



The Western,
Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

Protected Species Scoping Report

Report Reference KE/23/0051/2

31st January 2024

Authored by Richard Roe BSc MSc MCIEEM CEnv

CONTACT DETAILS

KINGDOM ECOLOGY LTD

7 Speke Road

Woolton

Liverpool

L25 8QA

Email: enquiries@kingdomecology.com

CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	2
1.1	Background.....	2
1.2	Purpose of Report.....	2
1.3	Protected Species Legislation.....	3
1.3.1	Bats.....	3
1.3.2	Birds.....	3
2	Field Survey Methods.....	4
2.1	Survey Aims and Objectives.....	4
2.2	Survey Methods.....	4
2.2.1	Ecological Walkover Survey.....	4
2.2.2	Daytime Bat Inspection.....	5
3	Desktop Study.....	7
3.1	Sources of Information.....	7
3.1.1	Species.....	7
4	Survey Results.....	8
4.1	Site Description and Habitats.....	8
4.2	Protected Species.....	9
4.2.1	Bats.....	9
4.2.2	Other Protected or Notable Species.....	10
5	Summary & Recommendations.....	11
5.1	Habitats.....	11
5.1.1	Summary and Recommendations.....	11
5.2	Protected Species.....	11
5.2.1	Roosting Bats.....	11
5.2.2	Other Protected Species.....	11
5.3	Ecological Enhancements.....	12
5.3.1	Bat and Bird Boxes.....	12
6	Appendix.....	13

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kingdom Ecology have carried out an Ecological Walkover Survey and initial Bat Scoping Assessment of an outbuilding/garage and an area of carpark located at the Western pub, 205 High Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1BB (National Grid Reference TQ 0569 9444).

The assessment has been carried out to identify any ecological constraints which should be considered during proposed works to redevelop the site. The development proposals are to demolish the garage and to construct a new apartment block comprising of three flats. The proposed works will not affect any trees or significant areas of vegetation.

Initial field surveys were undertaken on 29th May 2023. Surveys were led by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking habitat and protected species surveys as a professional ecological consultant with over twenty years' experience. Richard is also a licensed bat worker (Level 4 Bat Class Licence and Bat Mitigation Class Licence).

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report provides the findings of field surveys and a desk study undertaken at the site.

The assessment aimed to identify habitats and species which are either of importance in terms of their conservation value or are afforded statutory legal protection. The presence of such habitats or species would form a material consideration during the planning process and could pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the site.

Site assessment comprised of a biological desk study/data search and an ecological walkover survey of the site including a daytime assessment of the suitability of the garage building to support roosting bats.

Following a description of the survey findings and an evaluation of habitats at the site, the report goes on to make recommendations for further works, mitigation and ecological enhancement measures where relevant.

1.3 Protected Species Legislation

1.3.1 Bats

All British bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and through their inclusion in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (“EC Habitats Directive”) which defines European protected species of animals.

British bats species are afforded further protection by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats.
- Deliberately disturb bats, whether at roost or not.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.
- Possess or transport bats, unless acquired legally.
- Sell, barter or exchange bats.

A bat roost is interpreted as “any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection.” (Bat Conservation Trust 2016¹). A bat roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

All species of British bat are considered a European Protected Species (EPS). The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations (2010) provide derogation against certain offences which could potentially affect an EPS through the EPS Licensing system.

1.3.2 Birds

All wild birds in England and Wales are protected under Section 1 of 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 the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

¹ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) ‘Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition’

2 Field Survey Methods

2.1 Survey Aims and Objectives

The survey aim was to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species. The purpose of this was to highlight any ecological constraints associated with future development proposals.

Survey comprised of an ecological walkover survey and bat roost scoping assessment, this included an assessment of habitats at the site in terms of their suitability to support any protected species including breeding birds and bats.

Species that are considered unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed development, even if known to be present in the general vicinity, were 'scoped out' of the assessment.

Survey also aimed to identify opportunities for ecological enhancement and to inform potential mitigation measures, if required, to ameliorate any negative impacts attributable to the proposed works.

2.2 Survey Methods

2.2.1 Ecological Walkover Survey

An initial Ecological Walkover of the site was undertaken on the 29th May 2023.

The aims of the walkover survey were to:

- identify areas or habitats that are of particular ecological interest for nature conservation and which require more detailed investigation;
- provide a broad botanical description of habitats present;
- provide additional information regarding incidental observations of protected species or non-native, invasive species;
- to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species (including badgers, bats and breeding birds).

The site layout and proposals are shown on Figure 2. Typical habitats recorded at the site are also shown in photographs in the Appendix.

2.2.2 Daytime Bat Inspection

The garage/outbuilding was assessed as to its suitability to support bats following standard methodologies prescribed in English Nature's *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (Mitchell-Jones 2004)² and the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition (BCT 2016)³.

Survey, comprising of an inspection of the interior and exterior of the building, was undertaken during daylight conditions using binoculars and a high-powered torch. The survey was undertaken during daylight hours on the 29th May 2023.

In addition to searching for evidence of an actual bat roost the survey also aimed to assess the suitability of the building to support bats and consequently the likelihood of a bat roost being present but with no obvious field signs.

Survey assessed the building's roost suitability by examining structural features and the surrounding habitat. Structural features that will influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats include the presence of a roof void; access points into a building including gaps beneath barge boards, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry, loose tiles etc, complexity of any roof void, daytime light levels in roof void etc.

Important habitat features surrounding the structures which could influence roost potential include: whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, proximity to a significant linear feature (e.g. watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lane) or an area of woodland etc.

Taking account of these architectural and habitat features, the building was assigned a level of roost suitability. This assessment considered roost suitability criteria as summarised in Table 1 below and taken from the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition.

² Mitchell-Jones, A.J. 2004. *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

³ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) '*Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition'

Table 1- Bat Roost Suitability Criteria

<i>Suitability</i>	<i>Description of Potential Roosting Habitats</i>
<i>Negligible</i>	Structure has Negligible habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats.
<i>Low</i>	<p>A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger number of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).</p> <p>A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground of features seen with only very limited roosting potential.</p>
<i>Moderate</i>	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, condition and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
<i>High</i>	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

3 Desktop Study

3.1 Sources of Information

Ecological information on bat records within proximity to the site have been sought from the Hertfordshire Ecological Record Centre (HERC).

3.1.1 Species

HERC holds several records of bats within 2km of the site. These records include bat roosts, bat detector records and bat casualties. Species recorded include the following:

- Brown long-eared bat
- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle
- Nathusius pipistrelle
- Daubenton's bat
- Noctule
- Natterer's bat
- Serotine

The closest bat records are for a grid reference centred on the main Western Public House building. These records are all aural records of passing bats picked up on a bat detector. The species recorded comprise of common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctule and all date from 2018.

There are no records of any bat roosts within 100m of the site. There is a record of a soprano pipistrelle maternity colony located approximately 150m to the northwest of the site. This record dates from 1998.

There are no other records of other significant bat roosts within relative proximity to the site from within the last 20 years.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Site Description and Habitats

The proposed development area is located to the rear of the Western Pub. Development proposals would comprise of the construction of a new apartment block of three flats constructed within the existing pub carpark. The works would affect an area of existing hardstanding carpark and an existing garage building. The adjacent pub and the pub carpark are currently in use. The main pub building would not be affected by development proposals. The site location is shown on Figure 1 whilst the existing and proposed habitats are shown on Figure 2 in the Appendix.

The garage is of relatively recent origin (late-20th century/early 21st century). The building is constructed of brick with a hipped roof clad in slate and concrete tiles. The garage is used for storage.

The carpark at the rear of the pub comprises of sealed-surface, hard standing. There is a young ash tree located at the south-east corner of the car park. The tree is entirely unsuitable for roosting bats as it doesn't support any potential bat roosting features. In any case, the tree will be retained as part of development proposals.

Vegetation at the site is very limited. However, there are some scattered, common urban herbs around the fringes of the carpark including sparse patches of ivy-leaved toadflax, herb Robert, smooth sow-thistle, dandelion and common chickweed.

The site is located within the centre of the town of Rickmansworth. Immediate surrounding habitats are highly urbanised and built-up, with the pub building located immediately north of the proposed development area. Habitats to the south and east comprise of a supermarket and associated carpark. Wesnum Way runs immediately to the west of the site. Habitats within a surrounding 100 m radius largely comprise of commercial and residential properties with limited areas of green space.

The closest areas of significant suitable bat foraging habitat are located on the River Colne which is located approximately 200 m to the south of the site. The river supports areas of woodland and open grassland. Immediately to the south of the river, there are a series of interlinked large lakes offering further good quality bat foraging habitat.

Therefore, habitats immediately surrounding the site are considered to be of low suitability for foraging bats, with high quality areas of potential bat foraging habitat located approximately 200 m to the south of the site.

Habitats recorded at the study site are shown on Photographs in the Appendix.

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 Bats

The proposed development will require the removal of a detached garage building (Building 1). The main pub building will not be affected by works.

The garage building is brick-built with a hipped roof clad in slate with concrete hip tiles. The building is likely to be of late-20th-century/early 21st century origin. The building measures approximately 6 m x 6 m in area and is approximately 4 m in height. The garage is currently used for storage.

Internally, the building does not have a separate roof void. The internal face of the roof is lined with bitumen hessian felt and the roof is supported on latticed, narrow, softwood trusses. The building does not have a ridge beam. The building does not offer any obvious suitable bat roosting habitat internally.

Externally, the garage has a double garage door at the buildings north face. The building has wooden soffits extending around its perimeter, these are tightly fitted to the external brickwork. There is a row of fairy lights running beneath the building's eaves.

The roof slates and concrete hip tiles are mostly intact and in good condition apart from at the buildings south-west and south-east corners where there are some minor areas of damaged tiles near the base of the roof. The damage sections of the roof are located at a height of approximately 2.5 m

These locations were inspected from a ladder using a torch and endoscope. The damaged tiles provide access to a small cavity between the slates and the roof felt and situated between two sections of roof batten.

These sections were inspected from a ladder and could be fully viewed. No bat droppings or other bat field signs were observed. The features were found to have areas of light cobwebbing including within the cavities themselves, indicating that they have not been used by roosting bats in the recent past.

No other potential roosting features were identified associated with the building.

The identified cavities could be used by nesting however no evidence of previous nesting bird activity was identified.

Given the building's location within a car park with limited vegetation, the site's location in an urbanised setting, the low height of the features, the presence of cobwebbing within the potential features and the absence of any bat field signs, it is considered to be very unlikely that the building is currently used by roosting bats. The building was assessed as offering a 'negligible' bat roosting potential.

4.2.2 Other Protected or Notable Species

It is considered unlikely that any other protected species would be present within the proposed development areas. However, the damaged sections of roof could be used by nesting birds in the future.

5 Summary & Recommendations

5.1 Habitats

5.1.1 Summary and Recommendations

Kingdom Ecology have carried out an Ecological Walkover Survey and Bat Scoping Assessment of an area of car park and a detached garage located to the rear of the Western pub located in the centre of Rickmansworth. Development proposals are to construct a new apartment comprising of three flats. The development will require the removal of the garage building and will affect areas of existing car park only.

The proposed development will not affect any trees or significant areas of vegetation. The affected area of car park is considered to be of very limited ecological value.

Recommendations to enhance the biodiversity value of the proposed development are provided in section 5.3. This includes the installation of bat and bird boxes into the proposed new building.

5.2 Protected Species

5.2.1 Roosting Bats

The daytime bat scoping inspection examined the affected garage building with regards to its suitability to support roosting bats.

Whilst the building supports some areas of damaged slates at the base of the south facing roof, these locations could be fully inspected with no evidence of bats found and the features also found to be cobwebbed internally.

Taking account of the building's location in a highly urbanised setting and an absence of bat field signs within the potential features, the building was assessed as offering a 'negligible' suitability for roosting bats. It is therefore considered to be very unlikely that any roosting bats would be affected by development proposals.

Nevertheless, it is recommended that a precautionary approach is followed during demolition works. Roof tiles should be carefully removed by hand if any evidence of roosting bats is found, works should immediately stop and an appropriately qualified ecologist should be contacted for further advice.

5.2.2 Other Protected Species

The site is considered very unlikely to currently support any other protected species. However, the identified sections of damaged roof could be used by nesting birds in the future.

It is therefore recommended that works to remove the building avoid taking place during the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive). Where this is not possible, a check for nesting birds should be completed immediately prior to removal by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

5.3 Ecological Enhancements

It is recommended that opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the proposed development are taken.

5.3.1 Bat and Bird Boxes

The proposed development should include provision for roosting bats and breeding birds. This can be achieved through the installation of bat boxes and bird boxes at the site.

It is recommended that a bat box (model Habibat 003 or similar) is built into the South face of the proposed new building. The bat box should be located at a height of at least 4 m or more.

In addition, it is recommended that 2 x swift nest boxes (model Vivara-Wood Stone Built-in Swift Nest Box or Similar) are also installed into the North face of the proposed building. These should be located as high as possible and located at a minimum height of 5 m.



6 Appendix

Photograph 1- North and west face of garage building



Photograph 2- South and west face of building showing damaged slates



Photograph 3- South and east face building



Photograph 4- Open cavity under damaged section of slates



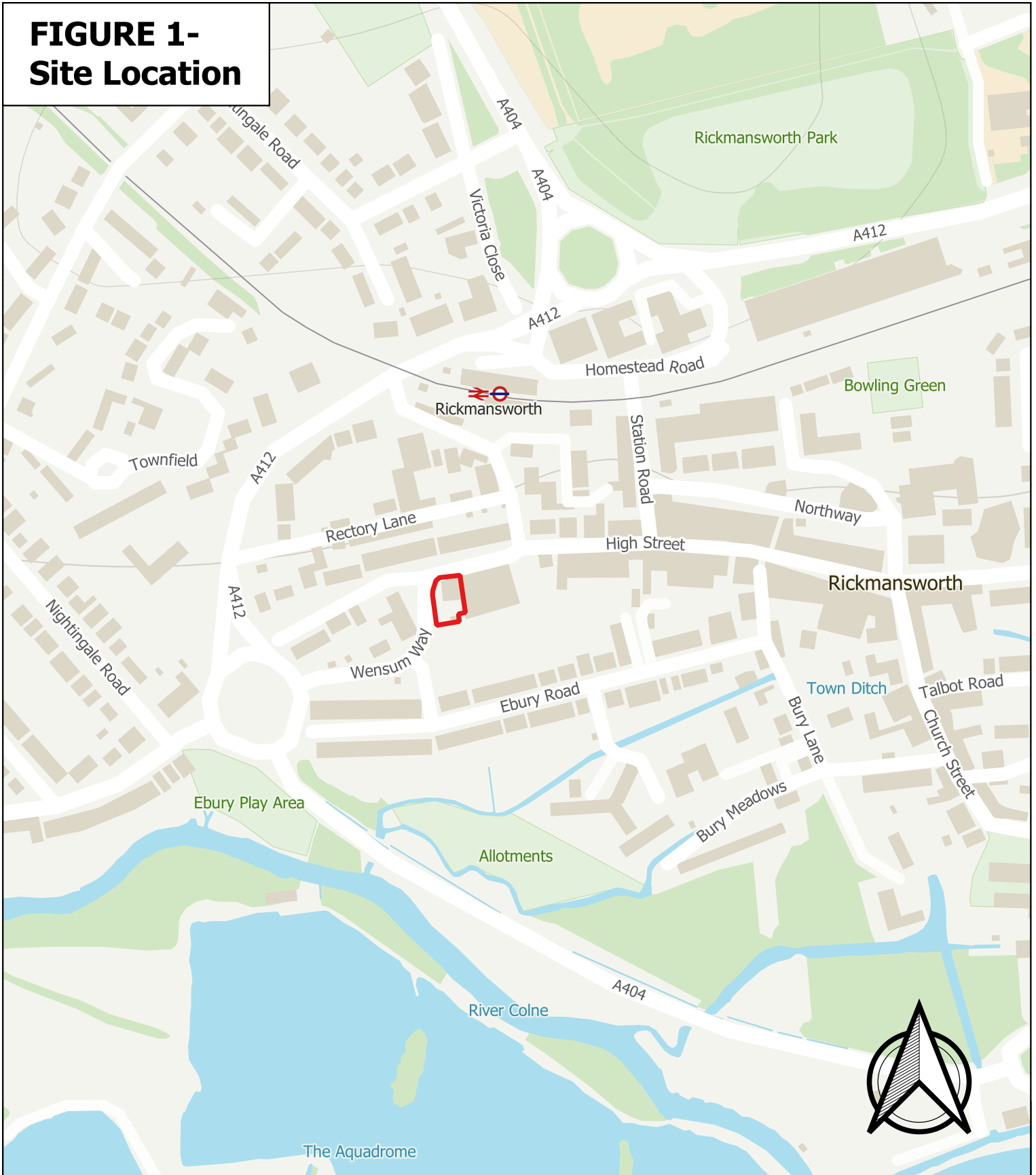
Photograph 5- Interior of garage



Photograph 6- Carpark habitats



**FIGURE 1-
Site Location**



KEY



Study Site

0 100 200 300 m

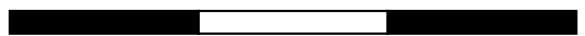
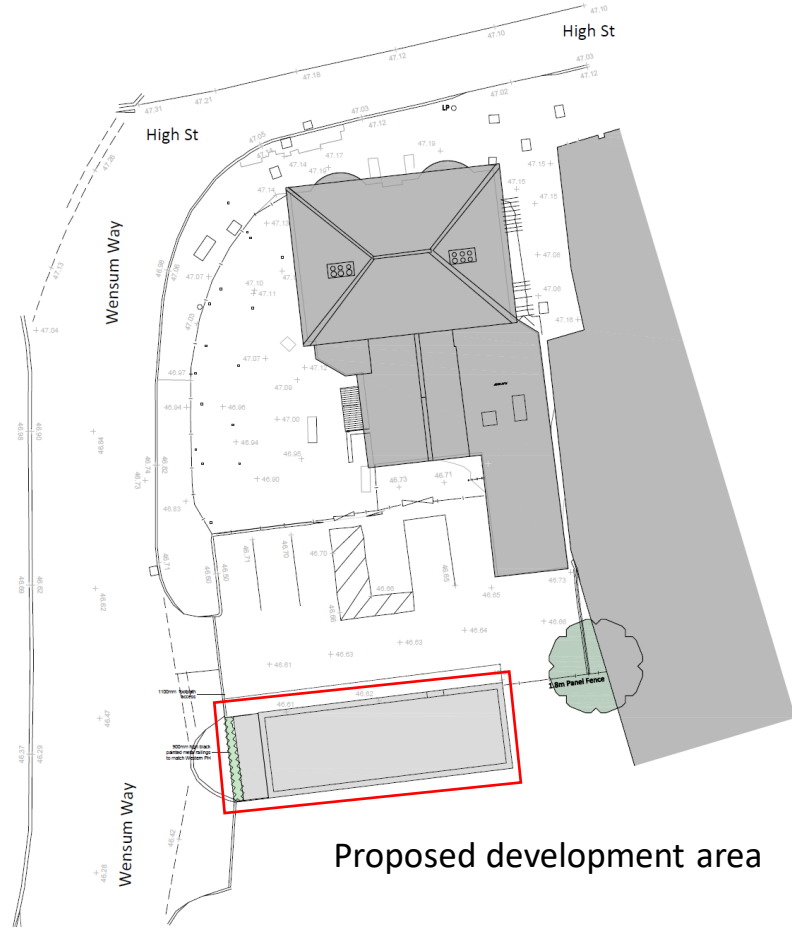


Figure 2- Site Plans



Proposed development area

Existing



Proposed development area

Proposed