



Manor  
Farmyard,  
Blackwell  
Close,  
Earl's Barton,  
NN6 0ND

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## Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

December  
2023

Rev A

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Ref: 23-11924

**QUALITY STANDARDS CONTROL**

The signatories below verify that this document has been prepared in accordance with our quality control requirements. These procedures do not affect the content and views expressed by the originator.

This document must only be treated as a draft unless it has been signed by the originators and approved by a director.

<i>Revision</i>	-	<i>Rev A</i>
Date	30/11/23	20/12/2023
Prepared by	K. Seaman	K. Seaman
Checked by	R. Quintana	A. Stuart
Authorised by	A. Stuart	A. Stuart

**Note**

The advice which we have prepared and provided within this report is in accordance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional opinions. Opinions and information provided in the report are based on Syntegra Group Ltd using reasonable skill, care and diligence in the preparation of the same in compliance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct.

**Validity of Data**

The findings of the site survey are valid for a period of 18 months from the date of the survey. If approved works have not commenced by this date, then an updated site survey could be required to inform any changes to the habitats present on site in order to inform any updated mitigation and or precautionary measures required on site.

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No allowance has been made for changes in prices or exchange rates or changes in any other conditions which may result in price fluctuations in the future. Where assessments of works or costs necessary to achieve compliance have been made, these are based upon measures which, in SC’s experience, could normally be negotiated with the relevant authorities under present legislation and enforcement practice, assuming a proactive and reasonable approach by site management.

Forecast cost estimates do not include such costs associated with any negotiations, appeals or other non-technical actions associated with the agreement on measures to meet the requirements of the authorities, nor are potential business loss and interruption costs considered that may be incurred as part of any technical measures.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is proposed to redevelop Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, in Earl's Barton, Northamptonshire. The redevelopment proposals include the demolition of four former farm buildings and the residential conversion of a barn. The scheme proposes to construct three new dwellings, along with a new access road and soft landscaping.

The application site currently supports five derelict former farm buildings with hard standing, bare soil, a single ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) tree and a small area of ruderal and ephemeral vegetation.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the proposed application site has been carried out by qualified Principal Ecologist Keith Seaman, following industry and approved standard methodologies.

The PEA has established the presence of five UKHab habitats; buildings, hard standing, bare soil, a single urban tree and ruderal and ephemeral vegetation. The vegetative habitats have been found to be of negligible ecological value and none are recognised as Habitats of Principal Importance. Their loss through redevelopment is not predicted to have a significant adverse impact on important ecology. The results of the desk study undertaken as part of the PEA established that the application site is not a designated site of nature conservation importance although a number of such designated sites are found within the 2km radius data search zone. Notably, the application site lies within the Impact Risk Zone of an internationally important site - Upper Nene Valley RAMSAR, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is considered however that, due to the distance involved and the small scale of the application site's redevelopment, it is highly unlikely that any significant adverse impacts would result to the designated site from the redevelopment of the application site.

The PEA has also established the potential for the application site to support common nesting birds, specifically within the single ash tree and a number of the former farm buildings. The predicted impact of the redevelopment on common nesting bird habitat is however deemed to be insignificant. The farm buildings have been noted as having bat roosting potential and a Potential Roosting Assessment (PRA) is recommended.

Excluding roosting bats, the nature of the proposed redevelopment, the size of the application site and the limited number of unimportant semi-natural habitats within the site are all factors which combine to result in a negligible significant adverse impact on important habitats, protected species and wildlife in general. Avoidance, mitigation, and compensation measures will further reduce negative impacts. To reduce and mitigate impacts on protected and important species, it is recommended that:

- Once redevelopment plans for the buildings have progressed, a PRA will be conducted of the farm buildings
- During the construction works, any holes, trenches and/or ditches should be supplied with an inclined hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) ladder, to provide a means of escape. Future fencing on the redeveloped site must include hedgehog 'pop-holes', to allow for their free movement throughout the site
- The single ash tree and a number of former farm buildings are suitable for nesting birds and construction works impacting these habitats should ideally be conducted outside of the nesting bird season (considered to be March to August inclusive) or, if this is not possible, buildings should be sealed once any bat mitigation measures have been

implemented (should they be required), against the potential for bird nesting outside the nesting season.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

- 1.1** Syntegra Group was commissioned by the applicant, William Chambers to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, Earl's Barton, NN6 0ND.
- 1.2** This report has been prepared in support of the application being submitted by Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, Earl's Barton, NN6 0ND ('the site').
- 1.3** The objectives of this PEA were to:
- Map the main ecological features within the site and compile a plant species list for each habitat type;
  - Make an initial assessment of the presence or likely absence of species of conservation concern;
  - Identify any legal and planning policy constraints relevant to nature conservation which may affect the development;
  - Determine any potential further ecological issues;
  - Determine the need for further surveys and mitigation; make recommendations for minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity, where possible, in accordance with Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2023).
- 1.4** The site survey was undertaken by Keith Seaman BSc. Dip.HE. Cert.HE. CBiol, MRSB. MCIEEM, a suitably qualified Ecologist, on the 16th of November 2023. Keith is a Chartered Biologist registered with the Royal Society of Biology and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). He holds Class survey licenses, issued by Natural England, for bats - CL18 Level 2 and CL21 Bat Mitigation Class (Low impact) licence; great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) - CL09 Level 2; hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) - CL10b Level 2; otter (*Lutra lutra*) - A29; badger (*Meles meles*) - CL35 and barn owl (*Tyto alba*) - CL29. Weather conditions were considered suitable for surveying; overcast but dry. The timing of the survey was sub-optimal for botanical surveying however this is not seen as a major constraint as a robust assessment of the habitats present and their overall potential to support protected and important species could be made.
- 1.5** The application site consists of a number of redundant and derelict former agricultural buildings surrounded by hard standing and some bare soil, with small amounts of regenerating ruderal and ephemeral vegetation (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Site boundary as provided by the client



## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- 2.1** The methods outlined in the CIEEM Guidance for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (2017) were used for this survey. The field survey comprised of an extended UK Habitat Survey (UKHab, 2020) of the proposed redevelopment site. This is a standard technique for obtaining baseline ecological information for areas of land, including proposed redevelopment sites.
- 2.2** Incidental records of fauna were also made during the survey and the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected species, other species of conservation concern and any species of principal importance listed under the NERC Act (2006). When appraising the overall potential for protected and important species during the survey, the habitats on site were assessed as present, high, moderate, low, and negligible.
- 2.3** Invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were searched for and recorded.
- 2.4** The survey was undertaken by Keith Seaman BSc CBIol, MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist and follows the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct when undertaking surveys (CIEEM, 2016).

### Desktop Study

- 2.5** The applicant commissioned a local biological records and designated sites of nature conservation importance search for a 2km radius around the application site, from the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre.
- 2.6** Ordnance Survey maps and aerial images of the application site were examined online using [bing.com/maps](http://bing.com/maps) and [maps.google.co.uk](http://maps.google.co.uk).
- 2.7** The North Northamptonshire Local Plan - Joint Core Strategy 2011 to 2031 plan was consulted for details on policies relevant to designated sites, protected species, and general ecology protection.
- 2.8** In accordance with the CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017), only details of the information gathered from the biological data search that influence the field surveys and assessment have been included in the main report. The full list of the data search results is available on request.

### Zone of Influence (Zol)

- 2.9** The Zol is used to assess any potential direct and indirect impacts or risks to the application site and the immediate surrounding habitats. The Zol is also used to determine the feasibility for enhancements for the site and within the surrounding areas/habitats. The Zol is based on the following: the site itself, the areas directly adjacent to the site and areas up to 2km outside of the site, including statutory and non-statutory designated sites. The Zol looks for potential impacts on habitats and species with possible connectivity to the site itself.

### Constraints

- 2.10** It is possible that certain flowering herbs and or ephemerals may have not been recorded during the summer survey and an extensive species list was not obtained however it is

considered that the species characteristic to the habitats on site were recorded. The survey provides a snapshot of the site and does not show seasonal differences. Ecological surveys are limited by factors that affect the presence of plants and animals such as activity levels at times of year, weather, migration patterns, and behaviour. This report is not designed, nor is it required to, present a complete inventory of flora/fauna.

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### Desk Study

#### Designated Sites

3.1 The desk study has revealed the location of one internationally important site for nature conservation; Upper Nene Valley RAMSAR, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Upper Nene Valley SPA includes;

- Earls Barton Lock Lake SSSI,
- Grendon Lakes SSSI,
- Grendon Lakes North SSSI,
- Hardwater Mill Lake SSSI

Nine non-statutory sites; Potential and Local Wildlife sites (LWS) and Pocket Parks are recorded within the 2km data search zone and include;

- Earls Barton Pocket Park
- Earl's Barton Bridge Shelter Belt Potential Wildlife Site
- Earl's Barton LWS
- Earl's Barton Quarry Potential Wildlife Site
- Earl's Barton Spinney Pond Potential Wildlife Site
- Ecton Gravel Pits LWS
- Ecton Park Spinneys Potential Wildlife Site
- Oxbow Lake Potential Wildlife Site
- Wilby Meadows Stream LWS

#### Habitats

#### General

3.2 The application site is dominated by a number of former farm buildings, hard standing and bare ground, with limited areas of ruderal and ephemeral vegetation.

#### U1b5 Developed land - sealed surface - Buildings

3.3 Within the application site are a number of derelict and dilapidated former farm buildings that include one barn (B3), part of which is constructed of traditional stone (B5), a single-car garage (B4) and a cattle/stock byre and shed (B1 & 2).



**Plates 2 & 3: Views of the application site’s derelict and dilapidated former farm buildings**

**U1b - Developed land - sealed surface**

**3.4** Forming part of the access driveway and turning and former storage areas is an area of hard standing - U1b - Developed land-sealed surface. This area is constructed from tarmacadam, is sealed and supports no vegetation. As such, this area of land is considered to be of no ecological value.



**Plates 4 & 5: Two views of the site’s hard standing areas; Developed land-sealed surface - U1b**

**510 - Bare Ground**

**3.5** Located in at least five interconnecting areas in the southern and western sides of the application site are areas of bare soil. In their current condition, these bare soil areas are considered to be of negligible ecological value.



**Plates 6 & 7: Two views of the bare soil/ground – 510, with some interconnection with regenerating ruderal and ephemeral vegetation**

**81 – Sparsely Vegetated land – Ruderal/ephemeral vegetation**

- 3.6 Found growing in the western and central areas of the application site is a small area of vegetation, classified as ruderal/ephemeral, appearing to have developed from a cleared former vegetable garden, dominated by nettle (*Urtica dioica*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), with evidence of a former vegetable garden; rhubarb, potatoes and strawberries.
- 3.7 All the obvious herbs and forbs found growing in this habitat are considered very common plants typically found on cleared, disturbed and or nutrient-rich soils. As such, this habitat is not listed as a NERC Sect. 40 Habitat of Principal Importance and is deemed to be of negligible value.



**Plates 8 & 9: Views of the ruderal/ephemeral vegetation**

**Individual Trees – Urban Trees**

- 3.8 Located on the southern site boundary is a single tree – a semi-mature ash. This tree appeared to be in a poor condition with very limited damage (to a single limb) and rot and supporting some climbing ivy (*Hedera helix*) up its stem and lower crown.



**Plates 10 & 11: Views of the single ash and minor damage of one limb**

## Protected & Important Species

### Plants

- 3.9** There have been no protected or important plants recorded in the last ten years within the 2km data search zone. Plants present within the application site comprised very common species typically found in the type of disturbed growing conditions of the site and, as such, the site is not considered likely to support either protected or important plant species and has a negligible value to protected and important plants, at this time.

### Invertebrates

- 3.10** There are few protected and important invertebrate species recorded locally within the last ten years. Those recorded included small heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) and grizzled skipper (*Pyrgus malvae*) butterflies and the September thorn (*Ennomos erosaria*), ghost moth (*Hapialus humuli*) and shaded broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*) moths.
- 3.11** The application site currently supports very limited areas of low-growing and species-poor vegetation and it is considered highly unlikely that such an impoverished vegetative habitat would be important to protected or important assemblages of invertebrates, at this time.

### Amphibians

- 3.12** Within the last ten years, both great crested newts and common toads (*Bufo bufo*) have been recorded within the 2km radius data search zone. A single record of common toad dated 2018 has been returned, as have three records of great crested newts also dated 2018, from a single location; grid reference SP8486223 which lies approximately 1.5km to the south-west of the application site. With great crested newts typically dispersing up to a distance of 500m from their natal pond, great crested newts from this recorded location are highly unlikely to be found within the application site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the majority of any great crested newt population will generally be found within 250m of their natal pond (Froglife 2001), Natural England advises that the vast majority of the newts would be found within 50m of their natal pond (English Nature 2001). Research carried out on behalf of Natural England by Cresswells (*Cresswell and Whitworth 2004*) found that most newts are captured within 50m of the natal pond, with decreasing numbers the greater the distance from the pond, resulting in very few captures beyond 100m, suggesting that terrestrial land beyond 100m is unlikely to be important to the newt population.

- 3.13** The application site supports no open water and there are no ponds or open water within at least one kilometre from the application site and therefore the application site is considered likely to have a negligible value to protected and important species of amphibians, at this time.

### Reptiles

- 3.14** There were no records returned of reptiles within the data search zone, from the last ten years. The application site supports no suitable habitat for reptiles and is located within an urban environment therefore it is deemed to have a negligible value to reptiles.

### Birds

- 3.15** 136 important species of bird are recorded within the 2km radius data search area – the majority being wetland species recorded from the Earl's Barton Gravel Pits complex. Of the 136 species recorded, only three; woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) could potential be found utilising the application site. However, due to the lack of habitat and the site's urban location, it is considered highly unlikely that the site would be important to specially protected and important bird species, at this time.

- 3.16** The application site does however support limited common bird nesting habitat in the form of the single ash tree and the derelict buildings. Whilst acknowledging the legislation that protects common birds' occupied nests or nests being built, the application site's value to birds generally is considered to be low.

### Bats

- 3.17** The numerous former farm buildings are found to have been constructed from a mix of brick, block and stone with roofs constructed from corrugated tin, composite cement and bitumastic felt-lined slate. Such building materials, particularly in association with dilapidated structures would be considered to have bat roosting potential as often, the dilapidation leads to the creation of recesses, cavities and voids.

### Badgers

- 3.18** There are numerous badger records from within the data search zone within the last ten years. None however are from the application site itself or immediate surrounding locations. At the time of the survey the application site supported no setts or indicative field signs of badger presence. It is likely therefore that the application site has a negligible value to the local badger population.

### Hedgehogs

- 3.19** There are 22 returned records of hedgehog arising from within the town of Earl's Barton with the closest record to the application site being from Dowthorpe End, dated 2020. Hedgehogs appear to be common within the town of Earl's Barton and the application site does currently support suitable habitat for this species. However, in its current condition, the application site is deemed to have a low potential value to hedgehogs although the presence of hedgehogs

within the site at any time should not be precluded.

**Polecat**

- 3.20** A single record of polecat (*Mustela putorius*) was returned from one location - Earl's Barton allotments, dated 2017. The application site, in its urban location, is considered highly unlikely to be important to this species, at this time.
  
- 3.21** Other protected and important species and species groups are recorded locally, specifically brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and wetland species such as water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) and otter. However, the application site supports no suitable habitat to support any of these species and therefore they are not considered further.



## 4.0 EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

### Designated Sites

- 4.1** There is one internationally important designated site within 10km of the application site; Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits RAMSAR, SPA and SSSI. Whilst the application site supports no habitat connectivity with this site as it is separated by housing, arable land and a major road, the application site lies within its Impact Risk Zone and Natural England will need to be consulted by the local planning authority. It is however predicted that the redevelopment of the application site is too small and unconnected to the Upper Nene Valley designated site to be in contravention of Policy 4 a) - Biodiversity and Geodiversity North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011 - 2031.
- 4.2** The application site is not a designated site of nature conservation importance, nor are any such local designated sites found adjacent or abutting the application site. There is no habitat connectivity between the application site or any local site and therefore no significant adverse ecological impacts are predicted arising from the redevelopment of the application site and designated local sites, at this time.

### Habitats & Important Species

- 4.3** There are five UKHab classified habitats within the application site; buildings, developed land sealed surface, bare ground, ruderal/ephemeral and an individual urban tree. Of these classified habitats only two are vegetative features; the tree and the ruderal/ephemeral vegetation. The tree is a semi-mature ash with a limited canopy and small amounts of ivy growing up its stem. Its potential value to important or protected species is limited to a very small amount of common bird nesting habitat but it has no discernible bat roosting potential. The ash is considered to have a low ecological value and the potential loss of this tree as the result of the redevelopment of Plots 3 & 4 is not predicted to have a significant adverse impact on important protected species or important ecology.
- 4.4** The ruderal/ephemeral vegetation appears to have developed from a former vegetable garden and some bramble scrub clearance. This habitat type is very common and not considered a protected or important; its potential value to wildlife is considered negligible in its current state. The development of Plots 2 and 3 will, in all likelihood, result in its loss however this is not predicted to result in a significant adverse impact on important or protected species.
- 4.5** The bare ground and developed land - sealed surface are considered to offer negligible value to wildlife of importance and, as such, their loss to facilitate the redevelopment of the application site is predicted to have a negligible impact on important ecology. The buildings, in their current dilapidated and derelict state, offer some potential for protected species, namely nesting birds and roosting bats. All buildings within the application site have the potential to support some common nesting bird species with evidence in Buildings B1 & B2 of previous bird nesting.
- 4.6** The redevelopment of the application site will result in the demolition of Buildings B1, B2 as well as B3 and B4. As such, the risk of nesting birds having their nests damaged or destroyed is high and contrary to the protection afforded them from the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Whilst mitigation measures will be required to avoid infringing this legislation,

the ecological impact of the loss of these common bird nesting sites is considered very low and is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the local bird population.

**5.0 MITIGATION & COMPENSATION**

- 5.1 In order to mitigate the potential impacts on nesting birds, it is recommended to adopt one of two mitigating methods. Firstly, the potential adverse impact on nesting birds can be avoided by carrying out the building demolition and tree removal outside the bird nesting season (between September through to the end of February). If it is not possible to demolish outside the bird nesting season, the buildings due for demolition or conversion should be sealed and boarded-up, following the implementation of any bat mitigation measures, to stop nesting birds gaining access to the interior of the buildings when the nesting season begins in March, through to late August.
- 5.2 Mammals such as hedgehogs can appear at any time during site works and considerations for these must be implemented during the construction phase. During the works any holes, trenches, and/or ditches will be supplied with an inclined mammal ladder to provide a means of escape. Future fencing on the site must ensure use of mammal ‘pop-holes’ in gravel boards, to allow for escape and free movement of hedgehogs throughout the site.
- 5.3 It has been established that the former farm buildings have the potential to support roosting bats and, as such, a PRA is recommended.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** The application site was not found to be a designated site of nature conservation importance, nor are any such designated sites found immediately adjacent to the site. There is however an internationally important site - the Upper Nene Valley RAMSAR, SPA SSSI within the Impact Risk Zone of the site. However, due to the distance between this designated site and the application site and the very small scale of the proposed redevelopment, it is considered highly unlikely that the site's redevelopment would have a significant adverse impact on the Upper Nene Valley site.
- 6.2** The site supports very few habitats with only two vegetative habitats, a single semi-mature ash tree and a small area of ruderal/ephemeral vegetation. These habitats are considered to be of negligible ecological value and are not listed as Habitats of Principal Importance; their loss through redevelopment is also not predicted to result in a significant adverse impact on important ecology. With regard to important and or protected species, the presence of common nesting birds, roosting bats and possibly hedgehogs are considered possible at the appropriate times of the year. The loss of the ash tree and several buildings is predicted to result in the loss common bird nesting habitat however this is considered to be insignificant ecologically.
- 6.3** Both the ash tree and a number of the buildings within the application site are suitable for nesting birds and works impacting these habitats should be conducted outside the bird nesting season (considered to be March to August inclusive) or, in the case of the buildings, they should be sealed outside the nesting season to stop bird nesting during the season but only once all bat mitigation measures have been implemented.
- 6.4** Mammals such as hedgehogs could appear on site at any time during redevelopment works and considerations for these must be implemented during the construction phase. During the works any holes, trenches, and/or ditches will be supplied with an inclined mammal ladder, to provide a means of escape. Future fencing on the site must ensure use of mammal 'pop-holes' in gravel boards, to allow for the movement.
- 6.5** The former farm buildings are found to have been constructed from materials such as brick, block and stone, with roofs built from corrugated tin, composite cement, with felt-lined slate; all such materials typically used by roosting bats where voids, crevices and recesses are present. As such, a PRA of the former farm buildings is recommended.
- 6.6** The redevelopment of the application site should try to enhance features for biodiversity at all times during the planning and construction process by planting wildlife-friendly species during landscaping. It is also advised that the site should enhance roosting opportunities for bats by including bat boxes/bat bricks within the scheme.

## 8.0 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

### Use of Native Species in Landscaping Proposals

- 8.1 It is recommended that any trees or shrubs lost to accommodate the redevelopment should be replaced with species of value to local wildlife. A list of native and non-native species that are beneficial to pollinating insects is appended.

### Refuges

- 8.2 Refuges consisting of vegetation or debris piles should be provided to increase sheltering opportunities for various species, including hedgehogs and invertebrates.

### Bird Boxes

- 8.3 It is recommended that several nest boxes for different species of bird should be erected around the site in areas of good cover and out of the reach of domestic cats. Given the lack of mature trees on site, integrated or wall-mounted boxes should also be considered and designed into the new dwellings.

### Bats

- 8.4 The inclusion of bat 'bricks' into the walls of the new buildings or associated structures should also be considered. Full details of mitigation and enhancements for bats will be set out, following the recommended further surveys.

### Hedgehogs

- 8.5 Features of the build should consider connectivity of the landscape to enable hedgehogs to move freely across boundaries. Enhancements are easy to install and some fencing suppliers offer hedgehog friendly options at little or no extra cost. Measures include:

- Providing 13 x 13cm 'pop-holes', at ground level, in fence panels;
- Leaving a sufficient gap beneath gates;
- Leaving brick spaces at the base of brick walls;
- High kerbs, steps, terracing, sunken patios, gullies and drains should ensure sloped access/escape routes;
- Fit any holes in boundaries with 'Hedgehog Highway' signage to prevent holes being blocked by new residents of the development;

- 8.6 The ecological enhancements (and precautionary mitigation measures) should be informed by all ecological surveys, to be secured by an appropriate planning condition. This should ensure compliance with local and national policies.

## 9.0 REFERENCES

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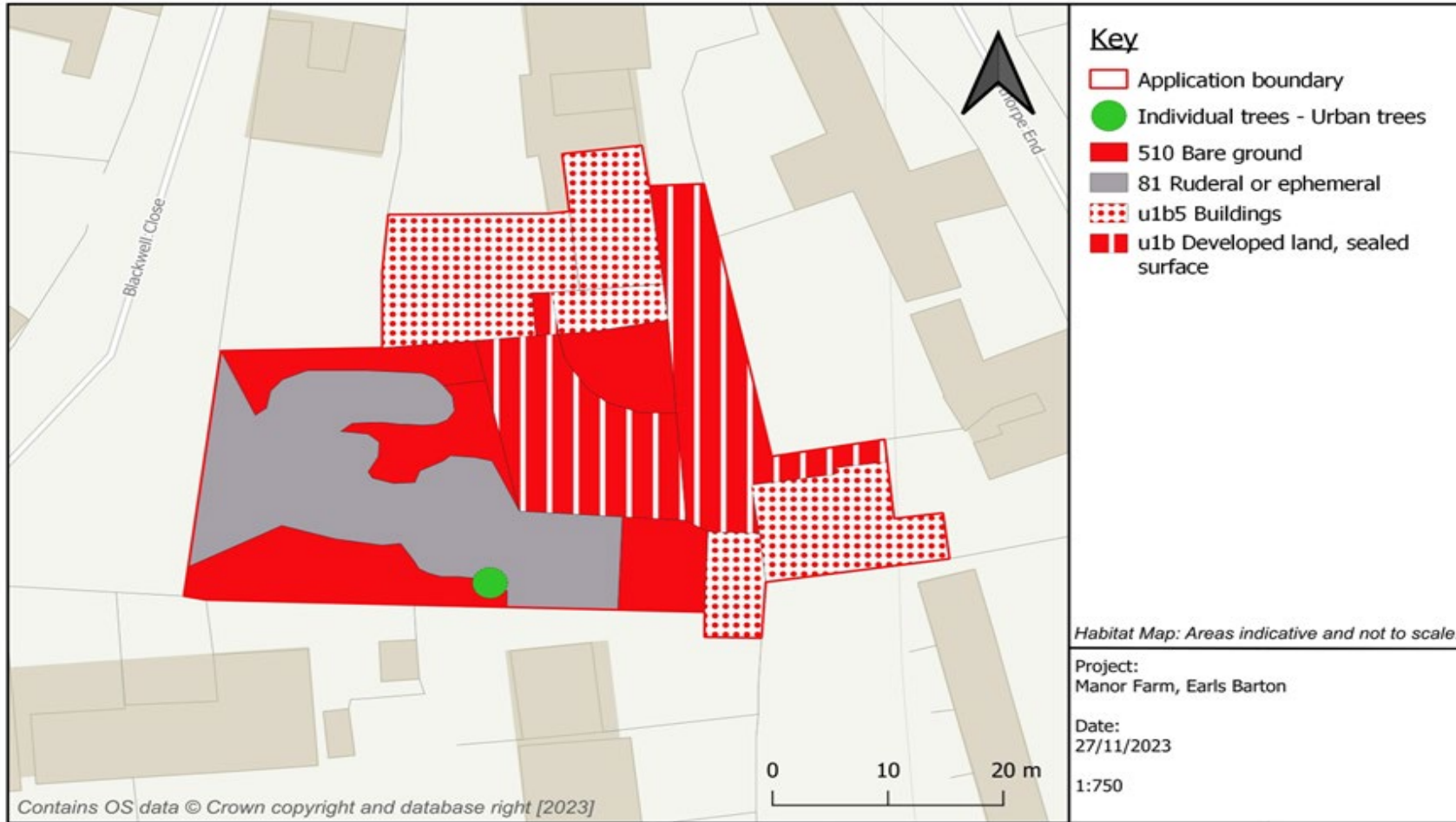
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## APPENDIX 1: UK Habitat Map





## APPENDIX 2: Legislation

### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) superseded Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) in March 2012. The NPPF 2021 states that *'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by'*, in part;

*Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*

It also states that *'when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles'*;

*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*

*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;*

*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*

*Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'*

### Local Plan Policies

The current Local Plan for North Northamptonshire includes the Joint Core Strategy 2011 to 2031. This was adopted in July 2016 and provides the strategic planning policies for the future development of the area from 2016 to 2031. The following policy is taken from that document;

#### POLICY 4 – BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY

A net gain in biodiversity will be sought and features of geological interest will be protected and enhanced through:

a) Protecting existing biodiversity and geodiversity assets by:

i. Refusing development proposals where significant harm to an asset cannot be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated. The weight accorded to an asset will reflect its status in the hierarchy of biodiversity and geodiversity designations;

ii. Protecting key assets for wildlife and geology, in particular the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site, from unacceptable levels of access and managing pressures for access to and disturbance of sensitive habitats;

iii. Protecting the natural environment from adverse effects from noise, air and light pollution;

iv. Where appropriate requiring developments to provide or contribute to alternative green infrastructure (Policy 19); and

v. Ensuring that habitats are managed in an ecologically appropriate manner.

b) Enhancing ecological networks by managing development and investment to:

i. Reverse the decline in biodiversity and restore the ecological network at a landscape scale in the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA);

ii. Reverse habitat fragmentation and increase connectivity of habitats where possible by structuring and locating biodiversity gain in such a way as to enlarge and/or connect to existing biodiversity assets such as wildlife corridors;

iii. Preserve, restore and create priority and other natural and semi-natural habitats within and adjacent to development schemes.

c) Supporting, through developer contributions or development design, the protection and recovery of priority habitats and species linked to national and local targets. Such measures could include the retention of, and provision of areas of open green space, and hard and soft landscaping to address habitat and visitor management.

d) Developments that are likely to have an adverse impact, either alone or in-combination, on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area or other European Designated Sites must satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, determining site specific impacts and avoiding or mitigating against impacts where identified. Mitigation may involve providing or contributing towards a combination of the following measures:

i. Access and visitor management measures within the SPA;

ii. Improvement of existing greenspace and recreational routes;

iii. Provision of alternative natural greenspace and recreational routes;

iv. Monitoring of the impacts of new development on European designated sites to inform the necessary mitigation requirements and future refinement of any mitigation measures. A Mitigation Strategy document concerning the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area will be produced, with a view to its subsequent adoption as an Addendum to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document by June 2016, to support the adopted Joint Core Strategy 2011 - 2031. Development proposals will need to take account of the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document and the JPU Mitigation Strategy for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area. Where necessary, this will include new residential development contributing towards implementation of this Mitigation Strategy.

## Legislation

### **The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019**

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 in the UK implement the EC Habitats Directive in the UK. These regulations mainly deal with the protection of sites that are important for nature conservation in a European context (eg Special Areas of Protection [SACs] and Special Protection Areas [SPAs]). The legislation also gives protection to certain species of flora and fauna.

The 2019 Regulations makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb wild animals and it is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (even if the animal is not present at the time).

### **Wildlife & Countryside Act (WCA)**

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, consolidates and amends existing national legislation to implement the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive).

### **Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act (NERC)**

The NERC Act of 2006 places a duty on authorities to have due regard for biodiversity and nature conservation during the course of their operations.

**APPENDIX 3: Recommended Wildlife-beneficial Plant Species**
**Table A5.1: Native and wildlife-friendly shrubs (Natural England, 2008).**

Common Name	Scientific Name
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Wayfaring tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>
Shrubby cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
Raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Barberry	<i>Berberis × stenophylla</i>
Barberry	<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>
Bell heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>
Black currant	<i>Ribes nigrum</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>
Butcher's-broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>
Cowberry	<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i>
Cross-leaved heath	<i>Erica tetralix</i>
New Zealand holly	<i>Olearia macrodonta</i>
Daphne	<i>Daphne odora</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Field rose	<i>Rosa arvensis</i>
Firethorn	<i>Pyracanthus angustifolia</i>
Flowering Currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>
Gooseberry	<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>
Hebe 'Midsummer Beauty'	<i>Hebe</i> sp.
Himalayan honeysuckle	<i>Leycesteria formosa</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Japanese quince	<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i>
Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>
Mexican orange	<i>Choisya ternata</i>
Mezereon	<i>Daphne mezereum</i>
Midland hawthorn	<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>
Oregon grape	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>
Osier	<i>Salix viminalis</i>
Portugal laurel	<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>
Privet	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>
Purple willow	<i>Salix purpurea</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Snowy mespilus	<i>Amelanchier canadensis, Amelanchier lamarckii</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>
Spurge laurel	<i>Daphne laureola</i>
Sweet briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>

**Table A5.2: Native and wildlife-friendly trees (Natural England, 2008).**

Common Name	Scientific Name
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>
Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria agg.</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Large-leaved lime	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>
Small-leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Wild service-tree	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>

**Table A5.3: Moth pollinator species (Butterfly Conservation, 2019).**

Common Name	Scientific Name
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Jasmine	<i>Jasminum officinale</i>
Evening primrose	<i>Oenothera biennis</i>
Sweet rocket	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>
Night-scented stock	<i>Matthiola bicornis</i>
Aubretia	<i>Aubretia</i> sp.
Cuckooflower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>
Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis</i> sp.
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i>
Pansy	<i>Viola</i> sp.
Primrose	<i>Primula veris</i>
Wallflower	<i>Erysimum</i> sp.
French marigold	<i>Tagetes</i> sp.
Ice plant	<i>Sedum</i> sp.
Knapweed	<i>Centaurea</i> sp.
Lavender	<i>Lavendula</i> sp.
Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
Michaelmas daisy	<i>Aster amellus</i>
Mint	<i>Mentha</i> sp.
Scabious	<i>Scabiosa</i> sp.
Thyme	<i>Thymus</i> sp.