



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Meadhurst
Uppingham School
North Street West
Uppingham
Rutland
NGR SP86591 99935

Survey by
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Non-Technical Summary

The site surveyed comprises part of the building at Meadhurst, Uppingham School, North Street West, Uppingham, Rutland centred at NGR SP86591 99935. A stage 1 inspection of the property was completed on 08th March 2023. The defined site area comprises part of a much larger school building which is also used as residential accommodation for students. The landscaped grounds of the school extends to the west and south and consist primarily of open amenity grassland and sports turf with a large car parking area. To the north there are some mature trees in the ground of Farleigh, another part of the Uppingham School Estate. To the east is the road beyond which there are residential and commercial properties. To the south is open landscaped garden within another part of the School Estate.

The survey has identified the following habitats within the site area:

- Commercial / Educational Buildings
- Amenity Grassland
- Sports Field
- Amenity Landscaping
- Hardstanding / Car Park

An assessment of the survey area has identified the following potential for protected species to be present:

Species	Present within 1km	Suitable habitat on site / evidence of presence	Likelihood of presence on site	Further Survey / Mitigation recommended
Nesting Birds	Yes	Ground nesting highly unlikely within the landscaped school grounds. Nesting on the building structures is possible as there are roof overhangs but no nests were found during the inspection.	Possible for swallow, swift and house martin to be using the building roof edges in the future.	Measures to avoid disturbance to any nests or nesting activity will need to be considered prior to any vegetation clearance
Reptiles	Yes	No evidence of any reptiles was found in the grounds around the building and the survey area is suboptimal for reptile species.	Very low likelihood if individual reptiles being present in the school grounds.	No further surveys of specific mitigation measures are recommended.
Amphibians	Yes (GCN)	No evidence of any amphibians was found in the grounds around the building and the survey area is suboptimal for reptile species.	Very low likelihood if individual common amphibians being present in the school grounds.	No further surveys of specific mitigation measures are recommended.
Bats	Yes	Some foraging along the site boundaries likely. No evidence of any roosting was identified the building structure which has low roost potential.	Bat activity survey of May 2023 identified no roosting activity associated with the building.	Remove roof structures outside of the bat activity season or have a precautionary survey completed ahead of works commencing.
Badger and other mammals	Yes	No field signs of badger or water vole were found in any part of the grounds surrounding the school building and the landscaped areas are sub-optimal for badger.	Very low likelihood of foraging badger accessing the grounds around the building.	No further surveys of specific mitigation measures are recommended.

Constraints:

No significant ecological constraints have been identified during the survey. The following factors should be taken into consideration when planning any development work:

- The mature trees and dense Cherry Laurel hedge within the grounds close to the building where work is being considered could support nesting birds in the future.
- There is potential for hedgehogs to be present within the school ground and any vegetation removal should take this into account.
- It is possible that features on the buildings where work is proposed could be colonised by roosting bats in the future although it is recognised that there is no evidence of any such activity in the past.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The works proposed will be entirely contained within the ground of the existing school and comprise improvement or replacement of existing buildings. The potential for any disturbance to Statutory or Non-Statutory sites is considered to be negligible.

The survey area comprises school buildings and open amenity grassland and sports field areas of low biodiversity value. There are no significant habitat areas of high or moderate value identified at the property and the nearest mature trees are understood to be sufficiently far from the buildings where work is proposed to be retained and protected.

Until a development proposal is prepared a detailed assessment of the impact on local biodiversity cannot be prepared. It is clear that the areas where disturbance will take place to facilitate the works represent areas of low biodiversity value. A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment using DEFRA 3.1 methodology can be calculated once the development proposals are prepared.

The Stage 1 inspection completed in March 2023 did not identify any physical evidence or field signs of protected species within the survey area but the buildings were recommended for a further bat activity survey. This was completed in May 2023 and no bats were seen to leave a roost within any part of the building and foraging activity in the area was of low intensity.

After inspection of the site, assessment of its landscape context and a review of the biological records for this area, the following precautionary measures are advised:

Birds: There is negligible potential for ground nesting birds to be present but if any taller vegetation, such as the nearby Cherry Laurel hedge, needs to be cleared, this should be completed outside of the nesting season or be preceded by an inspection by an Ecologist to ensure no nesting birds are present or determine what mitigation measures to protect nesting birds are required.

Bats: Whilst no evidence of roosting bats has been identified, it is always possible for bats to take advantage of suitable features identified within the building in the future. It would be prudent to undertake any works that require disturbance to the existing roof structures outside of the bat activity season or have a further inspection and/or bat activity survey carried out prior to works starting as a precaution. The design of any external lighting associated with the proposed development should avoid any significant increase in artificial light levels around the building wherever possible.

General Recommendations: It is recommended that as part of development works the following biodiversity enhancements should be incorporated if practical:

- At least one bat roost tube should be incorporated into the building structure on the south or west facing side in a suitable position,

- At least two swift nest bricks/ tubes should be incorporated into the building structure on the north facing side in a suitable position
- Hedgehog refugia should be constructed in suitable locations where these will be accessible to this species but can remain undisturbed.



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Part 1: Site Details

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Description and Location

The site surveyed comprises part of the building at Meadhurst, Uppingham School, North Street West, Uppingham, Rutland centred at NGR SP86591 99935. The location of the site is shown on the plan within **Figure 1** and an aerial photograph has been provided within **Figure 2** to place the site in context.

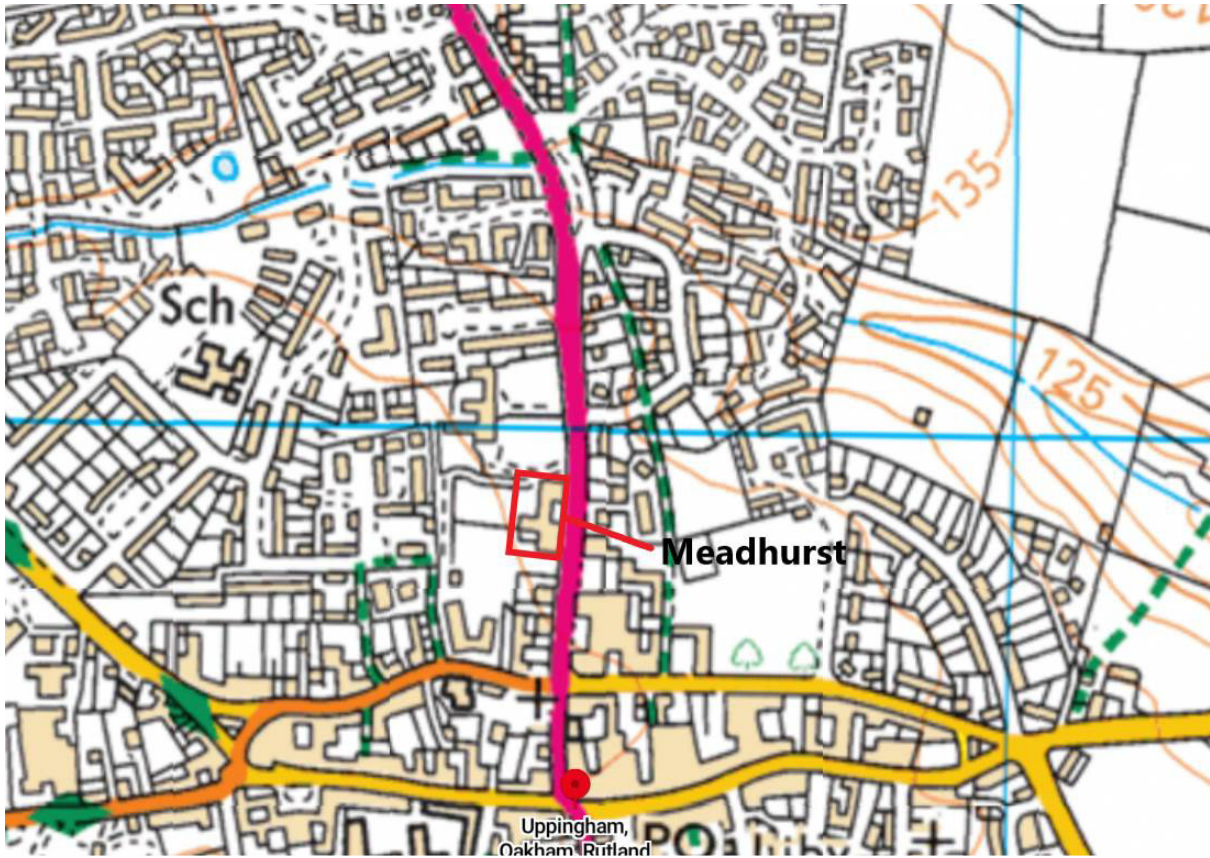


Figure 1: Site location.

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The Client has requested a Preliminary Ecological Survey of the building and immediately adjacent land should be completed to determine whether there is anything of ecological value or any evidence of protected species present. A stage 1 inspection of the property was completed on 08th March 2023 and details of the survey are provided in the table below. A photographic record of key areas is included alongside target notes within the report and a list of plant species identified in the site during the survey is included within **Appendix 1**.

Date	Time	Location	Weather
08 March 2023	11.30am	Meadhurst North Street West Uppingham LE15 9RN	Lightly overcast. Wind 9mph from the north west. Temperature 12° C. Humidity 76% at 1018hPa.
Accessibility	All areas of the site accessible to search for evidence of protected species.		

The defined site area comprises part of a much larger school building which is also used as residential accommodation for students. The landscaped grounds of the school extends to the west and south and consist primarily of open amenity grassland and sports turf with a

large car parking area. To the north there are some mature trees in the ground of Farleigh, another part of the Uppingham School Estate. To the east is the road beyond which there are residential and commercial properties. To the south is open landscaped garden within another part of the School Estate. A contextual aerial photograph has been provided below.



Figure 2: Site Contextual Aerial Photograph

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1.2 Objective of the Report

This report is a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the area identified in yellow within the aerial photograph above. The objective of the ecological appraisal is to identify the habitat(s) present on, and surrounding, the site area being assessed. Development of the site for the purpose of constructing a new residential house within the land will require planning approval and this report has been prepared to provide information as part of any future planning application process. To this end the report is required to comply with the recommendations and principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 as amended (NPPF). The report contains Biological Records and has been prepared to meet the standard required by BS42020 (British Standard for Biodiversity and Development).

Chapter 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) describes the Government's national policies on promoting 'an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment.' NPPF is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance on 'Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure' (2014) and ODPM Circular 06/2005.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 Chapter 15 sets out the Government's objectives for planning in regard to the protection of habitats and biodiversity. The planning objectives in relation to biodiversity and the natural environment are stated within paragraph 170 of the NPPF 2021 and are as follows:

"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; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”

Within the revised NPPF 2021 it is now policy that ‘*permission should be refused for major development applications within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty other than in exceptional circumstances*’. Planning policy context requires that Planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area including an assessment of existing and potential components of ecological networks (NPPF paragraph 43).

The above approach encapsulates the ‘mitigation hierarchy’ described in British Standard BS 42020:2013 which involves the following stepwise process:

- **Avoidance** – avoiding adverse effects through good design,
- **Mitigation** – where it is unavoidable, mitigation measures should be employed to minimise adverse effects,
- **Compensation** – where residual effects remain after mitigation it may be necessary to provide compensation to offset any harm,
- **Enhancement** – planning decisions often present the opportunity to deliver benefits for biodiversity, which can also be explored alongside the above measures to resolve potential adverse effects.

The measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development (BS 42020:2013, section 5.5).

This ecological appraisal provides information on the existing ecological and biodiversity value of the land on the site and also reports any evidence of protected species or significant habitats present. It has been provided to provide information to the Planning Authority in order to help meet the requirements of the NPPF and enable the Authority to assess the site area in accordance with the Code of Practice within BS42020 and guidelines issued by CIEEM in 2012. The report also identifies any habitats or species present that require more detailed surveys prior to any improvements being undertaken.

Part 2: Survey Methodology and Results

2. Appraisal Methodology

2.1 Baseline Study

Within NPPF it states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: “economic, social and environmental.” The environmental role includes “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment” and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity.

Within the NPPF 2021 it states that: *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight....”* Paragraph 172

Within paragraphs 174 and 175 of NPPF 2021 the principles by which the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity within the context of proposed development are described. These principles state in Paragraph 174 that any development proposal 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 steppingstones 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 175: 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 incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

The biodiversity of a site area and the potential presence of protected species are factors relevant to all developments irrespective of the size scale and will apply to any development on the site being assessed. Available information on the baseline ecology of the site and the presence of protected species within the locality has been obtained from the local biological records centre and reviewed (**Appendix 2**) and the records obtained are provided as separate appendices.

These data sources have been reviewed and the character and nature conservation value of habitats and species assessed. The aims of this appraisal of information are:

- To characterize all the existing available information regarding habitats and species that may be present at the site and provide up to date information about the environmental characteristics of the site area.
- To identify any habitats potentially present of nature conservation value in terms of local, regional and national context and within the context of local, regional and national policy; and,
- To identify any areas of ecological interest in order to either a) make recommendations to minimize the potential impact of any site works, or b) identify the need for a further survey work.

Following the appraisal of the available information, a site inspection has taken place to obtain specific site data at the site.

2.2 Habitat Assessment Methodology

The stage 1 inspection of the site was completed on 08th March 2023. The inspection used the extended Phase 1 Habitat Assessment methodology as adopted by Natural England (Joint Nature Conservation Committee 1993) and in accordance with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2012) issued by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) and BS42020 (British Standard for Biodiversity and Development).

The survey required a systematic walkover of the site to classify the habitat types present and was completed using standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail through Phase 2 surveys. This method was extended, in line with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to record details on the actual or potential presence of any notable or protected species or habitats.

A habitat / building base plan and target notes have been prepared and included as **Figure 3** within section 3 of this report.

2.3 Protected Species Assessment Methodology

A methodical inspection was carried out to look for any evidence of protected species using the site and to identify any habitats with potential to provide significant shelter or foraging opportunities for these. The survey was carried out by Christopher Barker, an experienced ecological consultant and Chartered Environmentalist holding Class Licenses issued by Natural England.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 consolidates the various amendments that have been made to the Regulations. The original (1994) Regulations transposed the EC Habitats Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into national law.

“European protected species” are those which are present on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. They are subject to the provisions of Regulation 41 of those Regulations. All European Protected Species are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:

- a. Intentionally or deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal included amongst these species
- b. Possess or control any live or dead specimens or any part of, or anything derived from these species
- c. deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species
- d. deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or
- e. intentionally, deliberately or recklessly damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal, or obstruct access to such a place

For the purposes of paragraph (c), disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely—

- a. to impair their ability—
 - i. to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
 - ii. in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate;or,
- b. to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Although the law provides strict protection to these species, it also allows this protection to be set aside (derogation) through the issuing of licences. The licences in England are currently determined by Natural England (NE) for development works. In accordance with the requirements of the Regulations (2010), a licence can only be issued where the following requirements are satisfied:

- i) The proposal is necessary ‘to preserve public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment’
- ii) ‘There is no satisfactory alternative’
- iii) The proposals ‘will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.’

General faunal activity, such as mammals or birds observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys was recorded. Specific attention was also paid to the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable species, and specific consideration was given to bats, birds, badgers, amphibians and reptiles as described below.

Breeding Birds: All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. The inspection of the site included a search of hedgerows, ground vegetation and tree canopies looking for evidence of active or former nests.

Bats: All species of Bat within the UK are protected under the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitat Regulations) that amended and incorporated the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These regulations make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a bat [WCA section 9(1)]

- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a bat [WCA section 9(2)]
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat [WCA section 9(4)(a)]
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose [WCA section 9(4)(a)]

Any building or significant trees present within the survey area have been assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats based on the presence of features such as holes, crevices, cracks, splits or loose bark. Potential bat roost locations in relation to buildings are described within this report (taken from Bat Survey Guidelines 2016) as:

Confirmed Roost – a structure with physical evidence confirming the presence of bats or bats visibly seen.

High – a structure with one or more potential roost features that are obviously suitable for use by a large number of bats on a regular basis and which is situated in an area of continuous high-quality foraging habitat suitable for bats.

Moderate – a structure with one or more potential roost features that could be used by bats, but which is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status and which is in an area of connected habitat suitable for foraging by bats.

Low – a structure with one or more potential roost features that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost features do not provide sufficient potential to be used by a larger number of bats or on a regular basis and the surrounding habitat is not of high value to foraging bats.

Negligible – a structure with negligible habitat features which is in a poor location making it highly unlikely roosting bats will be present.

Tree assessments were undertaken from ground level, with the aid of a torch and binoculars where required. During the survey features considered to provide suitable roost sites for bats such as the following were sought:

- Trunk / branch cavities – significant holes in the trunk caused by rot or injury.
- Trunk / branch split – split / fissure in trunk caused by rot or injury.
- Branch socket cavity – Where a fallen branch has resulted in the formation of an access point into a cavity.
- Woodpecker hole – created by nesting birds suitable for use by roosting bats.
- Lifted bark – bark which has rotted / lifted to form suitable access point/roost site for bats.
- Trunk hollows – decay in heartwood leading to internal cavity in trunk.
- Ivy cover – dense / mature ivy cover where the woody stems could create small cavities / crevices.

Common Reptiles: All species of British reptile are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The common species (adder, grass snake, slow worm and common lizard) are only protected against intentional killing and injuring (but not taking).

The survey included a search of all areas where suitable habitat for reptiles to shelter under or bask may be present, lifting logs and other suitable features to search underneath. The surveyor also maintained a careful watch whilst moving across the site to look for signs of reptiles moving to cover.

Great crested newts are afforded legal protection under European and UK law under the auspices of The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Amendment) Regulations which came into force on 21 August 2007, superseding the Habitat Regulations 1994. The 2007 amendments have increased the protection afforded to European Protected Species.

The law provides protection to adults, juveniles, efts (immature GCN) and eggs and it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly or as an incidental result of actions:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill, or injure Great Crested Newts
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used for shelter or protection (including resting or breeding places) whether occupied or not
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb Great Crested Newts when in a place of shelter
- Possess a Great Crested Newt, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale Great Crested Newts or any part of them.

The survey included a search of any ponds and wetland areas within the site or immediate surrounding area nearby (where these features were accessible) and an assessment of ponds in the local area using Ordnance Survey Maps and aerial photographs to consider the potential for these species to access the site area.

Badger: Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This makes it an offence to wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or to attempt to do so; or to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it. A badger sett is defined in the legislation as “*a structure or place, which displays signs indicating current use by a badger*”.

The survey searching for evidence of badger activity comprised two main elements. The first element involved searching for evidence of Badger setts. For any setts that were encountered, each sett entrance was noted and mapped. The following information was recorded:

- Number and location of well used / active entrances; these are clear from any debris or vegetation and are obviously in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently.
- Number and location of inactive entrances; these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance.
- Number of disused entrances; these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the
- entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be and the remains of the spoil heap.

The second element of the survey involved searching for signs of Badger activity such as well-worn paths and push-throughs, snagged hair, footprints, latrines and foraging signs, so as to build up a picture of any use of the site by Badger.

Invasive Species: Attention was paid to the presence of any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, the detectability of such species varies due to a number of factors, e.g. time of year, site management, etc., and hence the absence of invasive species should not be assumed even if no such species were detected during the Phase 1 survey.

A range of invasive non-native plant species are listed in Schedule 9 (Part 2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to plant or cause these introduced invasive plants to grow in the wild, effectively making it illegal to spread the plants during development operations.

2.4 Consultations

The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2016). In evaluating ecological features. The *Geographic Frame of Reference* is a key factor taken into account when assessing the potential ecological value of a site being surveyed. The value of an ecological feature or resource is determined within a defined geographical context using the following frame of reference:

- International.
- National.
- Regional.
- County (or Metropolitan).
- District (or Unitary Authority, City or Borough).
- Local (or Parish).
- Site level only.

Within this frame of reference, certain sites may carry a statutory ecological designation, e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for internationally important sites or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for sites of national importance. Sites of more localised nature conservation importance do not receive statutory protection but may be designated by Local Planning Authorities or other bodies, e.g. Wildlife Trusts. Such non-statutory designations or 'Local Sites' include Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs), for example.

Since the 'site' comprises a building and small area of amenity grassland and hardstanding within the school grounds, a full set of biological records was not considered appropriate. It is clear that the site is not a Statutory or Non-Statutory site of ecological significance and there are no such sites close by that could be impacted by the works proposed to extend / modernise this building.

However, records of protected species for the surrounding 2km area were purchased from Leicestershire and Rutland Biological Records centre and reviewed. A small number of significant records relating to the immediate vicinity of the site identified in the records are summarised within the table below.

A review of the data for protected species has identified a small number of significant records relating to the immediate vicinity of the site which are summarised within the table below.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Latest Record	Number of Records
Bufo bufo	Common Toad	2017	4
Lissotriton vulgaris	Smooth Newt	2020	30
Rana temporaria	Common Frog	2016	17
Triturus cristatus	Great Crested Newt	2020	40
Alcedo atthis	Kingfisher	2011	1
Falco subbuteo	Hobby	2013	6
Milvus milvus	Red Kite	2020	129
Turdus iliacus	Redwing	2017	1
Turdus pilaris	Fieldfare	2019	5
Tyto alba	Barn Owl	2020	3
Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Bluebell	2018	4
Anguis fragilis	Slow-worm	2020	3
Natrix helvetica	Grass Snake	2019	19
Zootoca vivipara	Common Lizard	2000	2
Arvicola amphibius	Water Vole	2020	1
Chiroptera	Bat	2018	10

<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	Serotine	2014	1
<i>Meles meles</i>	Badger	2022	31
<i>Mustela putorius subsp. furo</i>	Feral Ferret	2021	1
<i>Myotis</i>	Myotis Bat species	2018	12
<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Noctule Bat	2020	14
<i>Pipistrellus</i>	Pipistrelle Bat species	2017	6
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common Pipistrelle	2020	43
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle	2020	20
<i>Plecotus</i>	Long-eared Bat species	2002	2
<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown Long-eared Bat	2020	29

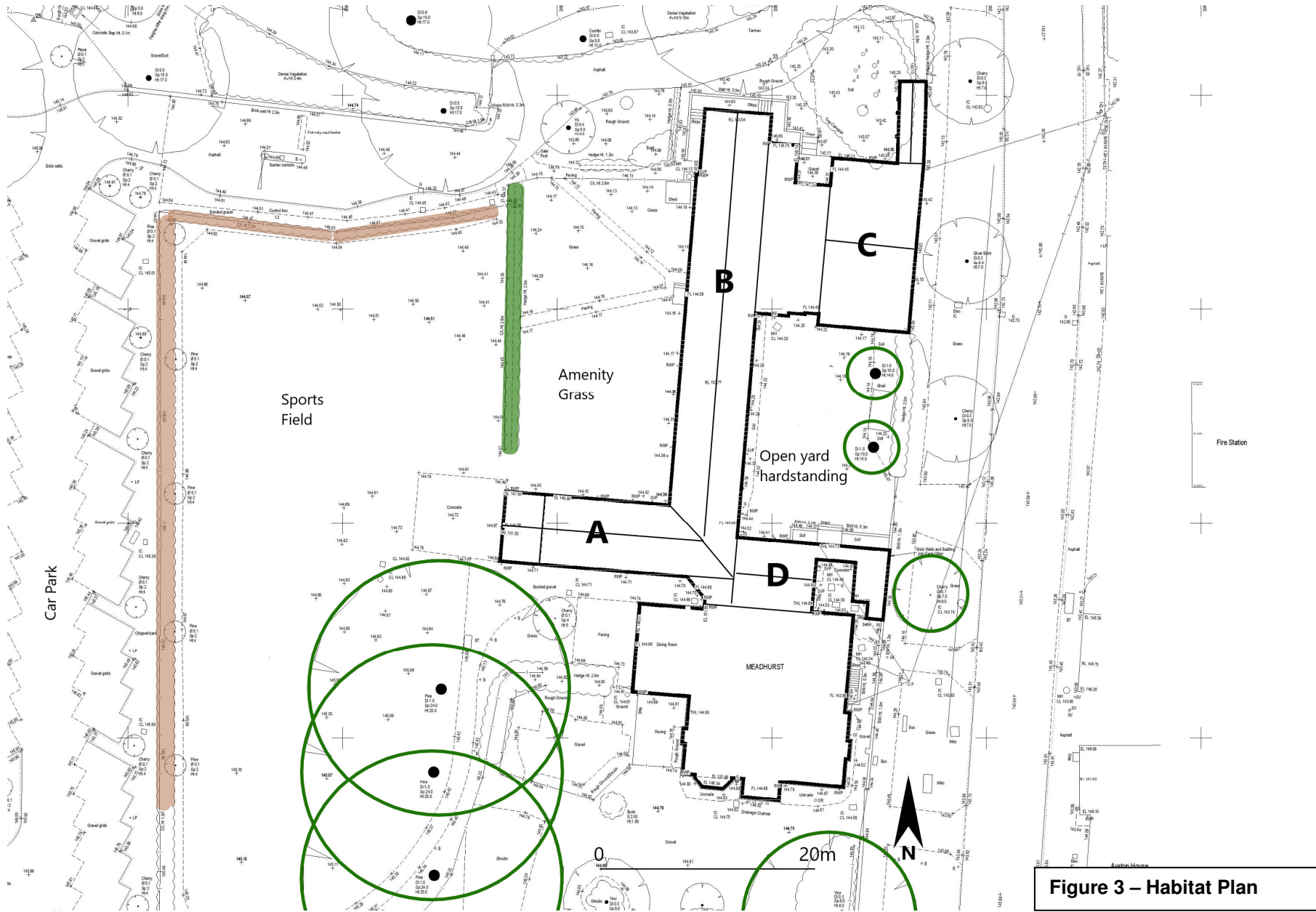
There are records of **great crested newt (GCN)** within 1km of the site, the nearest being an allotment pond situated 582m to the north west on the edge of the village of Uppingham. There are records of common amphibians 280m from the site in garden ponds but the GCN location is isolated from the site by roads and buildings and there are no ponds or wetlands close to the building surveyed to provide nearby habitat. The potential for amphibians to be present is considered to be very low.

There are records of **reptiles** within 1km, the nearest being Grass Snake recorded 285m to the east on the edge of the village. The site is sub-optimal for reptile species and quite isolated from suitable habitat so the potential for significant numbers of reptiles to be present is considered to be very low.

The majority of the site area surveyed is a building surrounded by open amenity grassland and sports field. It is very open and exposed land with negligible potential for **ground nesting birds**. There may be nests associated with the building on site and also with mature trees around the boundaries of the survey area.

There are records of roosting and foraging **bats** in this area with two species of Pipistrelle, Noctule, Myotid and Brown Long-eared bats recorded in the area. The nearest roost location is identified as being a Pipistrelle roost 280m to the south of the location surveyed. It is possible that the building could support roosting bats if there are suitable structural features present.

There are records of **badger** activity in this area but the nearest sett or foraging record is for land 344m to the south east of the property surveyed where there is a large active sett recorded on the edge of the village. The site is sub-optimal habitat for foraging badger and quite isolated near the centre of the village. The potential for badger to be present is considered to be very low.



3. Survey Findings

3.1 Habitat Classifications and Target Notes

The survey has identified the following habitats within the proposed development:

- Commercial / Educational Buildings
- Amenity Grassland
- Sports Field
- Amenity Landscaping
- Hardstanding / Car Park
-

Target Note: Buildings

The large building has been sub-divided into four sections for the purposes of assessment. CBE Consulting have been instructed that the main building at the south eastern corner of the property is not being disturbed and this has not been surveyed. Both four sections of the building surveyed are described in the table below with photographs of the exterior and interior loft space (where accessible) provided.

	Description	Potential for protected species
A	Two storey brick building of traditional construction with a pitched tiled roof. Brickwork is in good condition with no holes or gaps present on the exterior. Traditional timber sash windows present which appear tightly fitting throughout. Modern timber doors present. Small single storey extension at the western end of Building section A with a west facing gable exposed. Roof appears in good condition with no missing or broken tiles present but the roof edges extend over the walls a considerable distance providing a potential area of shelter and access under the roof edges. Enclosed loft area to this section of the building was inaccessible for inspection.	No evidence of any nesting bird activity on the exterior of within the interior. No field signs of roosting bats found on the exterior of the building. The property is in a good location for bats and the loft area is inaccessible for inspection. Potential entry points along the roof edges. Low roost potential
B	Two storey brick building of traditional construction with a pitched tiled roof. Brickwork is in good condition with no holes or gaps present on the exterior. Traditional timber sash windows present which appear tightly fitting throughout. Modern timber doors present. North facing gable end exposed. Roof appears in good condition with no missing or broken tiles present but the roof edges extend over the walls a considerable distance providing a potential area of shelter and access under the roof edges. Enclosed loft area to this section was accessible for inspection. Roof is lined with bituminous felt lining.	No evidence of any nesting bird activity on the exterior of within the interior. No field signs of roosting bats found on the exterior or within the interior of the building. The property is in a good location for bats and the loft area is lined with felt hiding the underside of the roof edges and ridge line. Potential entry points along the roof edges. Low roost potential
C	Tall single storey brick building of traditional construction with a shallow sloping pitched tiled roof. Brickwork is in good condition with no holes or gaps present on the exterior. Potentially a former coach house with large timber doors on the south face of the building facing an open courtyard. East facing gable end exposed. Linked to section B by a flat roofed connection corridor with small office rooms. Roof appears in good condition with no missing or broken tiles present. Light panels are present and the	No evidence of any nesting bird activity on the exterior of within the interior. No field signs of roosting bats found on the exterior or within the interior of the building. The property is in a good location for bats but there is no enclosed loft space and the roof structure

	roof edges extend over the walls a considerable distance but appear to be effectively sealed with no obvious gaps along the roof edges. No enclosed loft spaces within the building interior. Roof is lined and boarded.	appears effectively sealed. Negligible roost potential
D	Two storey brick building of traditional construction with a pitched tiled roof connected to Section A. Brickwork is in good condition with no holes or gaps present on the exterior. Traditional timber sash windows present which appear tightly fitting throughout. Modern timber doors present. North facing gable end exposed. Roof appears in good condition with no missing or broken tiles present but the roof edges extend over the walls a considerable distance providing a potential area of shelter and access under the roof edges. Enclosed loft area to this section was inaccessible for inspection and it is assumed the roof is lined with bituminous felt lining.	No evidence of any nesting bird activity on the exterior of within the interior. No field signs of roosting bats found on the exterior of the building. The property is in a good location for bats and the loft area is inaccessible for inspection. Potential entry points along the roof edges. Low roost potential

Whilst no evidence of roosting bats or nesting birds was found in any part of the building inspected, since there are features present in the building structure and it is in a good location for bats. A further bat activity survey was completed for this building on the evening of 27th May, details of which are provided in section 3.3 of this report.

Building Sections A - D



South face of section A



West end of section A



West facing gable of section A



North face of section A



West face of section B



Junction of sections A and B



East face of section B



East face of section B



North gable of section B



Interior loft of section B



Interior loft of section B



South face of section C



East face of section C



north and east face of section D

Target Note: Amenity Grassland

To the north western side of building sections A and B is a small parcel of amenity grassland supporting a dense even sward dominated by Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne* within which there are occasional common forbs found in mown grass areas. The western edge of this area supports a dense untrimmed hedge of Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* which divides this area from the adjacent sports pitch to the west.



Amenity grass behind A and B



Cherry Laurel hedge in grounds

Target Note: Sports Field

Further to the west is an area of intensively managed sports field used by the school. This support a dense, even and frequently mown grass sward dominated by Perennial Ryegrass with very few other species present except for occasional common forbs such as Plantain *Plantago major*, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* which can survive in mown grassland. There are no rare or unusual plant species present across this area.



Sports field

Target Note: Car park and Hardstanding

To the front of the school is a courtyard lying between buildings B, C and D, accessed from the main road. This has a hard asphalt surface with no features of ecological interest except for a pair of pollarded Lime *Tilia europaea*



Courtyard area

3.2 Evidence of Protected Species

During the inspection of the site notes were made on the suitability of habitats for protected species and any sightings or signs of protected species were recorded:

- The suitability of habitats for badger (*Meles meles*) was recorded and any evidence of badgers including setts, dung pits, badger paths, hairs, bedding, footprints and scratching trees was noted.
- Trees with features suitable for roosting bats were noted, such as hollows (e.g. old woodpecker holes), cracks and cavities within trunks and branches, crevices behind loose bark and ivy growth on trunks.
- The buildings were assessed for the potential presence of nesting birds and roosting bats.
- The suitability of habitats was assessed for reptiles such as Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and amphibians (including great crested newts - *Triturus cristatus*).
- The suitability of site was assessed for nesting birds.

Surveying in March is an optimal time for many protected species although it is recognised that bats may be less active. An experienced surveyor can make reliable judgements about the quality and composition of habitats and their potential suitability for protected species. Only an initial assessment of the site was made and no stage 2 surveys were carried out. As such, a lack of evidence of a protected species does not necessarily indicate an absence of these species. The table below provides a summary of the potential for protected species to be present within the site.

Species	Present within 1km	Connectivity	Suitable habitat on site / evidence of presence	Likelihood of presence on site
Nesting Birds	Yes	Limited by the developed land surrounding the school and management of the school grounds.	Ground nesting highly unlikely within the landscaped school grounds. Nesting on the building structures is possible as there are roof overhangs but no nests were found during the inspection.	Possible for swallow, swift and house martin to be using the building roof edges in the future.

Reptiles	Yes	Limited by the developed land surrounding the school and sub-optimal habitat present within the school grounds.	No evidence of any reptiles was found in the grounds around the building and the survey area is suboptimal for reptile species.	Very low likelihood if individual reptiles being present in the school grounds.
Amphibians	Yes	Limited by the developed land surrounding the school and sub-optimal habitat present within the school grounds.	No evidence of any amphibians was found in the grounds around the building and the survey area is suboptimal for reptile species.	Very low likelihood if individual common amphibians being present in the school grounds.
Bats	Yes	Reasonable due to the presence of mature trees in the landscaped areas around the building and location of the property.	Some foraging along the site boundaries likely. No evidence of any roosting was identified the building structure which has low roost potential.	Bat activity survey of May 2023 identified no roosting activity associated with the building.
Badger and larger mammals	Yes	Limited by the developed land surrounding the school and sub-optimal habitat present within the school grounds.	No field signs of badger or water vole were found in any part of the grounds surrounding the school building and the landscaped areas are sub-optimal for badger.	Very low likelihood of foraging badger accessing the grounds around the building.

Birds: The local area supports a range of bird species which includes some Schedule 1 and red list species. The open ground around the building comprises amenity grassland, sports field and an open courtyard which offer negligible opportunities for ground nesting birds. The area is also within range of predatory cats.

No evidence of any nesting activity was noted on the exterior of the building in the area where works are being considered and internally, where accessible, the loft areas also displayed no evidence of nesting birds.

The dense Cherry Laurel hedge and mature trees within the ground close to the building could support nesting birds in the future although no nests were seen at the time of the inspection. ***Measures to avoid disturbance to any nests or nesting activity will need to be considered within any development.*** If any work is proposed to the Cherry Laurel hedge of any nearby trees, this work should take place outside of the nesting season or be preceded by an inspection carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

Reptiles: The walkover survey of the site area was completed on a grid pattern looking for evidence or indication of reptiles. No sightings or physical evidence of reptiles was seen during the inspection completed in March which is at the start of the optimum survey period for these species. The site is sub-optimal for reptile species and no further surveys are recommended.

Amphibians: The presence of significant numbers of amphibians in the area surveyed is considered unlikely as there are no ponds or wetlands nearby and the survey area is sub-optimal habitat for these species. Further surveys and specific mitigation measures for amphibians are not recommended.

Chiroptera: The existing building have been assessed and whilst field signs of roosting bats were found associated with these, three of the four sections of the building inspected have been assessed as having ***low roost potential*** due to structural features present and the position of the building in the local environment. A bat activity survey was completed to comply with the Bat Survey Guidelines and details of this are contained within section 3.3 below and Appendix 1.

Invertebrates: The area assessed does not appear to support a diverse range of flora. The potential for a significant assemblage of invertebrates to be present within the survey area is quite low at the present time and further invertebrate surveys are not recommended.

Mammals: During the inspection of the landscaped areas around the school buildings a thorough search for evidence of badger was carried out.

No significant established tracks or trails indicative of badger activity were found within the survey area and no sett entrances found. The landscaped area is dominated by open amenity grassland and a large sport field and these areas will be sub-optimal for badger foraging. Further surveys for badger and otter are not recommended.

The potential presence of Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is considered quite likely as there are local records of this species being seen within the surrounding 2km area. Measures to protect hedgehogs should be taken and this should include an inspection of any vegetation by an ecologist ahead of clearance work being carried out. Any found should be moved to a temporary refugia located in a suitable position on the western boundary of the School Estate area which is away from the area where disturbance may take place.

3.3 Bat Activity Survey

The activity survey of this site was completed on the evening of 27 May 2023 during the optimum survey period for roosting bats. No droppings of evidence of bat activity was found associated with Meadhurst ahead of the May 2023 activity survey. The full details of the surveys are provided in the table within **Appendix 1**. The time and conditions of the CBE Consulting surveys are summarised in the tables below. The survey rationale was as follows:

27 May 2023: five surveyors positioned to complete the activity survey:

- Surveyor 1 – positioned to watch the south facing roof edge and west facing gable of section A and monitor activity on the edge of the sports field,
- Surveyor 2 – positioned to watch the north facing roof edge of section A and junction of sections A and B.
- Surveyor 3 – positioned to watch the north gable end and north west corner of section A and monitor activity along the access road.
- Surveyor S4 positioned to the east side of section D to watch the roof edge, gable end and monitor activity in the courtyard and also the road
- Surveyor S5 positioned to the north east side of section A to watch the roof edge and monitor activity around the mature trees in this position.

Date of Survey	Survey Time	Temperature and weather	Survey conditions
Saturday 27 May 2023	21.00 – 22.50	Clear with occasional cloud. 16 degrees C at 21.00. Humidity 53% at 1024hPa. Breeze 4mph from the east. Sunset 21.10.	Excellent surveying conditions suitable for bat foraging .

Findings:

No bats were seen to emerge from or show any interest in any part of the building under observation and foraging activity in the location was of low intensity. Foraging by Common and Soprano Pipistrelle reasonably close to the building was picked up and Noctule were also noted in the local area. However, no activity by Myotis or Plecotus species was recorded during the survey period in this location. A summary of the bat activity is provided in the table below

Species	Total Number of passes recorded	Time of first pass
Pipistrellus pipistrellus Common Pipistrelle	46	21.41
Pipistrellus pygmaeus Soprano Pipistrelle	19	21.47
Nyctalus noctula Noctule	5	21.27

Sunset was at 21.10 on the day of the survey and the first Pipistrelle bat pass was noted as coming from the south past survey position S1 on the western side of the building at 21.41. This bat is likely to be roosting somewhere close by but did not emerge from the building under observation. It is concluded from the survey and the level of activity in the location that this building, whilst offering features of potential interest to roosting bats, was not supporting roosting bats at the time of the survey and there is no evidence to indicate roosting bats have been, or will be present in the building structure.

3.4 Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints:

No significant ecological constraints have been identified during the survey. The following factors should be taken into consideration when planning any development work:

- The mature trees and dense Cherry Laurel hedge within the grounds close to the building where work is being considered could support nesting birds in the future.
- There is potential for hedgehogs to be present within the school ground and any vegetation removal should take this into account.
- It is possible that features on the buildings where work is proposed could be colonised by roosting bats in the future although it is recognised that there is no evidence of any such activity in the past.

Part 3: Initial Ecological Appraisal

4. Impact of Proposed Site Development

Within the NPPF 2021, guidance on the provision or retention of biodiversity within any proposed areas for development and measures to ensure the safeguarding of protected species are provided. Development should seek to contribute a net gain in biodiversity with an emphasis on improving ecological networks and linkages where possible.

The NPPF para 170 stresses that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by a variety of measures including minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. This is reinforced by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which identifies that ‘a key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by government in its 25 Year Environment Plan’ (PPG natural environment Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 8- 009-20190721).

This report is not intended to be a suitable alternative to an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines on Ecological Impact Assessment, 2016.

At the time this survey was completed, the specific proposals for the buildings had not been determined but it is understood that works to sections A, B, C and D are being considered to improve / replace these. The scale and scope of the works proposed has also not been determined so assessment of impact arising from the works cannot be determined at this stage in the assessment process.

As noted within this report, the ‘mitigation hierarchy’ described in British Standard BS 42020:2013 should be applied in regard to biodiversity within sites being considered for development which is a stepwise process:

- **Avoidance** – avoiding adverse effects through good design.
- **Mitigation** – where it is unavoidable, mitigation measures should be employed to minimise adverse effects.
- **Compensation** – where residual effects remain after mitigation it may be necessary to provide compensation to offset any harm.
- **Enhancement** – planning decisions often present the opportunity to deliver benefits for biodiversity, which can also be explored alongside the above measures to resolve potential adverse effects.

The measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development (BS 42020:2013, section 5.5).

The table below considers the features present on the site in the context of the hierarchy.

Feature	Ecological Significance	Hierarchy application	Impact of proposed development
Buildings	Negligible	None	Unknown but it is assumed some or all of the buildings surveyed will be disturbed or even replaced.
Hardstanding	Negligible	None	The proposed development is likely to utilise part of the hardstanding area for access to support any works to the buildings.
Amenity Grass	Low	Mitigation	Any amenity grassland disturbed for access / storage in support of any works will need to be reinstated or

			replaced with new landscaping. If the Cherry Laurel hedge is removed this should be replaced with a native species hedge.
Sports field	Low	Mitigation	Any amenity grassland disturbed for access / storage in support of any works will need to be reinstated or replaced with new landscaping.

4.1 Potential Impact on nearby Statutory and Non-statutory sites

The works proposed will be entirely contained within the ground of the existing school and comprise improvement or replacement of existing buildings. The potential for any disturbance to Statutory or Non-Statutory sites is considered to be negligible.

4.2 Impact of the Proposals on Site Biodiversity

The level of biodiversity within the site being assessed must be a consideration in determining the impact on biodiversity that may arise from any development on the site. Within the NPPF 2021 it states that any development proposal should seek to “*contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.....*”

Within the Guidance it specifically states that “*Planning.... decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by.....protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils.....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.*”

The survey area comprises school buildings and open amenity grassland and sports field areas of low biodiversity value. There are no significant habitat areas of high or moderate value identified at the property and the nearest mature trees are understood to be sufficiently far from the buildings where work is proposed to be retained and protected.

Until a development proposal is prepared a detailed assessment of the impact on local biodiversity cannot be prepared. It is clear that the areas where disturbance will take place to facilitate the works represent areas of low biodiversity value. A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment using DEFRA 3.1 methodology can be calculated once the development proposals are prepared.

4.3 Impact of the Proposals on Protected Species

The requirements of Part IV of ODPM / Defra Circular 06/2005 in regard to the protection of certain species are still applicable under NPPF. The presence of protected species at the site must be taken into consideration. Under the requirements of the NPPF provision in relation to the presence of protected species on, or making use of, a site proposed for any development must be taken into account. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined or where the impact on protected species is considered to outweigh the benefit of development.

The Stage 1 inspection completed in March 2023 did not identify any physical evidence or field signs of protected species within the survey area but the buildings were recommended for a further bat activity survey. This was completed in May 2023 and no bats were seen to

leave a roost within any part of the building and foraging activity in the area was of low intensity.

The Stage 1 inspection completed in March 2023 did not identify any physical evidence or field signs of protected species within the survey area but the buildings were recommended for a further bat activity survey. This was completed in May 2023 and no bats were seen to leave a roost within any part of the building and foraging activity in the area was of low intensity.

After inspection of the site, assessment of its landscape contact and a review of the biological records for this area, the following precautionary measures are advised:

Birds: There is negligible potential for ground nesting birds to be present but if any taller vegetation, such as the nearby Cherry Laurel hedge, needs to be cleared, this should be completed outside of the nesting season or be preceded by an inspection by an Ecologist to ensure no nesting birds are present or determine what mitigation measures to protect nesting birds are required.

Bats: Whilst no evidence of roosting bats has been identified, it is always possible for bats to take advantage of suitable features identified within the building in the future. It would be prudent to undertake any works that require disturbance to the existing roof structures outside of the bat activity season or have a further inspection and/or bat activity survey carried out prior to works starting as a precaution. The design of any external lighting associated with the proposed development should avoid any significant increase in artificial light levels around the building wherever possible.

General Recommendations: It is recommended that as part of development works the following biodiversity enhancements should be incorporated if practical:

- At least one bat roost tube should be incorporated into the building structure on the south or west facing side in a suitable position,
- At least two swift nest bricks/ tubes should be incorporated into the building structure on the north facing side in a suitable position
- Hedgehog refugia should be constructed in suitable locations where these will be accessible to this species but can remain undisturbed.



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Web references

MAGIC: Designated area data downloaded from URL <http://www.magic.gov.uk.html>

National Biodiversity Network: Protected species data downloaded from URL <http://data.nbn.org/interactive/map>

Appendix 1 – Bat Activity Survey record

Date of Survey	Survey Time	Temperature and weather	Comments		
Saturday 27 May 2023	21.00 – 22.50	Clear with occasional cloud. 16 degrees C at 21.00. Humidity 53% at 1024hPa. Breeze 4mph from the east. Sunset 21.10.	Excellent surveying conditions suitable for bat foraging .		
<p>Flight / Forage activity: Detector confirmed presence of Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Noctule foraging within the area around the property surveyed. Bat activity started with a pass by a Noctule out of site at 21.27 to the west picked up by S1 and S2, this was followed by a Common Pipistrelle passing S1 coming from the south at 21.41.</p> <p>The first Soprano Pipistrelle was picked up at 21.47 by surveyor S3 passing from east to west along the access road. No bats were seen to leave any part of the building under observation during the course of the survey or show any interest in this. Foraging activity in the location was of low intensity with only foraging passes by solitary bats being picked up during the survey.</p> <p>No evidence of Myotis or Plecotus species was identified once it became dark. Solitary Nyctalus were picked up but not seen by the surveyors.</p>					
Species	S1 passes	S2 passes	S3 passes	S4 passes	S5 passes
Common Pipistrelle	5	11	10	7	3
Soprano Pipistrelle	7	6	4	2	0
Noctule	2	2	1	0	0
Total bat passes	14	19	15	9	3
<p>Evidence of roosting activity: None.</p> <p>Significant swarming or concentration of bats: None noted</p>					



Survey position 2



Survey position 1



View of section B



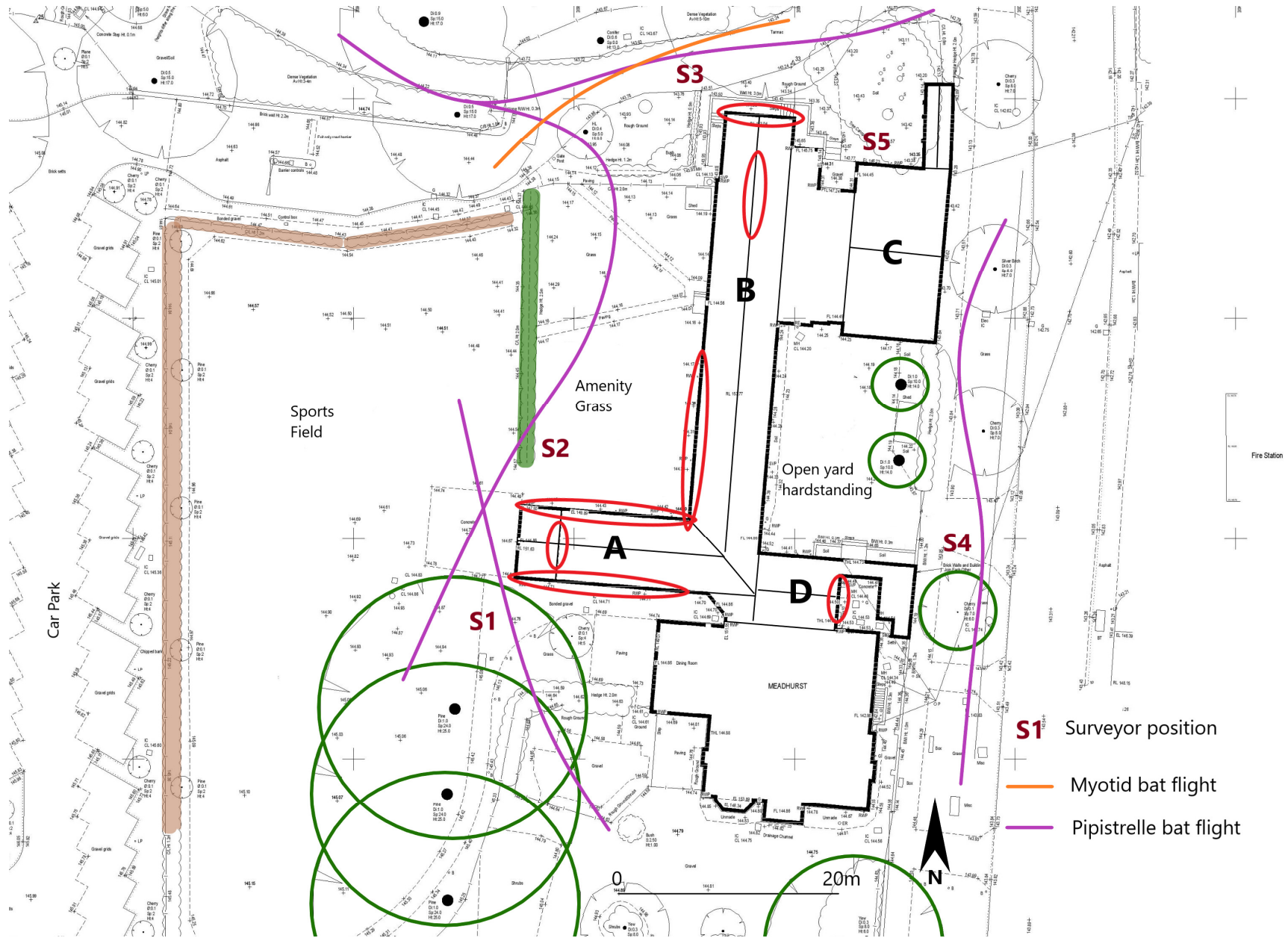
Survey position 2



Survey position 1



Survey position 1



Appendix 2 – Biological Records from Leicestershire and Rutland Biological Records Centre

Separate Appendix