



WALNUT FARM, OAKLEY, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

OUTLINE ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY  
ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024

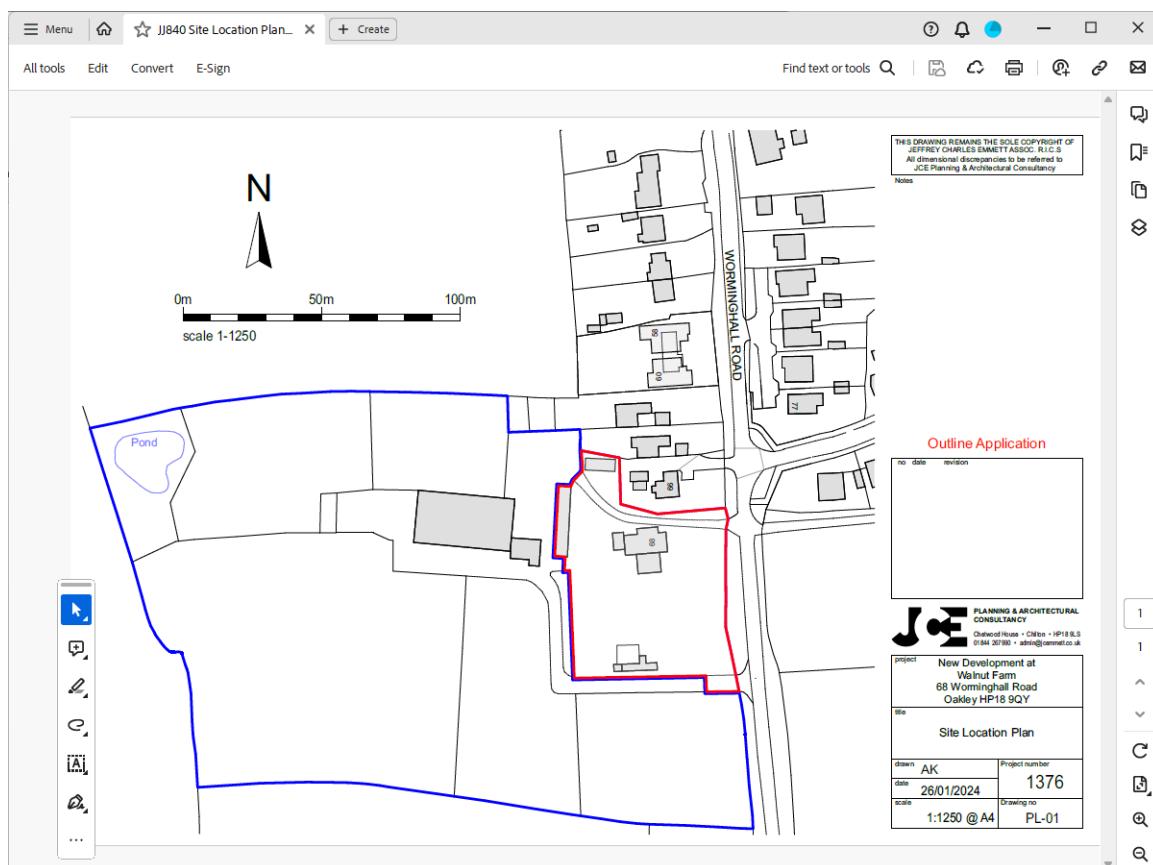
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

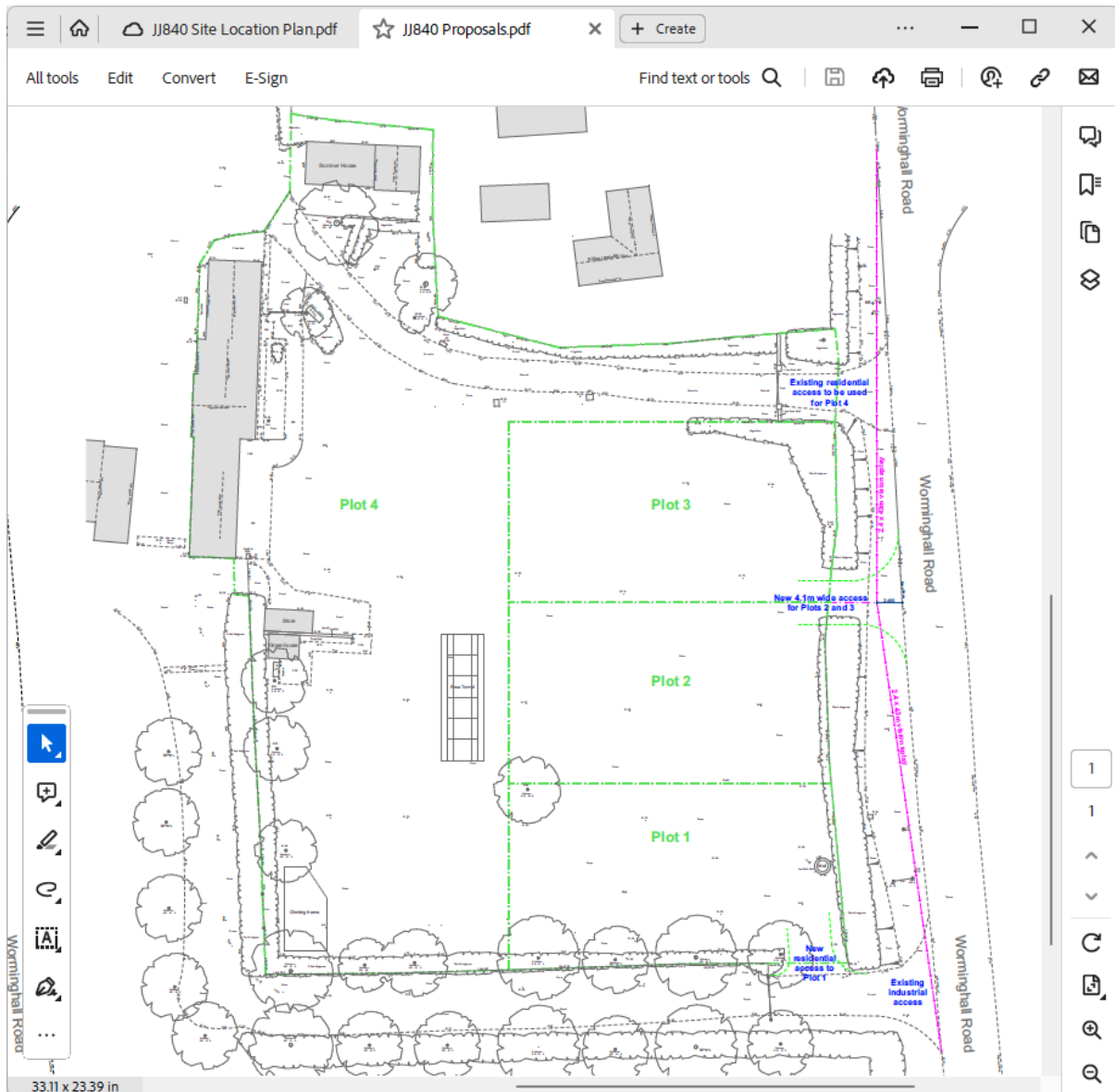
This document has been prepared by James Johnston (MCIEEM / CEnv, a Suitably Qualified Ecologist with 29 years' experience), on behalf of the site owner (Luke Gascoyne). It provides an outline ecology and biodiversity enhancement strategy, for a parcel of residential land (house and garden), at Walnut Farm, 68 Worminghall Road, Oakley, Bucks, where a small housing development is proposed.

The site is already 100% residential (supporting only a house and its garden), and there is a current planning permission for re-development to replace the house with a larger one and construction of a 3-bay garage (Consent 23/02923/APP). There is now a proposal for an alternative development of four dwellings instead of the one larger replacement dwelling. The application for the four units is Outline, and so there are no details of layouts or house footprints available. The application site is shown below in red, along with the other adjacent (blue-line) land also under the same ownership (available for any required ecology enhancement measures).



Outline Application Site (in red), and also-owned land (in blue)

Government guidance is that all development schemes should achieve 'net biodiversity gain'. This document advises on the ecology and biodiversity enhancement options and opportunities most appropriate for this land, in an outline manner, which can then be used as the basis for a Detailed Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy at the detailed planning application stage. The locations / distribution of the proposed four residential plots, are shown on the plan extract below (Plots 1 – 4).



The remaining Sections of this document include 'Enhancement Opportunities', and 'Conclusions'.

## 2.0 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Existing Habitat** – Currently the application site is residential, supporting only buildings, hard-standing, and a garden. Adjoining the south and west is an area of farmland (under the same owner-ship), supporting grazing land, vegetable cultivation, hedges, modern barns and hard-standing / parking areas.

**Enhancement Opportunities** – The application site does not lie within any published target areas for specific enhancement objectives, but there are a range of target enhancement opportunities / objectives at the District and Regional levels, that do apply and are appropriate to the local conditions and landscape character of this location.

The range of suitable enhancement options for the outline development scheme, including application site and the adjacent blue-line farmland, is as follows:

### Within Red-line Boundary

- New native species-rich hedges around the new houses;
- A range of bird and bat boxes (including several different designs), and ‘bee bricks’ integrated into the walls at each new house, and hedgehog nest boxes within boundary hedge bases;
- SuDS and new wetland features, as part of the drainage strategy (pond, swale, marshy habitat / run-off attenuation, boundary ditch, reed-bed, etc);
- New gardens to be vegetated with carefully selected and sited new trees and shrubs (using smaller species that avoid future shading and safety issues);
- Native species-rich wildflower verges to any new lawns, managed as ‘meadow’ (mown only twice per year, allowing flowering and seeding).

## Within Blue-line Boundary

- Creation of a traditional orchard, with the grassland beneath new fruit trees managed as 'meadow', mown only twice per year in spring and late summer, so that herbs and grasses flower and seed:
- Hedge strengthening and diversification at existing hedges, using a wide range of native shrubs, to increase hedgerow species-richness;
- Management and alterations to existing intensive species-poor agricultural grasslands, including sowing of native species-rich grassland seed mixes, to create Neutral species-rich grassland;
- Creation of brash piles / log piles (left undisturbed), to encourage hibernation and safe resting places for reptiles, newts, insects and other wildlife;
- Erection of a barn owl nest box, inside or outside a modern barn, or on a tree;
- Detailing of a Habitat Management Plan, with prescriptions for long-term management of habitats to maximise their ecology value.



*Traditional orchard*



*Strengthened native hedgerow*



*Wildlife log pile*



*Barn owl box inside modern barn*

### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

The outline application site (red-line boundary) for four houses, at Walnut Farm, Oakley, has the potential to support a range of biodiversity enhancement measures. The much larger adjacent farmland area (which is under the same ownership), also has significant opportunities for a wide range of substantial ecology and biodiversity enhancement measures.

It can therefore be concluded that there is no risk of the proposed small housing development not being able to achieve 'net biodiversity gain' within the land controlled by the applicant, and so it will be appropriate in this instance, within the Outline planning application, to attach a Planning Condition to the Outline Consent, referencing this enhancement document and requiring the Ecology Enhancement Strategy to be 'firmed up' and designed in detailed, at the Reserved Matters stage. This should be worded in a manner that requires the Enhancement Strategy to be detailed and agreed in writing by the Council, prior to the commencement of any development work.

It is not possible to detail the enhancement strategy at this outline stage, since the footprints of the proposed buildings are not yet known, and there necessarily cannot yet be a landscaping strategy (which the enhancement is usually designed in parallel with). However, this Planning Condition option ensures that planning regulations are properly followed, and that enhancement will be achieved.