitats on Site were very unlikely to support assemblages of invertebrates (prey species), the adjacent scrub and rough grassland in the wider site boundary provided much higher quality foraging habitat. Boundary features (tree belts and hedgerows) could also be used by foraging and commuting bat species.
- 4.12 The data search returned six records of at least three different species of bat within 2km of the Site. These were Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), and Long-eared Bat species (*Plecotus sp.*).
- 4.13 **No further survey is necessary; however, the Site will incorporate sensitive lighting – ensuring the boundaries are not illuminated as it could be an important commuting corridor for nocturnal species.** This will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals (Bats and artificial lighting at night, 2023), 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 site offered no suitable habitat for nesting birds as the short mown grassland lacked suitable structure for ground nesting species and appeared regularly disturbed.
- 4.15 The bramble scrub directly adjacent to the site, in the south, provided areas suitable for nesting birds as well as the mature trees surrounding the scrub and further north, but sit outside of the site boundary and therefore won't be impacted by development.
- 4.16 The data search returned a high number of records of common and protected species that have been observed in the local landscape. The trees in the wider ownership boundary offered nesting and foraging habitat for BoCC red listed and NERC S41 species such as Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) and Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*).
- 4.17 **Due to the small size of the development and lack of suitable nesting habitat, no further survey is necessary.**

### **Great Crested Newts & Reptiles**

- 4.18 Habitats recorded throughout the Site were not suitable for herptiles, however, in the wider ownership boundary, adjacent to the construction boundary, were suitable areas of scrub, woodland, ditches and rough grassland, as well as man-made log and brick hibernacula which could be utilized by herptiles but is unlikely to be impacted by construction.
- 4.19 There were four ponds highlighted on OS maps within 500m of the Site boundary.
- 4.20 There were six records of GCN returned in the data search between 2007 and 2013, three of which were over 1.4km to the northeast in High Street Green, and the remaining three were between 900m and 1.5km south of the site in and around agricultural land and farms.
- 4.21 **Due to no suitable habitat for herptiles found on the Site, no further surveys are required for reptiles or amphibians. However, precautions outlined in Appendix V should be adhered to, to minimise the risk of harm to individual GCN that might be using surrounding habitats.**

### **Hedgehogs**

- 4.22 Grassland habitats within the Site offered potential foraging habitat for hedgehogs; the shorter grassland provided good access to potential prey items. The adjoining scrub and tree belts offered an extension of this foraging habitat and could also be utilised as a potential commuting corridor, and cover for sheltering and hibernating animals. Fallen leaves from deciduous trees could provide nest building material.
- 4.23 Although no evidence of hedgehogs was recorded during the survey, the data search returned five records of hedgehogs within 2km of the Site from 2010 to 2020. All of the records were from over 1km away from the Site boundary.
- 4.24 **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**

- 4.25 The short mown grassland was not suitable for supporting assemblages of common or rare terrestrial invertebrates. The adjoining area of rough grassland and woodland to the north provided some areas capable of supporting common invertebrate assemblages but were outside the construction boundary.
- 4.26 The data search included four records of Small Heath butterflies (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), which are listed on the UKBAP. This species is found in areas of sparse grassland such as heaths and coastal dunes. However, can also be found in areas of rough grassland such as the area found in the north of the ownership boundary. The area of rough grassland is outside the construction boundary and won't be impacted by development.
- 4.27 **No further survey is necessary.**

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The preliminary ecological appraisal found the Site contained habitats suitable for supporting protected species – badgers, bats, GCN and reptiles. 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:

Adherence to Precautionary Measures in Appendix V to minimise the risk of harm to GCN that might be using the habitats surrounding the Site and could enter the construction zone. Such measures would also minimise the chance of GCN entering the construction zone.

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

Recommendations for precautionary working methods should be followed during clearance of any scrub to prevent harm to hibernating/sheltering hedgehogs.

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.

- 5.2 As detailed in Paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10, the Local Policy requires new developments to have consideration for priority habitats and species, protected sites, protected species, and biodiversity. The proposed development will not significantly harm or create disturbance to any such features. The development will follow the mitigation hierarchy and avoid negative impacts to biodiversity wherever possible. Any remaining short-term impacts or potential long-term impacts (such as disturbance to ecological corridors) will be adequately mitigated for through the above measures.
- 5.3 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 any SSSIs or National Site Network conservation areas and no requirement for a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

## 6. References

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Cresswell, W.J. Birks, J.D.S, Dean, M., Pacheco, M., Trehella, W.J., Wells, D. & Wray, S. (2012) UK BAP Mammals Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impacts and Mitigation. Eds. The Mammal Society, Southampton.

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

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

### Web references

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



## Appendix I: Site Photos



Proposed area of development



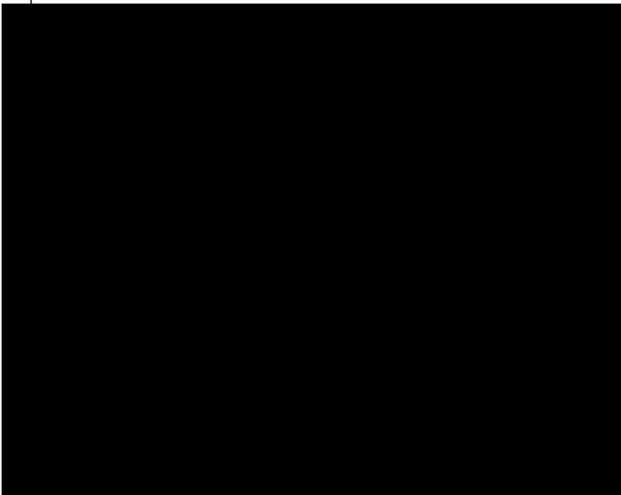
Machinery damage (tire tracks)



Managed grassland looking north to wider ownership boundary



Areas of existing hardstanding to the south



Bramble scrub bank and maple tree standards

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## Appendix II: Species Lists

### Plants

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#### Species

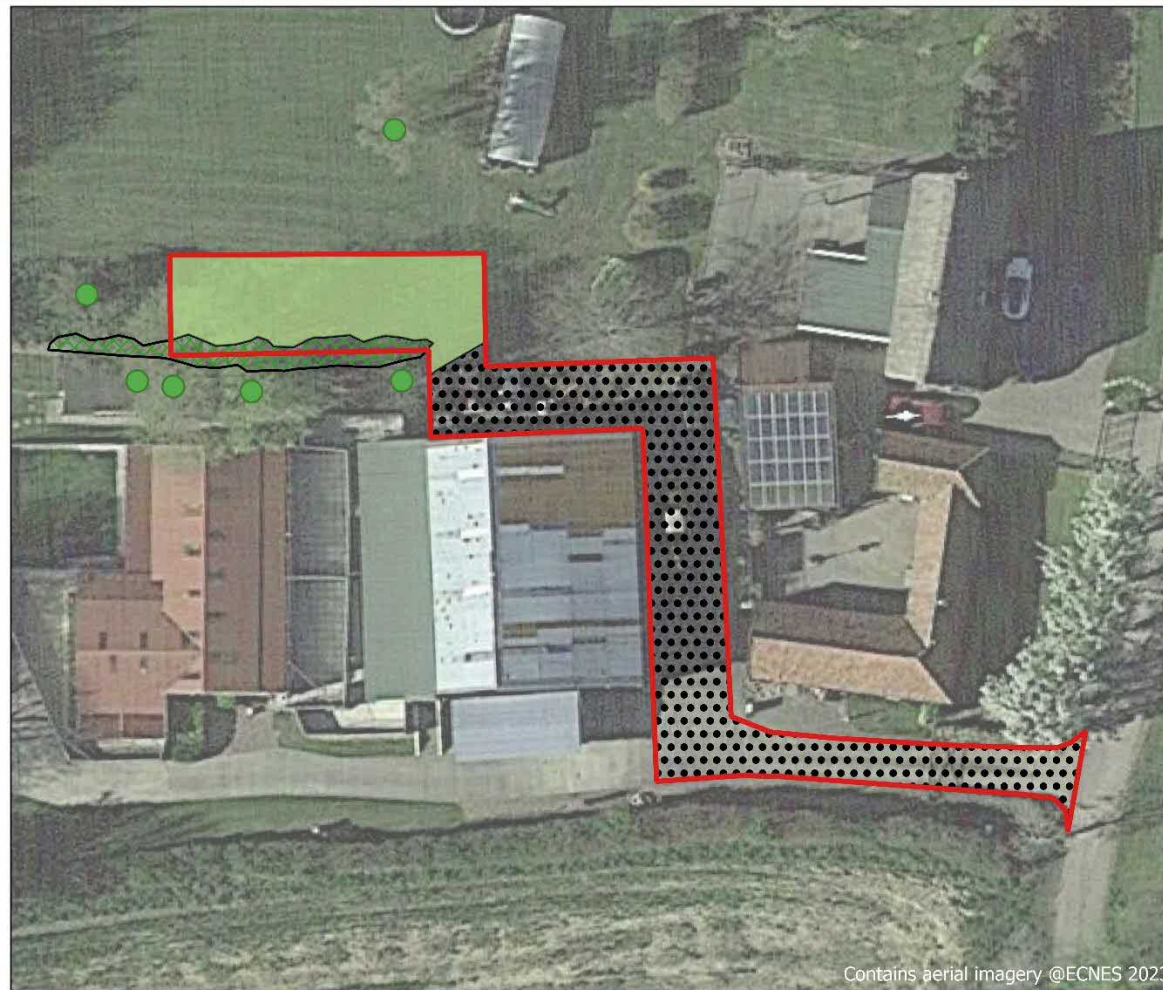
<i>Acer campestre</i>
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
<i>Bellis perennis</i>
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
<i>Galium aparine</i>
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
<i>Lolium perenne</i>
<i>Plantago major</i>
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
<i>Rosa canina</i>
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
<i>Urtica dioica</i>



# Appendix III: Figures

## Phase 1 Habitat Map

TL 99158 55129: West End Farm Kennels, Buxhall, Suffolk



### Key

- Site boundary
- UK habitats classification
- g3c - other neutral grassland
- h3h - mixed scrub
- u1b6 - hardstanding
- w1, 200 - broad-leaved tree

**Drawing Title:** Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site map  
**Date:** 00/00/2024  
**Projection:** EPSG: 27700 (British National Grid)

Produced by Abrehart Ecology Ltd for

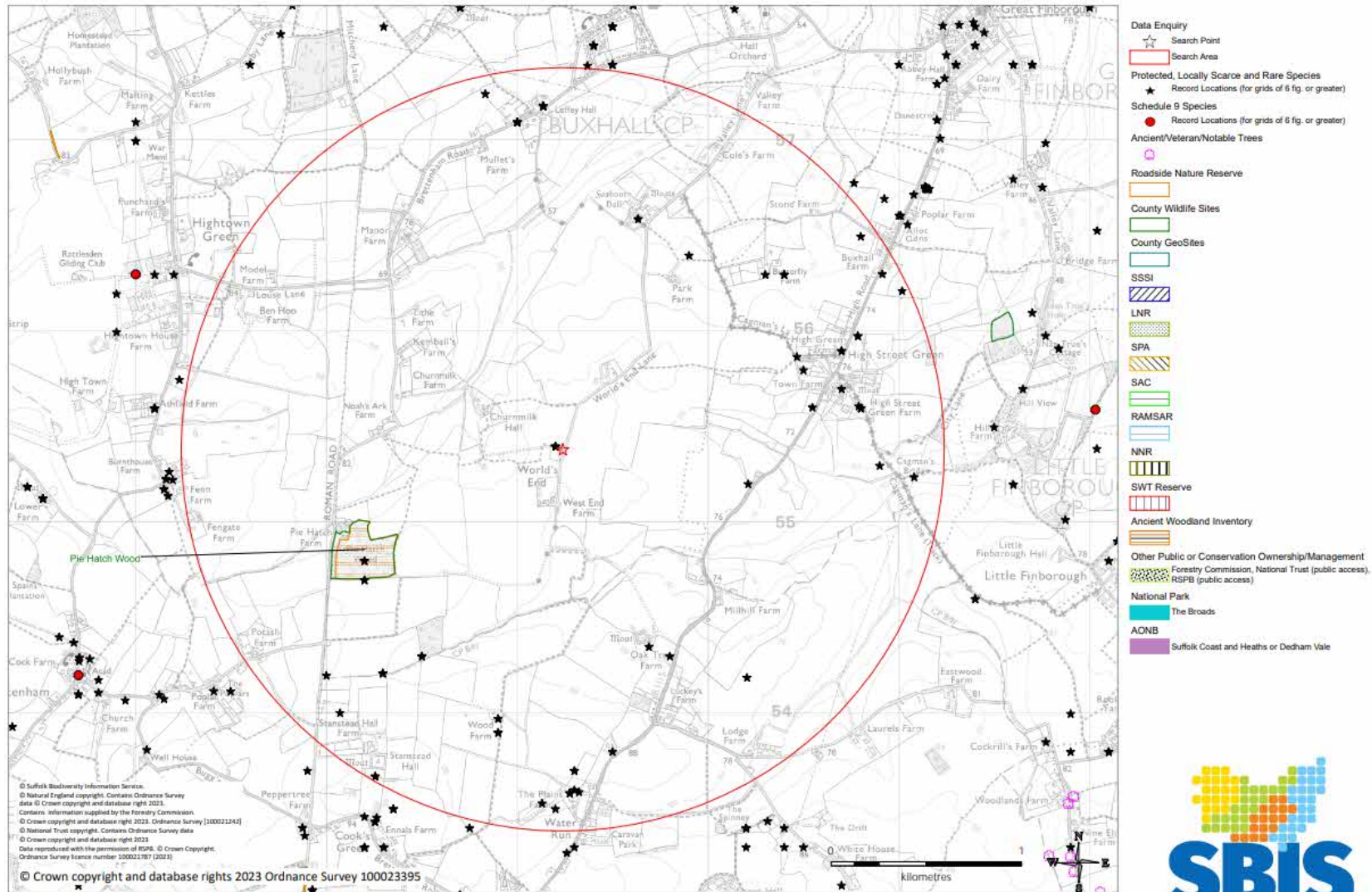
0 20 40 m

1 : 400





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



Abrehart Ecology (West End Farm Kennels, Worlds End Lane, Buxhall TL99239 55383) 2km Data Enquiry



Date: 08/12/2023 | Drawn by: Andy Mercer

## Appendix IV: Relevant Protected Species Legislation

Species	Legislation	Protection
<b>Bats</b>	<p>Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended)</p> <p>Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981), Schedule 5 (as amended)</p> <p>Wild Mammals Act (1996)</p>	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <p>Intentionally kill, injure or take any bat</p> <p>Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat</p> <p>Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost</p>
<b>Great Crested Newts</b>	<p>Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended)</p> <p>Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981), Schedule 5 (as amended)</p>	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <p>Intentionally kill, injure or take a great crested newt</p> <p>Intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt</p> <p>Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by a great crested newt for shelter or protection</p>
<b>Widespread Reptiles</b>	<p>Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981), Schedule 5 (as amended)</p>	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <p>Intentionally kill or injure a reptile</p> <p>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</p>
<b>Birds</b>	<p>Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended)</p>	<p>It is an offence to:</p> <p>Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird</p> <p>Intentionally take, damage or destroy nests in use or being built</p> <p>Intentionally take, damage or destroy eggs</p> <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>

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## Appendix IV: Precautionary Measures for GCN

Any individual animals (not including GCN) found during work will be safely removed and translocated to adjacent areas of suitable habitat. If GCN are found at any point throughout the development, then work must be stopped immediately, and a Natural England licence will be required.

### Safe Working Practices

The Landowner/Site Manager will be responsible for performing a thorough site check each morning to assess the condition of the working practices listed below.

Vegetation within and immediately adjacent the Site is currently very short and unsuitable for GCN. This should be retained as such prior to and throughout the construction period.

There are to be no fires on Site throughout the construction process. Materials stored for fires could attract amphibians as a refuge/shelter.

Vehicles and material storage should avoid better quality habitats identified during the PEA, such as the other natural grassland surrounding the derelict barn.

All materials should be stored on pallets. This will prevent places of refuge being created within the construction zone.

Any aggregates delivered to Site should be stored in bulk-bags and placed on pallets. Again, this will prevent places of refuge / hibernacula being created within the construction zone.

Any excavated soil should be placed on habitats unsuitable for GCN – such as hardstanding or short-mown grassland.

All waste should be stored in skips prior to removal from Site.

Any excavations (approved by the ECoW) should contain an escape ramp, made from earth or wooden sticks (or multiple ramps within large excavations – to be determined by the ECoW). This will allow amphibians (including GCN) to exit excavations.

The landowner/site manager will check the excavations each morning. Should common amphibians or mammals be found, then these animals will be moved to safe habitat outside the construction zone. If great crested newts are found within the excavations, then a suitably licensed ecologist will be contacted and discussions for future methods/works will take place.