

PLANNING STATEMENT

in respect of
Wildlife Pond

at
Pondok
Wrabness Road
Ramsey
CO12 5NE

Prepared by

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by FWAG East Consultancy Ltd in support of a full planning application for the construction of one wildlife pond in a residential garden at Pondok, Wrabness Road, Ramsey, Essex on behalf of the applicant Ms Jan Truscott.
- 1.2 The sole aim of the development is to create new wildlife habitat suitable to support great crested newts (a UK BAP priority species and a European Protected Species) but it will also benefit other wildlife.
- 1.3 This proposed development is part of a larger, county-wide landscape-scale project (District Level Licensing) being delivered by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) East in partnership with Natural England. The aim of this project is to create and restore ponds across Essex to be suitable to support great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*), a priority species in decline across the UK and Europe.
- 1.4 This planning statement will demonstrate that this minor development will increase, protect and enhance the local biodiversity and environment, fulfilling Policy SP7 of the Tendring District Local Plan (2013) and the objectives for biodiversity conservation in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.5 The following plans and drawings should be considered in conjunction with this statement:
 - i) Location Plan – Appendix 1
 - ii) Site photographs – Appendix 2
 - iii) Site Plan – Appendix 3
 - iv) Cross-sectional pond drawings – Appendix 4
 - v) Biodiversity Report – separate document submitted as part of this planning application
 - vi) Heritage Assessment – separate document submitted as part of this application

2 The Site

- 2.1 The application site is located approximately 1.3 kilometres (km) east and 1.8km north-west of the settlements of Wrabness and Ramsey respectively. The site is identified on the Location Plan provided in Appendix 1. Photographs showing views of the site location are provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.2 The site is located within a small grassland field comprising part of a residential garden and totals approximately 0.1 hectares (ha) in area. The field containing the application site is relatively level with no major slopes or level changes and is bordered to the north, east and west by agricultural land and residential garden to the south.
- 2.3 There are no mature trees or hedges within the application site.

- 2.4 The site is located within a strategically targeted area identified by Natural England as having high potential for facilitating the geographic expansion of local great crested newt populations.
- 2.5 The landscape surrounding the site is a mixture of farmland (consisting of arable land and grassland) with woodland in the nearby landscape. The settlements of Wrabness and Ramsey are located within 2km, to the west and south-east respectively. The Stour Estuary and its associated coastal habitats are located approximately 0.5km north of the application site.
- 2.6 At least two other ponds exist within 500 metres (m) of the application site with no major barriers to dispersal (e.g. major roads, watercourses), in addition to agricultural ditches.
- 2.7 There are no Rights of Way across or immediately adjacent to the application site. The nearest Public Footpath is located approximately 230m west (Ramsey 28).
- 2.8 There are no Scheduled Monuments or other statutory or non-statutory designated historic features on site (see the Heritage Assessment – submitted as a supporting document – for more information).
- 2.9 A review of the Flood Map for Planning (provided on the Gov.uk website) demonstrates that the application site is situated in Flood Zone 1: areas with a low probability of flooding.
- 2.10 The site does not lie within the Green Belt, and is not situated within any Landscape or Environmental Designation areas. The site is covered by the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan.

3 Proposed Development

- 3.1 One pond will be created in a grassland field. The location and dimensions of the pond will be as follows:

Pond name	Grid reference	Surface area (sqm)	Maximum central depth (m)
Pondok	TM 19597 31265	285	1.3

Please see the Location and Site Plans provided in Appendices 1 and 3 respectively.

- 3.2 The pond will be filled naturally by groundwater and rainwater and will remain isolated from ditches and land drains. In this way, the water quality of the pond can be more easily controlled, and the potential for pollutants and invasive species to cause harm is minimised.
- 3.3 In order to maximise the wildlife value of this development, the pond will be relatively shallow, with a maximum central depth of 1.3m, but with a variety of depths across the pond basin and shallower areas (0 – 0.3m) available at the margins. Appendix 4 provides depth profile drawings.

- 3.4 The bank gradients will be gently sloping (between 1:10 – 1:20), so as to facilitate wildlife access to the water and create a wide drawdown zone (valuable to wildlife and a natural germination area for wetland plants).
- 3.5 The pond will have an irregular shape so as to maximise the amount of marginal and bankside habitat available to wildlife, and to create a natural-looking pond in the landscape.
- 3.6 All soil resulting from the pond excavation works will remain onsite; some of this soil will be used to create a terrestrial habitat bank constructed of poor-quality subsoil and left to naturally vegetate over, providing a good opportunity for wildflowers to establish, supporting pollinators and other invertebrates. As per Natural England advice, this bank will be constructed at least 1.5m high and will slump naturally over time. The southern face of the bank will also be warmed by the sun, and so be popular with a broad range of invertebrates and potentially reptiles. The remainder of the soil will be spread thinly on species-poor semi-improved grassland around the new pond and left to naturally regenerate with native vegetation into rough, tussocky grassland. This “pond buffer zone” will provide suitable sheltering and foraging habitat for great crested newts and other wildlife, including other amphibians, reptiles, pollinators and other invertebrates, small mammals and birds.
- 3.7 The banks of the pond will also be left to naturally regenerate with plant species, in this way encouraging native varieties of local provenance.
- 3.8 No aquatic vegetation will be introduced into the new pond; instead, plants will be allowed to colonise naturally. This avoids any non-native species being introduced and encourages native varieties of local provenance.
- 3.9 No animal species of any kind will be introduced into the pond; again, this avoids the potential for non-native species or fish (which would be detrimental to any future newt population) to be introduced. Instead, native animal species will be allowed to colonise the pond naturally.
- 3.10 All work carried out under this project is covered by a great crested newt licence granted by Natural England.

4 Access

- 4.1 For construction and maintenance purposes the site will be accessed by vehicles via an existing residential driveway which adjoins the public highway (Wrabness Road) at approximately TM 19653 31098. Vehicles will then travel approximately 150m north using an existing hardcore access track, before travelling across species-poor semi-improved grassland for the remainder of the journey (approximately 14m). The site access can be seen on the Location Plan provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 No new access will be created nor will any existing access be altered as a result of this development.

5 Landscape-scale Essex pond project

- 5.1 This proposed development is part of a larger county-wide landscape-scale project (District Level Licensing) delivered by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) East in partnership with Natural England.
- 5.2 The aim of the project is to create and restore ponds across Essex to be suitable to support great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*), a declining species across the UK and Europe.
- 5.3 Because of widespread population declines, great crested newts are fully protected under UK and European law, and are listed on Annexes II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive. The great crested newt is a Priority Species listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and is named as a Species of Principal Importance in England under section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.
- 5.4 The number and availability of suitable pond habitats is thought to be a major limiting factor in great crested newt population growth and dispersal. The number of ponds across the UK has been in particular decline over the last century, and remaining pond habitats face pressures from increasing urban development, agricultural land use change and drainage, and pollution.
- 5.5 Ponds are listed as a UK BAP Priority Habitat, and the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (2011) recognises the importance of ponds as a feature in their own right, as well as their role in supporting many important and priority species including great crested newts, water voles, otters, bats and invertebrates. The action plan states the need to create new pond and open water habitats in the county.
- 5.6 Through this project ponds will be created within strategically targeted areas across the county identified by Natural England. Locating new ponds and additional suitable terrestrial habitat in these areas will facilitate the population expansion and geographic dispersal of local great crested newt populations, making populations more resilient to environmental change.
- 5.7 The new ponds will be positively managed for wildlife over a period of at least 25 years, and will be subject to ongoing maintenance such as periodic vegetation removal (to ensure sufficient sunlight reaches the pond surface).
- 5.8 Additionally, the ponds will receive great crested newt survey and monitoring visits over a 25 year period to inform ongoing and future management. All records will be shared with the local biodiversity records centres and Natural England.

6 Protected Sites and Species

- 6.1 Five statutory nature conservation designations exist within 1km of the application site: Stour and Copperas Wood, Ramsey (Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI]); Stour and Orwell Estuaries (Ramsar, SSSI, Special Protection Area [SPA]); and Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The application site is located approximately 95m west of the closest

designated site (Stour and Copperas Woods, Ramsey – SSSI). A map of protected sites in relation to the application site is provided in the Biodiversity Report (provided as a supporting document).

- 6.2 The projected impact of the development on the statutory designated nature conservation sites and on protected and priority species is discussed in the Biodiversity Report (provided as a supporting document).

7 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
- 7.2 The NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development via three overarching objectives: economic; social; and environmental. As such, the planning system aims to improve people's quality of life, as well as those of the built, natural and historic environments.
- 7.3 This section of the document sets out those parts of the NPPF relevant to this proposed development.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- 7.4 The NPPF sets out the requirement for planning policies and decisions to contribute 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; and
 - minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 7.5 The NPPF states that plans should seek to maintain and enhance networks of habitats and green infrastructure, and should enhance natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale.
- 7.6 To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans 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 stepping stones 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.

- 7.7 'Net gain' for biodiversity is defined as "an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand" and can be achieved by creating and/or enhancing habitats.
- 7.8 The NPPF states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principle:
development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported.
- 7.9 National legislation (including The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) and planning guidance place a legal duty on local authorities to protect and enhance biodiversity, such as this development proposes.

Tendring District Local Plan (2013 – 2033)

- 7.10 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan (which includes local and neighbourhood plans that have been brought into force and any spatial development strategies produced by combined authorities or elected Mayors).
- 7.11 The Tendring District Local Plan was adopted in January 2021 by Tendring District Council (hereafter 'the Council') and guides development in the district up until 2033.
- 7.12 This section of the document outlines those policies in the Tendring District Local Plan pertinent to this proposed development.
- 7.13 Policy SP7 Place Shaping Principles states that development proposals should respond positively to local character and context to preserve and enhance the quality of existing places and their environs. Additionally, development should "protect and enhance assets of...natural value", "incorporate biodiversity creation and enhancement measures", and "provide an integrated and connected network of biodiverse...green and blue infrastructure".
- 7.14 The Local Plan recognises ponds as valuable wildlife habitats. They are also potential components of the Essex green infrastructure network, and the management of such features is crucial to maintaining the existing biodiversity interest and to assisting further colonisation of habitats by various species. The Local Plan states that increased local green infrastructure can make vital contributions to quality of place and biodiversity gains.
- 7.15 The Local Plan recognises ponds as important features of wildlife corridors, connecting habitats across the landscape. The Plan states that such wildlife corridors allow the movement of wildlife throughout an area, connecting to the wider environment, and therefore greatly enhance the biodiversity value of an area.

- 7.16 The Local Plan identifies the importance of creating and improving wildlife habitat (such as those proposed in this development) wherever appropriate.
- 7.17 Furthermore, Policy HP3: Green Infrastructure states that green infrastructure (of which ponds are components) will be used a way to adapt to, and mitigate the effects of, climate change, through the management and enhancement of existing habitats, and the creation of new habitats, helping to provide benefits to biodiversity.
- 7.18 The Local Plan recognises that climate change poses a serious threat to biodiversity, and that the district is vulnerable to the impact of climate change such as flooding and drought. Therefore, the provision of green infrastructure is recognised as a desirable win-win approach to combating climate change, and the creation of new green infrastructure should be maximised.
- 7.19 The Key Strategic Issues outlined in the Local Plan include the need to ensure that continued growth in the district continues to conserve and enhance the natural environment, including landscape and habitat creation, and should seek net environmental gains, as this development proposes.
- 7.20 The Local Plan states that the Council will work with partners on projects to benefit habitats and species across Essex, and that biodiversity projects will seek to improve the wider countryside for wildlife which will bring benefits for Priority Habitats and Priority Species, as this development proposes.

Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 7.21 The Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to guide and shape planning and other services through the delivery of Green Infrastructure in the county in order to provide social, environmental and economic benefits.
- 7.22 The Strategy defines Green Infrastructure as the network of high-quality natural and semi-natural assets such as parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green spaces, designated sites, coastal features, productive spaces (agricultural land and meadows), green corridors (verges, green wedges and green fingers) reservoirs, lakes, ponds and other waterways, among others.
- 7.23 This section of the document outlines those objectives and policies of the Strategy relevant to the proposed development.
- 7.24 The objectives of the Strategy include: protecting existing green infrastructure; improving existing green infrastructure; and creating more high-quality green infrastructure, as this development proposes.
- 7.25 The Strategy states the need to strategically identify priority areas for the creation or improvement of green infrastructure that could provide most benefit for locally native species of recognised nature conservation priority and/or enhance local landscape character. This proposed

development, the location of which has been influenced by strategic mapping produced by Natural England as part of the District Level Licencing Scheme, meets both these principles by benefitting local populations of great crested newts and enhancing the local landscape character by restoring pond numbers in the local area, which have fallen significantly over the last century.

Essex Design Guide – Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.26 The Essex Design Guide, which guides development in the county, identifies habitats of principal importance (which includes ponds) as preferred habitats for enhancement and creation.
- 7.27 The Guide states that existing ecological systems and natural habitats found on the site must be enhanced, as well as exploring opportunities to create new habitat and increase biodiversity, as this development proposes.

The Development in Context

- 7.28 The proposal to create one new wildlife pond and supporting terrestrial habitats (rough grass buffer zone and terrestrial habitat bank) at Pondok, Wrabness Road, Ramsey clearly meets the broad NPPF objective to conserve and enhance the natural environment, and to protect and enhance biodiversity, including priority species and habitats, and ecological networks. The proposal meets similar objectives to conserve, maintain, and enhance biodiversity in the Tendring District Local Plan and its partner documents: the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Essex Design Guide.
- 7.29 Further to this, the proposal is in accord with Policy SP7 Place Shaping Principles of the Tendring District Local Plan and will help to achieve the Council's commitment to provide a net gain in biodiversity through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features.
- 7.30 The development will achieve the following objectives of Policy SP7:
- Respond positively to local character and context to preserve and enhance the quality of existing places and their environs
 - Protect and enhance assets of natural value
 - Incorporate biodiversity creation and enhancement measures
- 7.31 In accordance with the above objectives of Policy SP7, the proposed development will have no adverse impact on protected sites, and no valuable or priority wildlife habitat will be lost as part of this development (which is taking place on species-poor semi-improved grassland – not classified as a priority wildlife habitat). No hedges or mature trees will be lost or affected by this development. Indeed, the proposed development will actively enhance the adjacent and nearby habitats. In addition to this, the development will enhance the quality of the habitat for priority species in the local area by providing additional terrestrial and aquatic habitat and associated foraging opportunities. Therefore, this development will actively and positively complement and improve the quality and diversity of habitats in the local landscape, supporting priority species which may be using the area.

- 7.32 The proposed development will contribute towards meeting the objectives of the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy; the creation and management of ponds (as recognised components of the Essex green infrastructure network) are essential for maintaining existing biodiversity interest in the county.
- 7.33 Aside from the initial habitat creation of the pond, the ongoing maintenance and long-term survey and monitoring visits proposed as part of this development ensures that this development also meet the requirements for the long-term management and maintenance of new landscapes, as suggested in the Essex Design Guide.
- 7.34 The proposed development will increase the amount of priority wildlife habitat available in the local area, as well as resources available to local populations of priority species. As mentioned, no priority wildlife habitats are being lost as a result of the development; the sole aim of the entire development is to enhance the biodiversity value of the application site, and to complement and support the biodiversity interest of the neighbouring habitats. The target habitat and target species of this development and wider project (ponds and great crested newt respectively) are both UK BAP priorities and any project or development which actively conserves these priorities should be supported, as both national and local planning legislation recognises.

8 References

Environment Agency (2021) Flood map for planning. Available at: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/> (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (2011) A Wild Future for Essex. Available at: <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jjm4n5168.pdf&ver=8595>. (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

Essex County Council (2018) Essex Design Guide. Available at: <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/>. (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

Essex Place Services (2020) Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy. Available at: <https://www.placeservices.co.uk/resources/built-environment/essex-gi-strategy/> (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

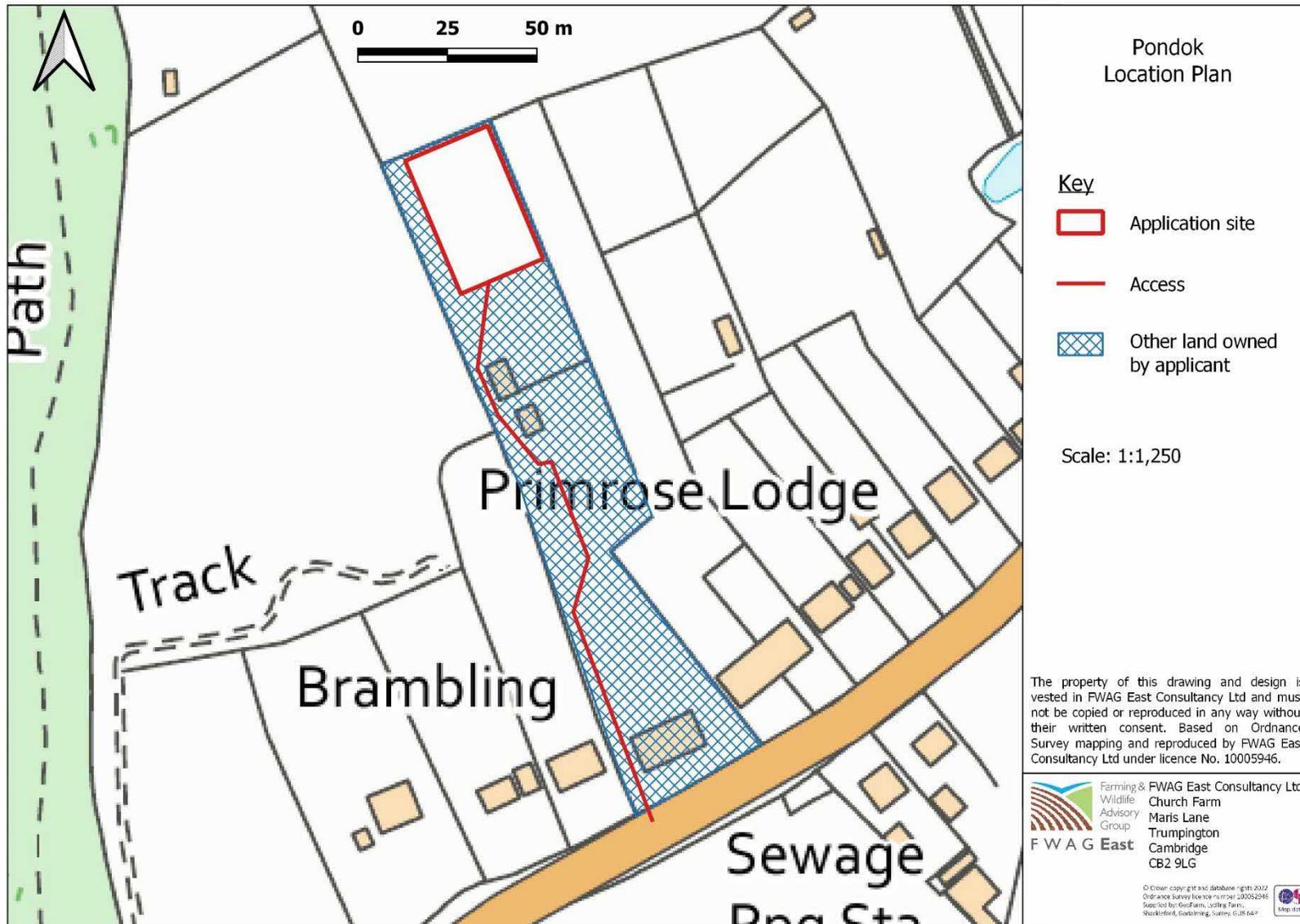
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Natural England (2021) MAGIC Map. Available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk> (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) The National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

Tendring District Council (2021) Tendring District Local Plan. Available at: <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/content/localplan>. (Accessed: 26th March 2024).

9.1 Appendix 1: Location Plan



9.2 Appendix 2: Photographs of site

Photo 1: View of the site taken from the south looking north (taken 07/03/2024):



Photo 2: View of the site taken from the north looking south (taken 07/03/2024):



Environmental Solutions for Sustainable Farming

Photo 3: View of the site taken from the east looking west (taken 07/03/2024). The trees and hedges seen in the photo are located outside of the application site and will be retained and left undisturbed throughout works:



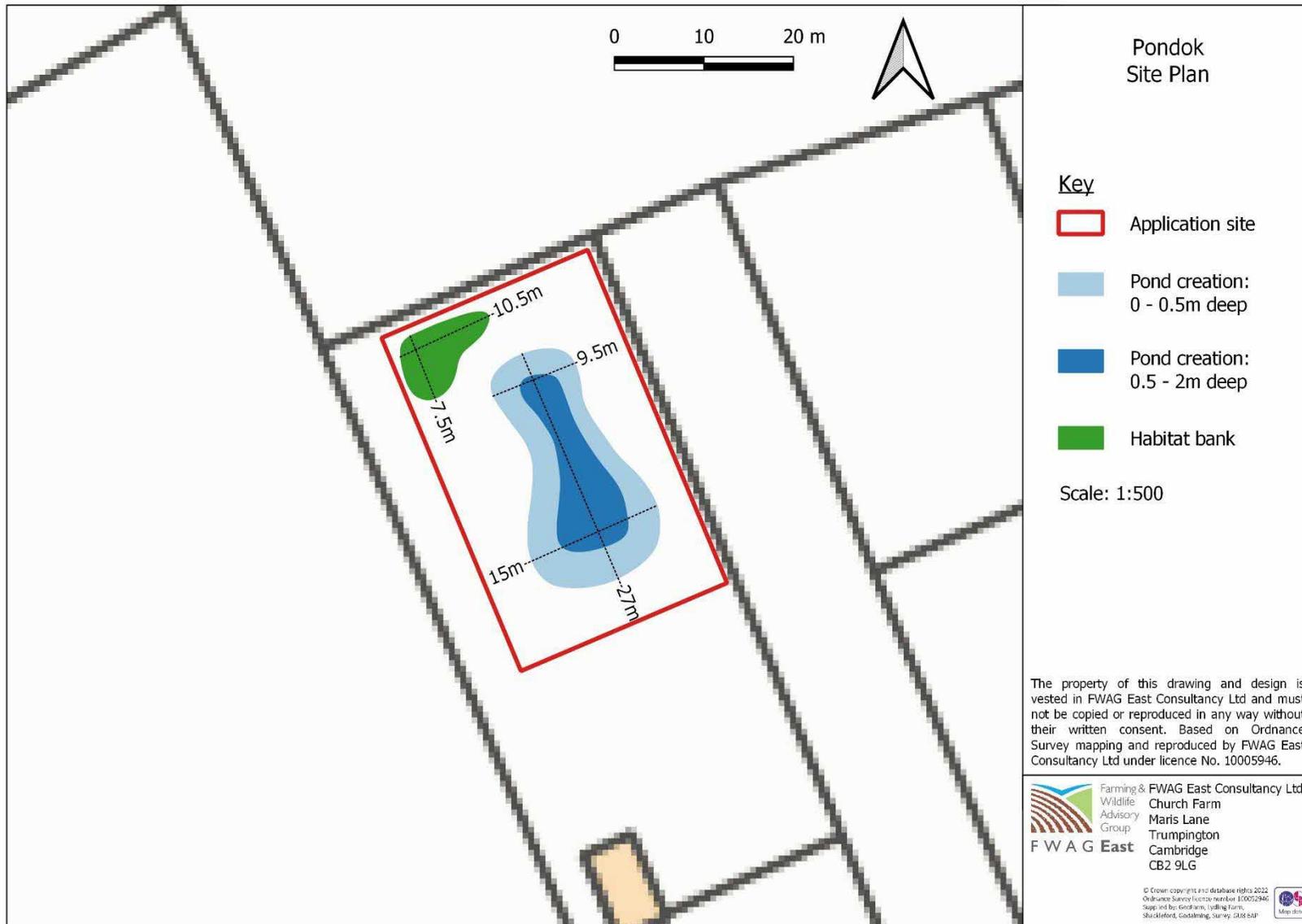
Photo 4: View of the site taken from the west looking east (taken 07/03/2024):



Photo 5: Aerial view of the sward composition (taken 07/03/2024):



9.3 Appendix 3: Site Plan



Environmental Solutions for Sustainable Farming

9.4 Appendix 4: Pond depth profiles

