



## Ecological Impact Assessment Report

### Possingham Farm, Chilmington Green

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## Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY	2
3.0	AMPHIBIANS	4
4.0	DORMOUSE	5
5.0	BATS	7
6.0	BREEDING BIRDS	10
7.0	BADGER	11
8.0	SUMMARY OF EVALUATION	13
9.0	IMPACT ASSESSMENT	14
10.0	OUTLINE MITIGATION STRATEGIES	18
11.0	CONCLUSIONS	23
	REFERENCES	25

## Tables

Table 1 – Summary of Ditch Characteristics at Possingham Farm
Table 2 – Dormouse Survey Index of Probability Trees with Bat Roost Potential Observed at Possingham Farm
Table 3 – Bat Habitat/Structure Assessment Criteria
Table 4 – Trees with Bat Roost Potential Observed at Possingham Farm
Table 5 – Summary of Bat Emergence Survey Results
Table 6 – Evaluation of Ecological Features
Table 7 – Predicted Effects Arising from the Construction of the Development
Table 8 – Predicted Effects Arising from the Completed Development
Table 9 – Outline Mitigation Strategy and Residual Effects

## Figures

Figure 1 – Phase 1 Survey Results with locations of dor
Figure 2 – Annotated Photographs

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – Records of GCN and ponds across the wider Site
Appendix 3 – Dormouse Survey Data

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Corylus Ecology has undertaken an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of an area of land at Possingham Farm, Chilmington Green, Ashford, hereinafter referred to as 'the Site', at OS grid reference TQ 96680 40060. The Site is approximately 3km east of Bethersden, Kent. The proposals for the Site include residential dwellings with associated structures (school, *etc.*) and gardens. In addition to the residential development, the proposals include creating two ponds to the southeast of the Site.

1.2 In March 2021, Lloyd Bore Ltd. produced a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report identifying potential for protected species. The details of this survey are still valid and are contained in the resulting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report (Lloyd Bore, 2021). This update report should be read in conjunction with the Lloyd Bore Ltd. Additional surveys for dormice and bats have been undertaken with further assessments of potential for breeding birds and badgers also completed.

1.3 The results of surveys are discussed in their own chapters and mitigation strategies are provided in section 10.0 of this report. The objectives of each of the protected species surveys were to:

- Determine presence / likely absence of the protected species surveyed
- Identify any key areas of habitat for these protected species
- Evaluate the importance of the protected species assemblage within the Site
- Make outline mitigation recommendations, if required

1.4 Water vole surveys have not been undertaken of the ditches, none of the ditches supported sufficient levels of water to support this species during the summer of 2022.

1.5 This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of Hodson Developments. No part of this report should be considered as legal advice.

### **Ecological Impact Assessment**

1.6 The general approach to the assessment of potential impacts of the proposed development on features of specific ecological and broader biodiversity interest, as well as the identification of appropriate mitigation measure to diminish those impacts, follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland ("EclA") produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management ("CIEEM"). These guidelines are web based and subject to review and updating and a summary is provided in Appendix 1.

## 2.0 PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

### 2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 The Lloyd Bore March 2021 Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken at a time when many plants are not visible. As a result, Corylus Ecology carried out an update walk-over on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022 to complete baseline ecological conditions of the Site. The habitats present on the Site were mapped in accordance with the '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey*' (JNCC, 2010). Habitat areas and features of topographical and/or ecological interest were described and are presented in Figure 1. All nomenclature follows Stace (2019). Non-native or invasive species were also identified and mapped where appropriate.

#### *Survey Constraints*

2.1.2 The survey included looking for invasive botanical species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, some species are seasonally constrained, and therefore may not be visible on a single site visit. Likewise, the presence of invasive species or protected species such as badger in densely vegetated habitats may be under-recorded.

## 2.2 Results

#### *Site Description*

2.2.1 The site is largely formed of arable fields surrounded by hedge and tree lines and with a number of ditches either crossing or bordering the Site.

#### *Ditches*

2.2.2 Three more ditches were recorded on Site in addition to the initial ditch recorded in March 2021 (see Figure 1 and Table 1). No three-lobed water crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus* was recorded during the survey.

Table 1: Summary of ditch characteristics at Possingham Farm

Ditch	D1	D2	D3	D4
Notes	221m, 5cm water	306m; 5cm of water, much emergent vegetation including brooklime <i>Veronica beccabunga</i> , willowherb <i>Chamaenerion</i> sp. and fool's water cress <i>Apium nodiflorum</i> and pond skaters	127m, heavily shaded by brambles, 5cm water, seasonally dry	283m, heavily shaded by hedge, no vegetation, seasonally holds water

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### *Spoil*

- 2.2.3 An area of spoil adjacent to the southern Site boundary is covered with common nettle *Urtica dioica* and elder *Sambucus nigra* (see Figure 1).

### *Hedges*

- 2.2.4 As a report on the Site's hedgerows had been produced (Lloyd Bore, 2021), a brief description of the hedges observed during the Site walk-over is provided: Corylus Ecology recorded five hedges (see Figure 1). Mature oak were recorded in the northern hedge (H1) as well as a young wild service tree *Sorbus terminalis*. The wild service tree is rare in the UK and an ancient woodland and hedgerow indicator species (Hornby & Roase, 1986). All hedgerows are known to be Important under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 due to the presence of either wild service tree, protected species (such as dormice) or being adjacent to a byway.

## **2.3 Evaluation**

- 2.3.1 No rare or nationally scarce habitats were identified onsite. One wild service tree was identified in the northern hedge. This species is rare and is an ancient woodland and hedgerow indicator species. The presence of the wild service tree is considered to be of Local Importance.
- 2.3.2 There are four seasonally wet ditches and five hedgerows across the Site. The hedgerows are Important under the Hedgerows Regulations and considered to be of Neighbourhood Importance.

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### 3.0 **AMPHIBIANS** *Background*

- 3.1 Historical data are available for great crested newts (GCN) surveys within the wider area due to surveys which have been carried out for the Chilmington Green development. The results of these are provided in Appendix 1e. The closest pond, P50 was not surveyed during the earlier 2012 surveys but the ponds in the surrounding area were subject to surveys and none were found to support GCN.
- 3.2 A Habitat Suitability Assessment and eDNA survey of P50 was attempted at on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 however access was denied by the landowners therefore the potential for this pond to support GCN is unknown.

#### **Evaluation and Recommendations**

- 3.3 The significance of the Site for amphibians cannot be evaluated although it would appear from the historic information it is unlikely a significant population of great crested newt will be present. However, as a precaution and given the seasonal nature of the ditches, it is recommended they are subject to eDNA testing for GCN in spring 2023. The ditches do not hold permanent water and if GCN are shown as present through eDNA testing it is considered they would most likely use the ditches as a corridor for dispersal to the wider landscape. There are no further ponds within the Site.

## 4.0 DORMOUSE

### 4.1 Methodology

4.1.1 In accordance with guidance provided within the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, Second Edition (Bright *et al.*, 2006), tubes were installed in suitable dormouse habitat at approximately 20m intervals, between waist and chest height. Initially, 87 tubes and five ink tunnels were installed on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Unfortunately during September all on-Site hedges had been subject to management and a number of the nest tubes were damaged by the flail. All undamaged tubes were repositioned and new tubes re-set on 18<sup>th</sup> November resulting in 88 tubes being used finally. Surveys of four ink tunnels were completed in September, October and November in 2022 while one nest tube check was carried out on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022 (see Appendix 2).

4.1.2 Each tube was surveyed in sequence, and where a tube could be seen to be empty, no further check was made. Where the inside of the tube could not be easily seen, the tube was temporarily blocked and a closer inspection made.

4.1.3 Each survey was carried out in suitable, dry weather conditions and completed within one day to ensure no animals found were double-counted. The biometric data of any captured dormice were taken; animals were weighed using small plastic bags and 50g Pesola spring scales. Any birds' nests were also noted.

4.1.4 The Dormouse Conservation Handbook provides an index of probability for the presence, or otherwise, of dormice based on a minimum level of survey effort. A scoring system has been devised in which each month during the active period is given a score. A minimum score of 20 points needs to be reached, using 50 tubes as a standard, in order to show reasonable survey effort has been made (Chanin & Woods, 2004, as cited in Bright *et al.*, 2006). The scores for the probability index are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Dormouse Survey Index of Probability

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
<b>Index of Probability</b>	1	4	2	2	5	7	2	2

4.1.5 The nest tubes were deployed in early September/mid November 2022 and checked for dormice or signs of dormouse occupancy (e.g., dormouse nests) undertaken in early December in 2022 (see Appendix 2). Currently, only a score of 2 has been achieved this index falls short of the minimum search effort required ('20') to assume likely absence in those hedgerows where dormice have not been recorded (Bright *et al.*, 2006) and surveys will continue in 2023.



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## 4.2 Results

4.2.1 On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, one male, non-breeding dormouse weighing 25g was found in a nest within a nest tube (T9) in the eastern boundary towards the southern end of the Site. Characteristic dormouse nests were found in tubes T47 along the eastern boundary towards the north and T31 along the southern boundary (see Figure 1 and Appendix 2). A partial footprint thought to be of dormouse was found in ink tunnel IT1 on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (see Figure 1 and 2) in the north-western corner of the Site.

## 4.3 Evaluation

4.3.1 The survey, although incomplete has determined dormice are present along the eastern and southern boundary features of the Site. A potential footprint of a dormouse has been recorded in the north-western corner although this could not be confirmed as a definite dormouse footprint at the time of the survey.

4.3.2 Dormice have been recorded to the north of the Site and a current EPSM licence has been granted to allow the removal of the hedgerow in this area. It is therefore considered likely dormice will be present within the northern boundary. The hedgerow along the western boundary does not support good quality habitat for dormice and it may be that this hedgerow is used for dispersal but the continuation of surveys in 2023 will assist in determining this.

4.3.3 The presence of dormice within the boundary features of the Site is considered to be of Local Importance.

## 5.0 BATS

### 5.1 Methodology

#### *Bat Habitat Assessment*

- 5.1.1 The on-Site habitats and trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats and habitats were placed into one of four categories as described in Table 3 below (Collins, 2016):

*Table 3 - Bat Habitat/Structure Assessment Criteria*

<b>Negligible</b>	Habitat with negligible features likely to be used by roosting, foraging or commuting bats.
<b>Low</b>	A habitat or tree that could be used by small numbers of roosting or commuting bats, such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated - i.e., not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat.
<b>Moderate</b>	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting and foraging, such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens.
<b>High</b>	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats, such as river valleys, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge.

#### *Bat activity surveys*

- 5.1.2 To understand bat activity on the Site, two static monitoring surveys were undertaken.
- 5.1.3 Four Wildlife Acoustic SM4 detectors were set at four Static Monitoring Points (SMPs) and left out for a minimum of five nights (see Figure 1). The static detectors recorded over the following time periods: 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> August 2022 and 23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>nd</sup> September 2022.

#### *Bat Sound Analysis*

- 5.1.4 SonoBat 30 software was used to analyse bat passes from activity surveys and calls were compared to identification parameters given in Russ (2012), and were compared with library recordings made by the surveyors.

#### *Survey Constraints*

- 5.1.5 Regarding sonogram analysis, it should be noted it is not always possible to identify each bat pass to species level due to either poor recordings of their echolocations or due to similarities between echolocations of bat species. For example, the *Myotis* genus is generally the hardest to separate to species level due to the plasticity of the calls overlapping of call characteristics between the different species. Bats will also vary their echolocation in different habitats and their calls may therefore not always resemble 'typical' echolocation calls. Where identification has not been possible, suggestions of likely bat species have been provided.

*Emergence surveys*

- 5.1.6 One dusk bat emergence survey of tree T1 was undertaken on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022. The emergence surveys followed guidance set out by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016) and commenced 15 minutes before sunset and continued until 1½ hours after sunset.
- 5.1.7 The survey was undertaken using two licensed surveyors of Native Ecology, assisted by a thermal imaging camera. The surveyors were located to the north and south of the trees.
- 5.1.8 Echo Meter Touch with a tablet were used to record bat passes with sonogram analysis undertaken using BatExplorer software. A thermal imaging camera, Flir e53, was used and a Batbox Duet detector was left adjacent to the camera to aid in species identification.

**5.2 Results***Bat Habitat Assessment*

- 5.2.1 The Site supports suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats, with the better-quality areas being limited to the northern, eastern and southern hedgerows of the Site. The Site is dominated by open arable land which provides low quality foraging opportunities. The overall area of the more suitable habitats is small and the immediate surrounding area is predominately open farmland which means the Site provides 'Low' quality habitat for bats under the BCT guidelines (Collins, 2016).

*Trees*

- 5.2.2 Two mature pedunculate oaks were noted in the northern hedge (H1) which have the potential to be affected by the proposals. T1 had three potential bat roosting features (see Figure 1 and 2; Table 4). A single bat emergence survey has been completed of tree T1.

*Table 4 - Trees with Bat Roost Potential Observed at Possingham Farm*

<b>Tree</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Bat roost potential</b>
T1: DBH~80cm TQ96815 40349	Light ivy cover, several small wounds with most potential facing northwest	Low
T2: DBH~100cm TQ96809 40352	Very light ivy cover, snagged ends, no obvious bat roost features	Negligible

*Tree Emergence survey*

- 5.2.3 The results of the emergence surveys are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 - Summary of Bat Emergence Survey Results

<b>Date</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023</b>
<b>Survey results</b>	No bats were recorded emerging or re-entering T1 during the emergence survey.
<b>Weather conditions and timings</b>	Time: 19:49-21:34 Temperature: 21-19 Cloud cover: 100% BF: 1 Rain: Nil

#### *Activity Surveys*

5.2.4 The bat activity surveys are still underway and the results will be provided in a separate addendum report.

### **5.3 Evaluation**

5.3.1 As no bats were observed emerging from T1, day roosts are considered absent from this tree.

## 6.0 BREEDING BIRDS

6.1 A full breeding bird survey has not been completed. However, the trees, grassland and hedgerows provide good quality habitat for breeding birds. Bird species noted during the initial PEA survey and during the Corylus site surveys have included skylark (Lloyd Bore, 2021). Skylark are considered likely to nest within the fields and for the purposes of this EclA they have been assumed breeding. Other species listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC5) Red List species (Stanbury *et al* 2021) have been recorded including house sparrow, linnet and starling albeit that breeding territories have not been determined the habitats present would be suitable for these species.

## 6.2 Evaluation

6.2.1 Whilst a full evaluation of the breeding bird assemblage cannot be undertaken, an assessment of the value of the Site for birds can be made based on the knowledge of the area. In addition, breeding bird surveys were undertaken as part of the larger Chilmington Green development site which is adjacent. The area was not found to support any significant breeding bird assemblage and species typical of the intensively farmed habitats present were recorded.

6.2.2 When evaluating the importance for a site for breeding birds the assessment will include both presence of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC5) Red List species (Stanbury *et al* 2021) and species diversity. Species richness can be used to describe conservation value separately for breeding, passage and wintering bird communities. Fuller (1980) provided the following criteria for the evaluation of Sites for the breeding bird diversity where the number of species found breeding in an area can be given a value as shown below:

National	Regional	County	Local
85+	84-70	69-50	49-25

6.2.3 Even without carrying out a full breeding bird survey it can be determined that the assemblage within the Site will not exceed the criteria for Local. The site supports skylark which are included within the Red List of the BoCC. The breeding bird assemblage is therefore considered to be of at most of Local Importance.

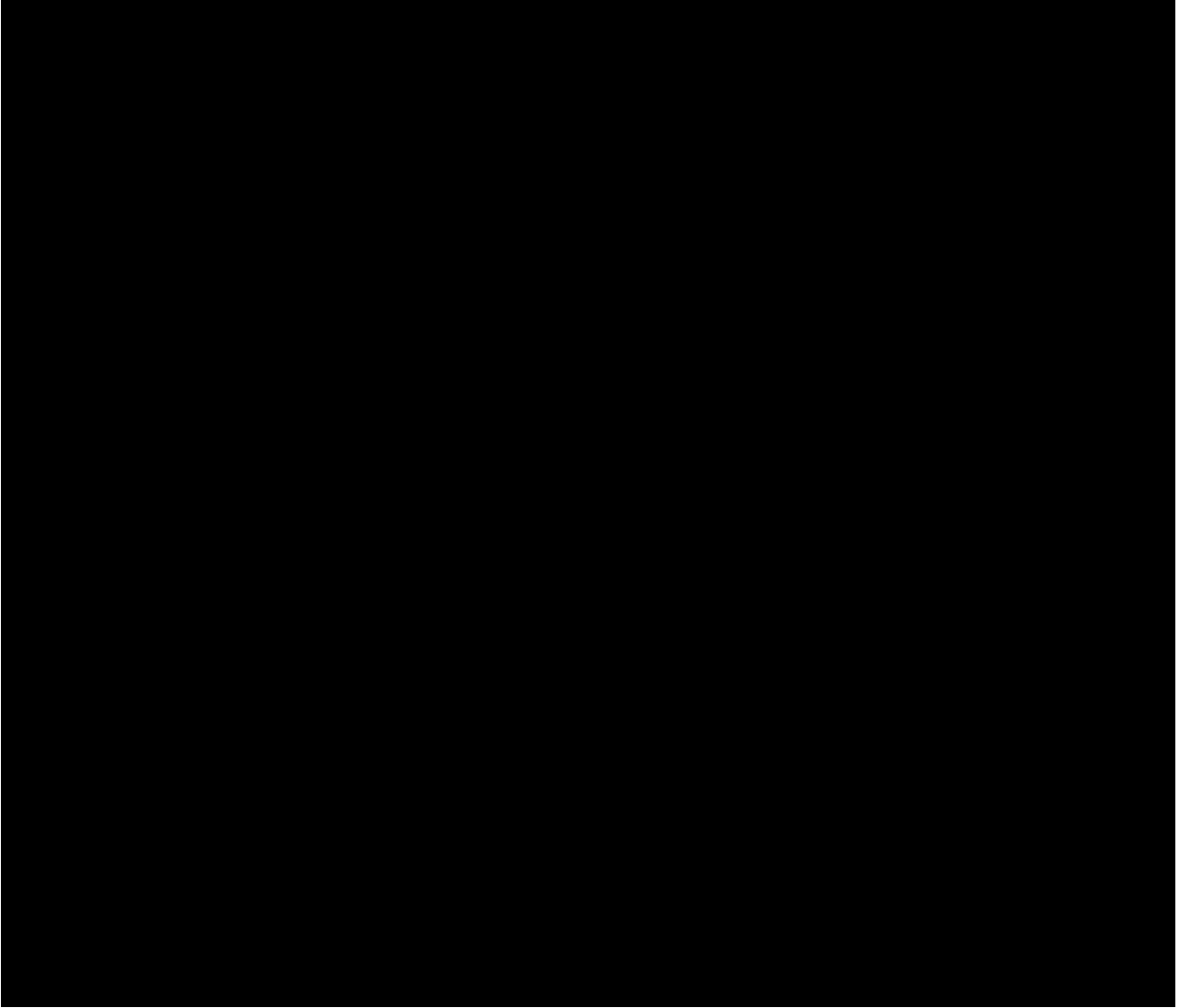
## 7.0 BADGER

### 7.1 Methodology

- 7.1.1 Signs of badgers were looked for during the Phase 1 Habitat Survey (20<sup>th</sup> March 2020). Signs were also recorded during other daytime and evening surveys, including the breeding bird and bat surveys which were undertaken during April to September 2020. An update check for badger field signs and sett activity was undertaken in November 2020. Field signs associated with badger were searched for, including setts, paths, scratching posts, foraging 'snuffle holes', latrines, footprints, pushes and hairs. These features were mapped accordingly.

- 7.1.3 Classification of setts can be difficult in the field and, in areas of low badger density, main setts may be relatively small, with only a few holes, and not all sett types will be found in a particular area. For example, in poor badger habitat there may be no main sett which fits the above description. Setts are sometimes taken over or cohabited by fox *Vulpes vulpes* or rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. However, they can still be recognised as badger setts by the shape of the tunnel (not the entrance hole, which may be an enlarged rabbit or fox hole), [REDACTED]

- 7.1.4 The location and condition of any sett found was recorded, including the presence of freshly excavated soil, bedding material and whether the condition of the entrance suggests that the hole is active, overgrown or disused.



## 8.0 SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

8.1 Table 6 provides a summary of the evaluation of the ecological interest within the Site as described in the preceding chapters.

*Table 6 - Evaluation of Ecological Features*

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Importance</b>
Arable fields	Limited botanical interest within the fields	Negligible
Ditches	Seasonally wet ditches	Neighbourhood
Hedgerows	All hedgerows are considered Important under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.	Local
Dormouse	Survey ongoing however dormouse confirmed on Site and ample food and dormouse habitat.	Local
Bats	Low roosting potential in T1. One emergence survey completed with no emerging bats recorded. Bat activity surveys to be completed.	Site
Breeding birds	The hedgerows and fields provide suitable habitat for breeding birds, skylark have been recorded within the fields.	Site - Local
Water vole	Survey complete: habitat of limited suitability, no field signs found	None
GCN	Survey incomplete due to access issues. Ditches to be surveyed in spring 2023.	Neighbourhood (if present)
Reptiles	No surveys completed, limited habitat suitable for reptiles within the Site. Likely presence of grass snake due to ditches.	Site



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## **9.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **9.1 Predicted Effects - Construction**

- 9.1.1 Table 7 describes the potential significant effects resulting from the Construction for each of the sensitive receptors discussed in Sections 2-7 above. Due to the distance from the Site, no construction effects or completed development effects are predicted for any ancient woodland or SSSI's within the wider countryside.

Table 7 – Predicted Effects Arising from the Construction of the Development

Feature	Potential effect	Relevant Development activity	Detail of Ecological Effects	Predicted Effects without Mitigation
<b>Construction Effects - Habitats</b>				
Hedgerows / individual retained trees of Neighbourhood Importance	Habitat degradation	Accidental physical damage during Site clearance and construction	Without adequate fencing protection there is some risk of direct (physical damage) or indirect (root compaction) impacts to the trees on the boundary of the woodland / area of scrub.	Moderate Adverse Effect at the Neighbourhood Level
		Dust emissions	Without adequate dust suppression controls there is the potential for excessive dust generation arising from initial site clearance and earth movement activities.	
		Changes to hydrological regime resulting from construction and drainage.	The retained hedgerows around the perimeter of the Site and off site hedgerows and trees may be affected	
		Pollution during site clearance and construction	Without adequate pollution prevention measures, there is some risk of pollution from refuelling activities, silt heavy run-off, concrete batching or chemical spills, via uncontrolled surface water discharges.	
Ditches of Neighbourhood Importance	Habitat degradation	Pollution during site clearance and construction	Without appropriate pollution control measures in place, there is a risk of the uncontrolled discharge of pollutants to the ditches.	
	Habitat loss	Silt run-off during initial site clearance and landforming works	Without appropriate silt control measures, there is the risk of silt accumulation within the ditches that could potentially lead to infilling.	
<b>Construction Effects - Species</b>				
Dormice of Local Importance	Killing or injury of individual reptiles	Site clearance	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential for dormice to be disturbed or to be killed or injured as the result of unmanaged site clearance works.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Local Significance
Bats of Site Importance	Killing or injury of individual bats	Site clearance (trees)	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential for bats to be killed or injured as the result of site clearance works involving accidental damage to, trees with bat roost potential.	Minor Adverse Effect of Site Significance
Badgers – Site Importance	Killing or injury of badgers and damage to setts	Site clearance and construction work	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential for badgers to be killed or injured as the result of site clearance works involving accidental damage to setts within the Site.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Site Significance
Amphibians of Site Importance (at most if GCN)	Killing or injury of individual GCN	Site clearance and landforming	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential to damage terrestrial habitat necessary for amphibians, or potentially to kill or injure GCN themselves.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Site Significance

Feature	Potential effect	Relevant Development activity	Detail of Ecological Effects	Predicted Effects without Mitigation
are present)				
Reptiles of Site Importance	Killing or injury of individual reptiles	Site clearance and land-forming	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential for reptiles to be killed or injured as the result of unmanaged site clearance works.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Site Significance
Birds	Killing or injury of individual birds during breeding period	Site clearance	Without appropriate mitigation, there is potential for breeding birds to be disturbed or to be killed or injured as the result of unmanaged site clearance works.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Neighbourhood Significance

## 9.2 Predicted Effects – Operation / Existence (Completed Development)

9.2.1 Table 8 describes the potential significant effects resulting from the completed development for each of the sensitive receptors.

Table 8 – Predicted Effects Arising from the Completed Development

Feature	Potential effect	Relevant Development activity	Detail of Ecological Effects	Predicted Effects without Mitigation
<b>Completed Development Effects - Habitats</b>				
Hedgerows of Local Importance	Habitat degradation	Increased public activity within woodland	Retention, without any further interventions, could reduce the condition of the retained habitats.	Minor Adverse effect of Local Significance
<b>Completed Development Effects - Species</b>				
Dormice Local Importance	Increased predation and disturbance	Increased population of domestic cats and degradation of retained and newly created habitats.	Without mitigation the degradation of retained and newly created habitat could directly result in an increase in predation and disturbance to dormice (if present).	Moderate Adverse Effect of Local Significance
Bats of Neighbourhood Importance	Habitat disturbance - lighting	Public realm lighting within the development	Without mitigation the additional lighting arising from the completed development will increase levels of disturbance/fragmentation to bats using the Site for commuting and dispersal.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Neighbourhood Significance.
Badgers	Increased disturbance and overall loss of foraging habitat	Increased public activity across Site may result in badgers abandoning setts.	Without mitigation the degradation of retained and newly created habitat could directly result in an increase in disturbance to badgers and a degradation and disturbance of foraging habitat.	Moderate Adverse Effect of Neighbourhood Significance.
Birds	Increased predation and disturbance	Increased population of domestic cats and degradation of retained and newly created habitats.	Without mitigation the degradation of retained and newly created habitat could directly result in an increase in predation and disturbance to breeding birds	Moderate Adverse Effect of Neighbourhood Significance
Amphibians of Neighbourhood Importance	Increase fragmentation	Development plots	Without mitigation the degradation of habitat arising from the development may compromise the potential for Ditch D1a to act as a conduit for facilitating amphibian dispersal within the wider landscape.	Major Adverse Effect of Site Significance.
	Increased predation and casualty	Increased cat population and potential for road casualty	Without mitigation the increased casualty through cat predation and road casualty	Minor adverse effect of Site Significance
Reptiles of Neighbourhood Importance	Increased predation and disturbance	Increased population of domestic cats and degradation of retained and newly created habitats.	Without mitigation the degradation of retained and newly created habitat could increase the risk of predation through the increased cat population and disturbance which could affect the retained reptile population	Moderate Adverse Effect of Neighbourhood Significance.

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**10.0 OUTLINE MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

- 10.1 The outline mitigation strategy described below forms the basis for an Ecological Mitigation Plan (EMP) which will, in turn, be integrated into a site-wide Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This will address other environmental issues arising from construction activities (e.g., waste management) that does not fall directly within the scope of ecology / wildlife management.
- 10.2 The long-term management of retained and created habitats will be provided in a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.
- 10.3 The EMP is presented in outline here because it will need to be finalised once a Principal Contractor has been appointed, at which point the necessary mitigation measures will need to inform an agreed construction sequence and programme.
- 10.4 With specific reference to the development of the EMP, the following outline mitigation strategy is to ensure the development minimises impacts on habitats of nature conservation value and protected species known to be present within the Site in order to satisfy requirements under National Planning Policy Framework.
- 10.5 Potential impacts of the construction works, without the mitigation, will include the following:
- Loss of dormouse habitats;
  - Loss of ditches
  - Loss of breeding bird habitat
  - Light pollution
  - Noise disturbance during construction.
  - Loss of trees
- 10.6 The measures proposed in Table 9 aim to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate for the impacts. The purpose and objectives are to:
- 10.7 The measures proposed in Table 9 aim to avoid, reduce and/or mitigate for the impacts. The purpose and objectives of the measures described in Table 9 are to:
- 1) Avoid any damage or reduction in the extent and quality of existing habitats for amphibians, bats, dormice and breeding birds wherever possible. Where habitats will be damaged or removed, provide adequate compensatory habitat to ensure retention of the Site's ability to support existing diversity and abundance of habitats and species

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- 2) Avoid any increase in the fragmentation of habitats located within and adjacent to the Site by retaining as far as possible, habitat connectivity
  - 3) Avoid killing or injury to protected species living within on-Site habitats to be damaged or removed
  - 4) Retain the suitability of existing habitats as commuting routes by bats and provide new areas of suitable habitat
  - 5) Retain the suitability of existing habitats such as aquatic and terrestrial habitat for amphibians,
  - 6) Limit dust and noise pollution during construction activities
  - 7) Limit the impacts of lighting on woodland habitats on-site and adjacent to the Site

Table 9 – Outline Mitigation Strategy and Residual Effects

Habitat Feature and Impact	Practical mitigation measures including working practices	Residual Effects
<p>The following habitat will be lost during Site clearance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedges</li> <li>• Ditches</li> <li>• Trees</li> </ul> <p>Loss of plant species diversity and habitat corridor function; loss of connectivity for dormice, reptiles, bats, hedgehog and badgers; reduction in dormouse and breeding bird habitat and foraging habitat for dormouse, bats, birds, reptiles, hedgehogs and invertebrates.</p> <p>Damage to existing hedgerow and shrubs, including compaction of tree roots.</p> <p>Loss of aquatic habitat and associated aquatic life.</p>	<p><u>Construction</u> For all retained habitats protective fencing/hoarding will be installed along the retained habitat at the boundaries of the Site will be protected from encroachment during the construction process. This will provide protection for all protected species and is therefore not referred to again in the protected species sections.</p> <p><u>Operation</u> To compensate for loss of removed hedgerows, ditches and trees there will be habitat creation, including scrub and woodland planting, grassland/wildflower meadow areas, tree and hedgerow planting, and SUDS and wetland habitat creation around the development.</p> <p>These new trees and hedgerows will be planted with native, heavily fruiting and flowering species that been chosen for their suitability to insects and nesting/foraging dormice and birds.</p> <p>Long term management of all habitats will be implemented to prevent the hedgerows becoming overgrown/defunct and for the newly created ditches and wetland areas to be maintained appropriately. Management of the grassland areas as species-rich wildflower meadow will be implemented.</p>	<p>Moderate Positive effect significant at Neighbourhood Level</p>
<p><b><u>Dormice</u></b> <i>Loss of habitat with dormice.</i></p>	<p><u>Construction</u> The removal of the area of hedgerow H1 will be carried out under an EPSM licence from Natural England. This will involve the careful removal of the hedgerow vegetation at an appropriate time of year, specifically avoiding May to August inclusive.</p> <p><u>Operation</u> Significant planting for dormice is to be provided within the landscape plan including additional hedgerow planting and scrub planting in the north and east close to the direct impact to H1. More planting to the south is also to be provided to extend the area of dormouse habitat available and allow the population to expand making it more robust against predation from cats.</p>	<p>Minor beneficial effect significant at Site Level.</p>
<p><b><u>Bat roosting habitat</u></b> Loss of trees with suitable features for roosting bats</p> <p><b><u>Bat foraging and commuting habitats</u></b> Loss of grassland, small areas of scrub/tall ruderal grassland and trees leading to loss of habitat corridor function, loss of connectivity and foraging habitat.</p> <p>Increased artificial lighting represents a major potential negative impact on existing (trees) and newly created or enhanced habitats and roosting features, field boundaries and</p>	<p><u>Construction</u> Tree T1 will be felled slowly and under the supervision of a suitability experienced ecologist.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The features with potential for bats will be checked prior to felling, with the aid of an elevated platform or climbing inspection.</li> <li>2. If bats are confirmed absent, the tree will be cut using a soft felling approach.</li> <li>3. Tree to be felled outside main active period for bats, which is May – August. This will also need to take into account the breeding bird period, which is March – August therefore the most suitable time to fell the tree would be September – October.</li> </ol> <p>If any bats are found during the soft felling then Natural England will need to be contacted and an EPSM licence will be applied for. Depending on the duration of the scheme, update tree emergence surveys may be needed before any are felled.</p> <p><u>Operation</u> Create and maintain new hedgerows and areas of open green space around the development for foraging and commuting bats:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creation of new hedgerows through planting of trees and hedge species to increase habitat for commuting and foraging.</li> <li>2. Management of wildflower meadows to create a more species-rich grassland habitat to increase foraging habitat.</li> </ol> <p>Design and implementation of a Sensitive Lighting Strategy. Full details to be included at the detailed design stage however key points of this strategy will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Minimise light spill along the boundaries of the Site and on retained mature trees and any newly created roosts;</li> </ol>	<p>Minor adverse effect significant at Site Level</p>

Habitat Feature and Impact	Practical mitigation measures including working practices	Residual Effects
<p>hedgerows that provide habitat for foraging and commuting routes.</p>	<p>ii) Eliminate any bare bulbs and upward pointing lighting;                      ii) Minimise the spread of light, particularly along the eastern side of the main access road and south-eastern corner. The spread of light should be kept near to or below the horizontal. Flat cut-off lanterns are best.                      iii) Consider the height of lighting columns. Light at a low level generally reduces impact.                      iv) Use narrow spectrum bulbs to lower the range of species affected by lighting. Use light sources that emit minimal ultra-violet light and avoid the white and blue wavelengths of the light spectrum to avoid attracting lots of insects.                      v) Lights should peak higher than 550nm or use glass lantern covers to filter UV light. White LED lights do not emit UV but have still been shown to disturb slow-flying bat species.</p>	
<p><b>Reptiles</b>                      No reptile surveys have been undertaken, however, it is considered likely that grass snake will be present within the Site.</p> <p>Potential for killing and injury of reptiles during the removal of the grassland, tall ruderal, scrub and tree habitats within the existing farmyard area as well as the removal of spoil mounds that may be used for rest/shelter, foraging, hibernation and dispersal.</p>	<p><u>Construction</u>                      Implementation of the following Reptile Mitigation Strategy to avoid the killing and/or injury of reptiles and the retention and/or provision of sufficient terrestrial habitat and connectivity to ensure long term viability of the reptile populations. Mitigation will include the following measures to be undertaken in chronological order.</p> <p>The following steps will be undertaken: during the reptile active season, which is March – October.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The clearance of the section of hedgerow H1 will be either completed with both above ground and below ground clearance in September/October under the methods for the dormouse clearance.</li> <li>• If this timeframe is not possible, above ground clearance will be undertaken between November and March and the ground cleared after May.</li> <li>• All clearance works will be supervised by the Project Ecologist.</li> </ul> <p>A destructive search will be undertaken of areas within the development area considered to support potential for reptiles such as rubble/compost/spoil piles and the ditch banks. Destructive searching involves a JCB with a toothed bucket being used to lightly comb through the ground layer, followed by a second scrape to remove the layer of top soil leaving bare earth.</p> <p><u>Operation</u>                      Enhancement for reptiles with the following features are to be included within the areas of open space.</p> <p>Enhancement of existing hedgerows around the Site and creation of new, species-rich hedgerows along the boundaries through planting of a more diverse range of tree and hedge species and seeded with an approximate hedgerow grassland mix to provide additional cover/refuge for reptiles (to be outlined in LEMP).</p> <p>Creation of wild flower meadow and scrub in the site will create higher quality habitat for reptiles. Management of these areas to consist of a single cut in late September on a two-year rotation with one of these areas left uncut each year. The grass will be cut to a height no shorter than 150mm to reduce direct injury/death to reptiles.</p> <p>Creation of a series of hibernacula and long piles within the areas of open space and the long term management of these reptile refuge.</p> <p>a) Ten log piles. Log piles will be constructed using logs with a maximum diameter of 200mm. Each log pile will be secured with stakes to prevent piles from collapsing and with wire to prevent removal or dismantling. These log piles will be created, where possible, using wood from the felled trees within the Site.</p> <p>b) Four artificial hibernacula to the accepted design provided by Froglife guidelines and to be provided within the LEMP. A hole will be dug out either by hand or by a mini digger to a depth of 500mm and back filled with timber logs and dead wood to a height of 500mm above ground. The hibernaculum will then be covered and capped with a 50mm – 100mm layer of topsoil and seeded with native acid grassland seed mix. Logs will be exposed at ground level to maintain gaps for reptile access. The hibernacula will be approximately 1.5m wide by 2m long and will run along a north-east to south-east direction so there is a southerly facing slope to maximise basking habitat. The digging of the hibernacula will be supervised by the project ecologist and the location to determined during the detailed design of the mitigation.</p>	<p>Minor Beneficial effect significant at Site Level</p>
<p><b>Amphibians including GCN</b>                      Loss of dispersal habitat (ditches) that may also be used for rest/shelter, foraging, hibernation and dispersal.</p> <p>Potential for killing and injury of amphibians during habitat removal and the construction phase.</p>	<p><u>Construction</u>                      Implementation of the following Method Statement to avoid the killing and/or injury of amphibians and the retention and/or provision of sufficient terrestrial habitat and connectivity to ensure long term viability of the amphibian populations. This Method Statement has been provided on the agreement that the Site will continue to be managed up until the commencement of the development to ensure no additional areas become suitable for amphibians prior to work beginning. In addition, the requirement for a EPSM licence will be confirmed once the eDNA surveys have been completed. However, if an EPSM licence is required a District Licence from Natural England would be applied for. Update surveys are likely to be required pre-construction to inform the need for an EPSM licence:</p> <p><u>Operation</u>                      The addition planting of native shrub species and installation of log piles and hibernacular (to the same specifications that have been provide for reptiles) in the areas of habitat creation will create new terrestrial habitat for the species.</p>	<p>Minor Adverse Effect at Site Level</p>



Habitat Feature and Impact	Practical mitigation measures including working practices	Residual Effects
<p><b>Breeding Birds</b> Loss of potential nesting sites of birds and bird feeding areas, through the development of the Site.</p>	<p><u>Construction</u> Sensitive timing of vegetation clearance works to avoid the bird breeding season (March-August inclusive). The timings of the vegetation clearance will need to take into account the suitable timings to complete the destructive search for reptiles and amphibians, which have been outlined above. The timings of the removal of T1 will have to take into account the suitable timings in relation to bats, which have also been outlined above. Therefore, the vegetation clearance of the scrub and trees will include above ground vegetation clearance during the winter months (September – March). The following measures will be followed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cutting the vegetation to above ground level using a chainsaw and brush cutters. All areas of mature/dense scrub that cannot be removed using hand tools will remain in situ until the reptile relocation exercise has been completed, and will only be removed once it has been confirmed that there are no active birds' nests present in the vegetation.</li> <li>2. All arisings from the scrub and trees will be removed from the development area; logs can be retained to create log-piles in retained habitats.</li> <li>3. No machinery will be tracked through the areas of the Site which support suitable reptile habitat until the destructive search as been complete.</li> </ol> <p><u>Operation</u> The suitability of the Site will be maintained and enhanced for breeding birds through the creation and enhancement of the wildflower meadow and boundary features; planting will include native food plants for a range of bird species and invertebrates. Full details to be included at detailed design stage and LEMP.</p> <p>Bird Boxes will be positioned on trees around the boundaries of the Site. The boxes will be positioned at suitable locations on retained tree. Locations and numbers of boxes to be confirmed at detailed design stage. Boxes to be installed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vivara Pro Woodstone Seville Bird Boxes</li> <li>• Schwegler 1B tit bird boxes</li> <li>• 1ZA Schwegler Wren Roundhouse</li> </ul> <p>Mitigation for the loss of habitat used by skylark can not be provided due to the size of the Site.</p>	<p>Minor adverse effect at Site Level</p>

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## 11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Surveys to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) have been undertaken at the proposed development of an area of land at Possingham Farm, Chilmington Green, Ashford. The impact assessment has been based on ecological surveys undertaken by Lloyd Bore Ltd. in 2021 and by Corylus Ecology Ltd. in 2022. The assessment is in relation to a plan to development the land parcel into residential dwellings and gardens and associated structures.

### *Dormouse*

11.2 A mitigation strategy has been included for dormouse, with the construction impacts having Major Adverse Effect and operational impacts having Minor Effect at Site Level

### *Bats*

11.3 The Site has been assessed as “Low” for foraging and commuting bats. The results from the bat activity survey will be published in a later addendum. Emergence surveys in 2022 found no bats emerging from the only trees with bat roost potential. Increased artificial lighting was identified as a potential major negative impact for bats. Recommendations for sensitive lighting strategy have been provided resulting in operational impacts having neutral effect significant at Site level.

### *GCN*

11.4 A Habitat Suitability Assessment was attempted and was unsuccessful during the 2022 season of the offsite pond. The GCN surveys are to be completed in spring 2023. In light of the historical records, suitable mitigation has been provided with construction impacts having moderate adverse effects at Site level and operational impacts having major effects at Site level without mitigation.

### *Breeding bird*

11.5 The hedgerows and fields provide suitable habitat for breeding birds. Although a full breeding bird survey has not been completed, skylark have been recorded on-Site. Suitable mitigation has been provided as construction impacts, without mitigation, will have moderate adverse effects at neighbourhood level and operational impacts will have moderate effects at neighbourhood level.

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*NPPF*

- 11.7 Recommendations have been made to enhance the Site for biodiversity in accordance with NPPF to include generous native, species-rich planting. A more detailed Biodiversity Net Gain report has been prepared and should be read in conjunction with the EclA.

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## Appendix 1 – Ecological Impact Assessment Criteria

The general approach follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (“EclA”) produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (“CIEEM”) (Ref A1). These guidelines are web based and subject to review and updating. This ES is based on the guidelines available in April 2023. The guidance covers all stages of EclA, including both evaluation and impact criteria. The criteria followed is summarised below:

### *Significance Criteria*

The CIEEM EclA guidance covers all stages of EclA, including both evaluation and impact criteria. These guidelines set out that the emphasis in EclA is on significant effects rather than all ecological effects. A significant effect being an effect that

- *“Either supports or undermines biodiversity objectives for important ecological features or for biodiversity in general.*
- *“Effects can be considered significant at a wide range of scales from international to local”.*
- *“A significant effect is an effect that is sufficiently important to require assessment and reporting so that the decision maker is adequately informed of the environmental consequences of permitting a project.”*

The main criteria used to assess the ecological value of habitats and communities are those described by Ratcliffe (1977) [ref A2] and the selection criteria for SSSIs produced by the Nature Conservancy Council (1989) [ref A3]. The primary criteria include rarity, typicalness, size, diversity, naturalness and fragility. Subsidiary criteria include ecological position, intrinsic appeal, potential value, and recorded history. The designation of SSSIs is not an all-inclusive list of sites which fall within the set criteria, rather the SSSI are designated as good examples of the better habitats within the region or nationally. Therefore, certain undesignated areas may fall within the criteria for being designated. Within individual counties there are often criteria for the selection of sites of County Importance within that specific County.

Further criteria used for assessing the ecological importance of a site may be based upon their value for particular species or assemblages of species. In addition to the individual species and groups the overall species and habitat assemblage or biodiversity is evaluated. Examples of valuation criteria related to a range of spatial scales are set out in Table 1 below.

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Value	Examples of Valuation Criteria
<i>International</i>	An internationally designated site or candidate site (SPA, SAC, etc);
<i>National</i>	A nationally designated site (SSSIs, National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Species or habitats which fulfil the JNCC SSSI selection criteria,
<i>Regional</i>	Viable areas of key habitat identified in the regional BAP or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole; Sites which exceed the County-level designations but fall short of SSSI selection guidelines where these occur;
<i>County</i>	County sites and other sites which the designating authority has determined meet the published ecological selection criteria for designation including Local Nature Reserves (LNR) selected on County criteria;
<i>Local (including District)</i>	Areas of habitat identified as being of Local Value in the relevant Natural Area profile; LNR not selected on County criteria;
<i>Parish/ Neighbourhood</i>	Areas of habitat considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the context of the Parish or Neighbourhood e.g. species-rich hedgerows;
<i>Within the zone of influence or Site Importance</i>	This may be the project site or a larger area;
<i>Negligible</i>	Sites or areas which support few or no habitats, communities or species populations of nature conservation interest. Typical of such areas are most intensively managed silage fields and arable crops.

Table 1: Assessment of the Value of Ecological Resource

Biodiversity has been given a number of definitions but, insofar as it relates to EIA, it is generally considered as including both structural relationships (spatial linkage, fragmentation, aspect, dispersion etc.) and functional relationships (nutrient cycling rates, energy flow rates, metapopulation dynamics, etc.).

#### *Assessment of Effects*

Activities which may affect the ecological resource need to be identified first. The associated changes and the implications for the ecological resource then need to be assessed. The following factors must be considered when assessing the effects:

- Confidence in predictions;

- Magnitude of effect;
- Extent of effect;
- Duration;
- Reversibility; and
- Timing and frequency.

A level of confidence is required in assessing effects, the standard for which is given below. The requirement for the lowest confidence level, given below as “extremely unlikely”, is for those effects which, although considered as extremely unlikely to occur, would have very serious consequences and would merit contingency planning.

- Certain/near certain;
- Probable;
- Unlikely; and
- Extremely unlikely.

Table 2 lists the broad categories used to assist in identifying the nature and types of different ecological effects. In addition to individual effects on the ecological resource being identified and evaluated, the cumulative effect of two or more effects on the resource is also evaluated using the same terminology.

Category	Example
Direct Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• habitat loss or destruction (for example, through construction work);</li> <li>• habitat fragmentation / severance; and</li> <li>• disturbance</li> </ul>
Indirect Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduced population viability (for example, due to decrease in habitat area etc.); and</li> <li>• habitat isolation</li> </ul>
Associated Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ecological effects caused by actions linked with the Proposed Development</li> </ul>
Cumulative Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overall reduction in habitat diversity; and</li> <li>• ongoing habitat loss or fragmentation</li> </ul>

Table 2: Categories of Ecological Effects (based on Treweek 1999 (ref A4))

The magnitude or physical extent of predicted effects upon an ecological feature is presented, wherever possible, in quantifiable terms. For example, the area of land taken, percentage of habitat lost or the



number of communities, species or individuals affected. Magnitude also considers the context of the feature affected within the categories of relative importance described above. For example, if there is an internationally designated site, the significance of predicted effects are assessed within an international context with reference to the relevant legislation.

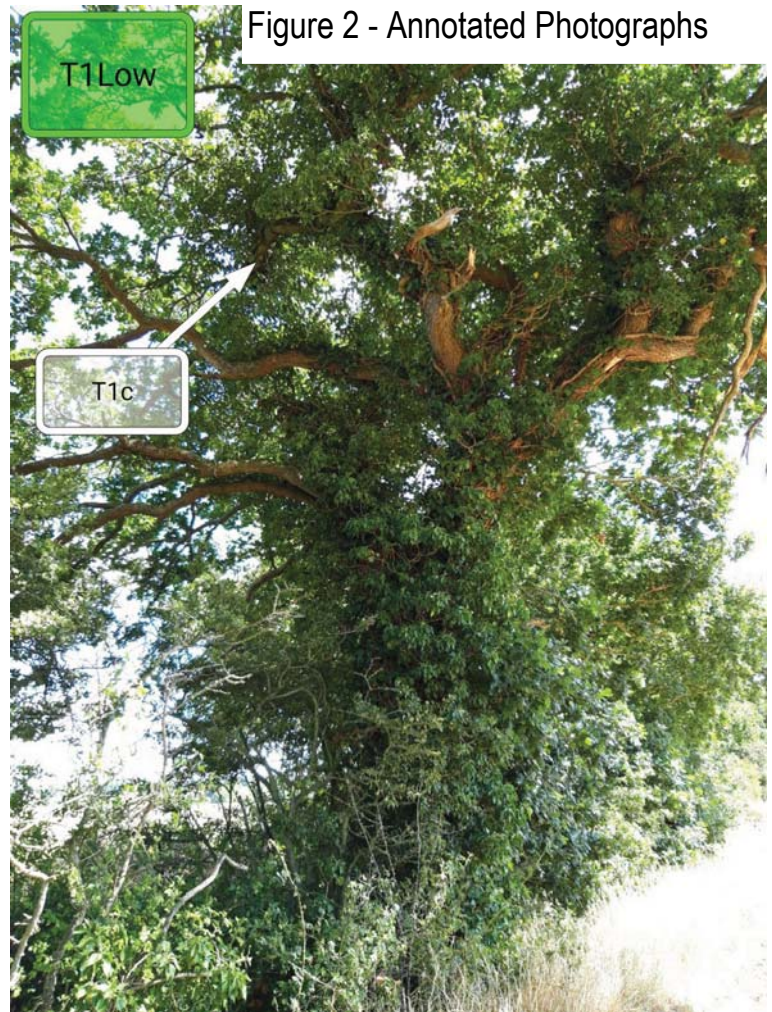
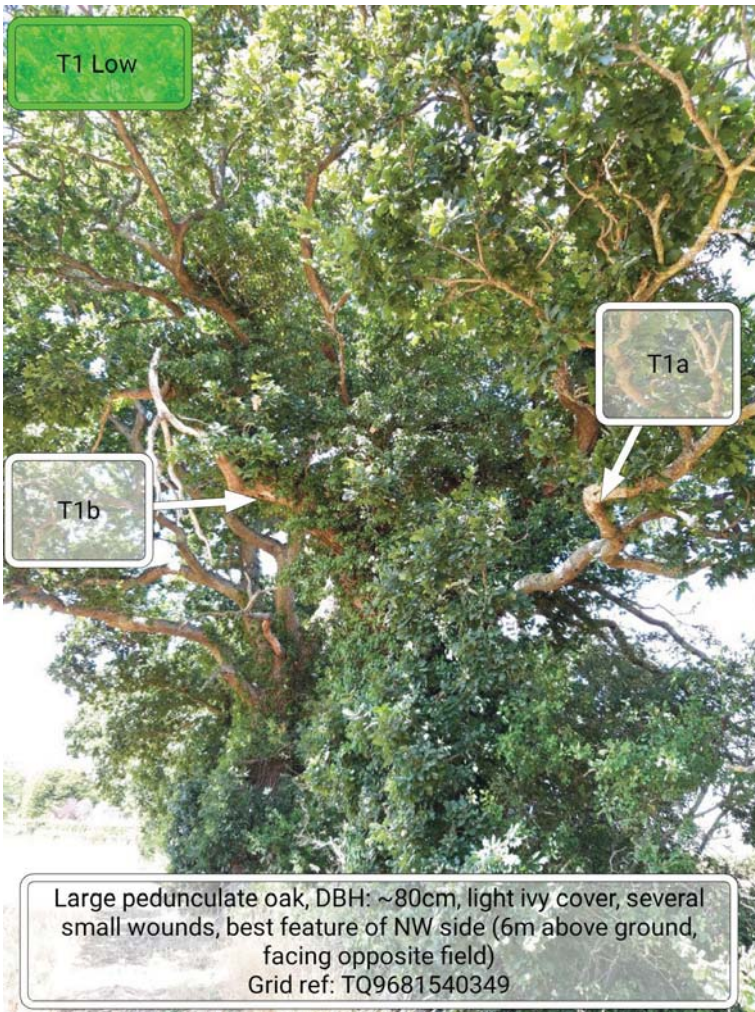
The potential effects of development schemes on nature conservation can be either beneficial or adverse. Neutral/Negligible effects are also recognised.

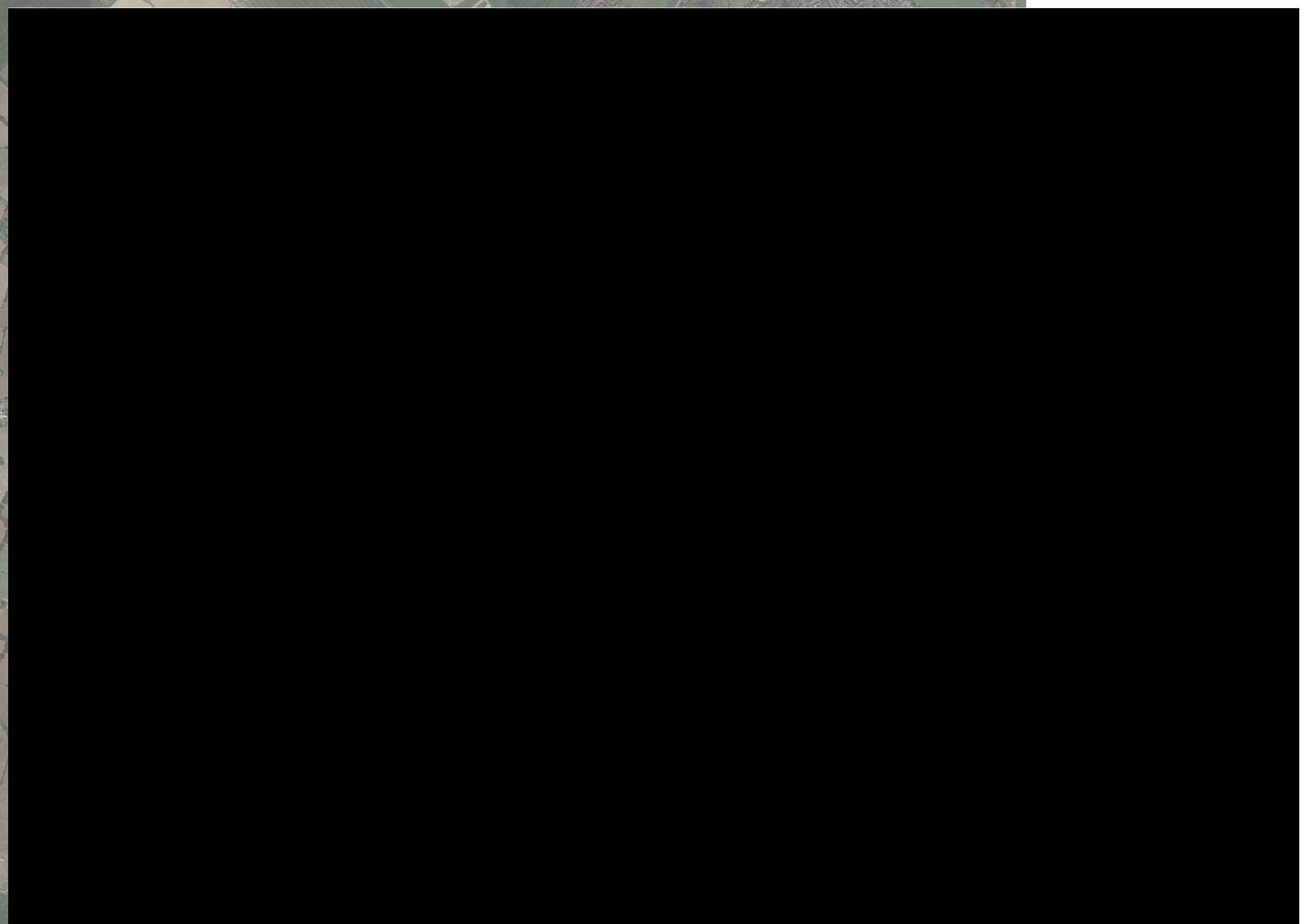
In the CIEEM guidance an ecologically significant effect is defined as an effect on the integrity of a defined site or ecosystem and/or conservation status of habitats or species within a given geographical area. The value of any feature that will be significantly affected is then used to identify the geographical scale at which the effect is significant. This value therefore relates directly to the consequences in terms of legislation, policy or development control at the appropriate level. Significant effects on features of ecological importance should be mitigated (or compensated for) in accordance with guidance derived from policies applied at the scale relevant to the value of the feature or resource. Any significant effects remaining after mitigation (the residual effects), together with an assessment of the likelihood of success in mitigation are the factors to be considered against legislation, policy and development control in determining the application

## References

- A1 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal*. [www.cieem.org.uk](http://www.cieem.org.uk)
- A2 Ratcliffe, D (1977) *A Nature Conservation Review*. Cambridge University Press.
- A3 Nature Conservancy Council (1989) *Selection Criteria for Sites of Special Scientific Interest*. Peterborough
- A4 Treweek, J (1999) *Ecological Impact Assessment*







Appendix 3 – Dormouse Survey Data

Possingham Farm - tubes set 09/09/22 & 18/11/22	02/12/2022
H2n	
T17	E
T18	E
T19	E
T20	E
T21	E
T22	Wood mouse nest
T23	E
T24	E
T25	Wood mouse nest
T26	E
T27	Wood mouse nest - droppings taken (N1)
H1	
T28	E
T29	E
T30	E
T31	E
T32	Wood mouse - sample taken (N2)
T33	E
T34	Wood mouse nest - Adult, 22g
T35	Not Found
T36	E
T37	Wood mouse nest, grassy, half-woven - sample taken (N3)
T38	Woodmouse, dense, grassy nest - sample taken (N4)
T39	Slat deep in bushes
H3	
T40	Wood mouse nest
T41	Wood mouse nest, 2 adults, 1 escaped, 1 female 18g
T42	Wood mouse escaped
T43	E
T44	E
T45	E
T46	E
T47	Dormouse nest E1
T134	E
T135	E
T136	Wood mouse
T137	E
T138	E
T139	Leaves
T140	E
T141	E
T142	Wood mouse firmly woven nest, 2 non breeding adult males: 24g and 21g
T143	E
T144	Wood mouse nest: wet, removed
T145	E
T146	E
T147	E
T148	Wood mouse nest
T1	E
T2	E
T3	E
T4	Bird droppings

T5	E
T6	E
T7	E
T8	E
T9	Dormouse: male 25g, half asleep (not quite torpid) non breeding
T10	E
T11	E
H5	
T12	E
T13	E
T14	E
T15	Wood mouse nest: wet, removed
T16	Wood mouse nest
T17	E
T18	E
T19	Wood mouse nest
H4	
T20	Wood mouse nest
T21	E
T22	E
T23	Wood mouse nest
T24	E
T25	E
T26	E
T27	E
T28	Wood mouse nest
T29	E
T30	E
T31	Dormouse nest
T32	E
T33	E
T34	E
T35	E
H2s	
T36	E
T37	E
T38	E
T39	E
T40	E
T41	E
T49	E
T50	E

