



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land North of Coach Road, Great Horkesley (additional land), Essex

On Behalf Of:

Bloor Homes Ltd.

January 2026

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Ecology, Countryside Management

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SES Quality Management

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Site assessments / surveys (where required) have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

Due to the temporal nature of ecology, the findings of this report should not be relied upon if a significant amount of time has passed, as defined by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines.

Executive Summary

1. This report presents the findings and recommendations of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken at Land North of Coach Road, Great Horkesley (additional land), Essex (the site).
2. The site is located within Colchester Borough Council and consisted of four arable fields with associated hedgerows and lines of trees, mixed scrub, scattered trees with a margin of modified grassland on the edges the arable fields. Within the site, hedgerows and lines of trees were of local ecological value with all other habitats being of site value.
3. Proposals for the wider development relates to the provision of up to 400 residential units when combined with the land to the south that benefits from a resolution to grant outline planning permissions (Ref: 250545). The proposals include associated landscaping, public open space, vehicular access from Coach Road and connections to adjacent public rights of way (PRoWs).
4. There were three European designated sites within 13km, four statutory designated sites within 5km and five non-statutory designated sites within 2km. The site falls within the ZoI of the Essex Coast RAMS, for Blackwater Estuary Ramsar SPA, Colne Estuary Ramsar SPA SAC, as well as Stour & Orwell Estuaries Ramsar SPA. A Habitats Regulations Assessment should be completed to assess the recreational impacts of the new proposals on these sites and propose suitable mitigation measures. A financial contribution of £169.45 per unit will also likely be required to mitigate against recreational impacts to these sites.
5. The site falls within the Natural England IRZ for Bullock Wood SSSI. The potential development meets the criteria to trigger mitigation or consultation with Natural England (100 or more residential units). The Habitats Regulations Assessment should assess the recreational impacts of the development on these sites and propose suitable mitigation measures, if required.
6. The site contains habitats of ecological value, including hedgerows, mature trees, and scrub, some qualifying as Habitats of Principal Importance under the NERC Act 2006. These should be retained and buffered, while arable land of low ecological value is most suitable for development.
7. The preliminary survey identified potential for protected and notable species, including bats (roosting, foraging, commuting), breeding and wintering birds, great crested newts, hazel dormice, reptiles, invertebrates, hedgehogs, and brown hares.
8. Recommended further surveys and assessments, to be undertaken at the appropriate time of year include:
 - Badger scoping survey – any time of the year;
 - Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) – preferentially in winter when trees are not in leaf;
 - Bat activity and static surveys - April to October;
 - Breeding bird surveys - March to June;
 - Wintering bird surveys – November to February;
 - Great crested newt eDNA Survey – Mid April to end of June;
 - Hazel dormouse surveys – April to November; and
 - Reptile – April to early October.
9. Proposals should aim to follow the mitigation hierarchy; avoid, mitigate, compensate and enhance along with local and national policies following all relevant guidance.
10. With appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, the potential development can achieve a positive impact on biodiversity, aligning with local and national policies. The potential development provides an important opportunity to enhance habitats within and adjacent to the site and strengthen ecological connectivity for priority habitats and protected and notable species.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Southern Ecological Solutions Ltd. (SES) was commissioned by Bloor Homes Ltd. to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Land North of Coach Road, Great Horkesley (additional land), Essex (Appendix 1). This PEA assesses land that forms part of a wider development that is being promoted to the Colchester City Council, the entire boundary of which is provided in Appendix 1 and combined measures c.23.35ha.
- 1.2** Approximately 7.7ha of this has been subject to ecological assessment under an existing PEA and EcIA (SES, 2022, 2025a) – discussed below in section 1.4. This PEA will assess the remaining 15.65ha, which will hence be referred to in this report as the 'site'. Boundaries and assessment areas are demarcated in Appendix 1.
- 1.3** The site is located at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL 97277 29578. The entirety of the site footprint consists of four arable fields separated and bordered by modified grassland margins, hedgerows, mixed scrub and lines of trees.
- 1.4** It should be noted that other ecological reporting has been issued to Colchester City Council in 2025 to support the promotion of the southern parcel, referred to as Land North of Coach Road, Great Horkesley, Essex. This report should be read in conjunction with those reports for further ecological context, including:
- Ecological Impact Assessment Rev H (SES, 2025a)
 - Update HRA Rev G (SES, 2025b); and
 - Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (SES, 2022).
- 1.5** The Land North of Coach Road, Great Horkesley, Essex, development proposals included for the provision of 150 dwellings and benefits from a resolution to grant outline planning permission (Ref: 250545).
- 1.6** The current proposals for the wider land promotion relate to the provision of up to 400 residential units (including the provision of 150 dwellings as above) with associated landscaping, public open space, vehicular access from Coach Road as well as Old House Road and connections to adjacent public rights of way (PRoWs). A site location plan is provided in Appendix 1, the proposed framework plan is provided in Appendix 2, and relevant planning policy is detailed in Appendix 3.
- 1.7** A site survey was carried out by SES in December 2025. This survey comprised:
- An extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
 - UKHab survey; and
 - A preliminary ground level assessment of trees on site to determine their suitability for roosting bats.
- 1.8** The specific objectives of this report are to:
- Map the main ecological features within the site;
 - 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 proposed development;
- Identify ecological constraints and opportunities;
- Determine the need for further surveys and mitigation; and
- Make recommendations for minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing gains in biodiversity where possible in accordance with Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, of the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2024), and relevant nature conservation policies within the adopted Colchester Borough Council Local Plan Publication (CBC, 2022).

2.0 Methods

- 2.1 This report has been prepared with reference to British Standards Institution (BSI) BS 42020:2013 ‘Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development’ (BSI, 2013) and The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management’s (CIEEM) and Technical Guidance Series ‘Ecological Report Writing’ (CIEEM, 2017a) and Code of Professional Conduct (CIEEM, 2019).
- 2.2 The following PEA follows guidance and methods as prescribed by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) *Guidelines for Ecological Appraisal 2nd edition* (2017b) and the *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment* (2022). Following these methods, a baseline of rare and/or noted ecological receptors (species and habitats) was established and valued. Predicted significant impacts upon these receptors have been identified and constraints and opportunities identified. This stepwise assessment process has informed likely mitigation and enhancement measures. Recommended phase 2 ecological surveys have been identified as well as a timetable for implementation. These surveys will fully inform the predicted impacts of the scheme in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2024), local planning policy and relevant wildlife legislation.

Desk Study

- 2.3 SES commissioned a data search for records of protected and notable species from Essex Field Club (EFC). The data search encompassed the site and up to 2km from the boundary. Data were received from EFC on 23 December 2025. Hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* records were also sought from the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas, which holds data from the People’s Trust for Endangered Species (PTES).
- 2.4 A web-based search for statutory designated sites via the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) spatial data resource (www.magic.gov.uk) was undertaken on 3 November 2025 for the following designations: European (up to 13km from the site boundary); and national (5km from the site boundary). Non-statutory designated sites were searched for within a 2km zone of the site using EFC data.
- 2.5 An online search was undertaken for waterbodies within 500m of the site boundary utilising and MAGIC Maps on 3 November 2025.
- 2.6 The Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Habitats Regulations Assessment Strategy document for 2018-2038 (Place Services, 2019) was referred to in order to determine the Zone of Influence (Zoi) for coastal European Designated sites and hence the requirement for off-site mitigation (Table 1).

Table 1: Zones of Influence of Essex Coast European Designated Sites (Place Services, 2019)

| European designated site | Underpinning SSSIs* | Zois (km) |
|---|--|-----------|
| Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar | Orwell Estuary SSSI Stour Estuary SSSI Cattwade Marshes SSSI | 13 |
| Hamford Water SPA and Ramsar | Hamford Water SSSI | 8 |
| Colne Estuary SPA and Ramsar | Colne Estuary SSSI | 9.7 |
| Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar | Blackwater Estuary SSSI | 22 |
| Dengie SPA and Ramsar | Dengie SSSI | 20.8 |
| Crouch and Roach Estuaries Ramsar and SPA | Crouch and Roach Estuaries SSSI | 4.5 |

| European designated site | Underpinning SSSIs* | Zols (km) |
|---|--|-----------|
| Foulness Estuary SPA and Ramsar | Foulness SSSI | 13 |
| Essex Estuaries SAC | Blackwater Estuary SSSI Colne Estuary SSSI Crouch and Roach Estuaries SSSI Dengie SSSI Foulness SSSI | ** |
| Benfleet and Southend Marshes SPA and Ramsar | Benfleet and Southend Marshes SSSI | 4.3 |
| Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar | Mucking Flats and Marshes SSSI | 8.1 |
| *Underpinning SSSIs are listed for Essex sites as these are what the Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are aligned to. **The Essex Estuaries SAC comprises the Colne Estuary, Blackwater Estuary, Dengie, Crouch and Roach Estuaries and Foulness Estuary and so follow the respective Zols throughout. | | |

SPA = Special Protection Area; SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest; SAC = Special Conservation Area

UK Habitats Classification

- 2.7** A UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Survey was carried out on 3 December 2025 by suitably qualified Assistant Ecologist Hal Edwards BSc (Hons) MSc during appropriate weather conditions.
- 2.8** UKHab survey methods are set out in the UK Habitat Classification User Manual – Version 2.01 (Butcher et al. 2023). UKHab is a comprehensive habitat classification system designed for the UK and is intended for ecologists to identify and map habitats to provide outputs that are suitable for ecological impact assessment. Habitat mapping was undertaken using the standard classification to indicate habitat types.
- 2.9** The dominant and readily identifiable higher plant species identified in each of the various habitat parcels were recorded and their abundances assessed on the DAFOR scale:
- D - Dominant
 - A - Abundant
 - F - Frequent
 - O - Occasional
 - R - Rare
- 2.10** These scores represent the abundance within the defined area only and do not reflect national or regional abundances. Plant species nomenclature follows Stace (2019).
- 2.11** All impacts upon ecological features have been considered for the purposes of this survey following industry best practice guidance. Only relevant protected and notable species have been discussed within this report to keep its contents concise and relevant to the works being undertaken and for ease of application.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 2.12** A BNG assessment should be completed on receipt of landscape plan and a condition assessment during the optimal season (April – September).

Badger

- 2.13** An initial assessment was made to identify areas that might be used by badger *Meles meles* for foraging, commuting and sett creation.

Bats

- 2.14** The site was assessed for its suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats. Trees were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats using guidelines issued by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023). Roosting habitats assigned a level of suitability according to the descriptions outlined in Table 2. The potential suitability of a tree for roosting bats and categorisation of the potential suitability of a potential roosting feature (PRF) is outlined in Table 3 & Table 4, respectively.
- 2.15** Trees were assessed to determine if further surveys including ground level tree assessments and preliminary bat roosting feature assessments are required. No buildings or structures were identified within or adjacent to the site boundary.
- 2.16** Good bat foraging habitat generally includes sheltered areas and habitats with good numbers of insects, such as woodland, scrub, ponds lakes and species-rich or rough grassland. Good commuting habitat generally comprises linear features such as well-connected hedgerows, woodland edge, watercourses. The site was assigned a level of suitability according to the descriptions outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of the potential suitability of a proposed development site for roosting, foraging and commuting bats (Collins, 2023)

| Suitability | Roosting Habitats | Commuting and foraging habitats |
|-------------|--|--|
| Negligible | No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion | Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting and foraging bats |
| Low | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats | Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by another habitat Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or patch of scrub |
| Moderate | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status | Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water |
| High | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts | 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, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge High-quality habitat that is well-connected to the wider landscape that is likely used regularly by foraging bats such as broad-leaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland Site is close to and connected to known roosts |

Table 3: Assessment of the potential suitability of tree for roosting bats (Collins, 2023)

| Suitability | Description |
|-------------|--|
| NONE | Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any |
| FAR | Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree |
| PRF | A tree with at least one PRF present |

Table 4: Categorisations of the potential suitability of PRFs for bats (Collins, 2023)

| Suitability | Description |
|-------------|--|
| PRF-I | PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats |
| PRF-M | PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony |

Birds

2.17 The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. Suitable habitat generally includes scrub, trees and ruderal vegetation but can also include buildings, open grassland and piles of debris.

2.18 The site was also assessed for its potential to support significant wintering and / or migratory bird populations.

Hazel Dormouse

2.19 Habitats were assessed for their general suitability for hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*. This species generally uses areas of dense woody vegetation and are more likely to be found where there is a wide diversity of woody species contributing to a three-dimensional habitat structure, a number of food sources, plants suitable for nest-building materials and good habitat connectivity (Wells., et al. 2025).

Great Crested Newt

2.20 Any aquatic and terrestrial habitats was assessed for their suitability for amphibians. Suitable terrestrial habitat generally includes rough grassland and woodland where they can forage and hibernate, with good links to the ponds where they breed.

2.21 Aquatic habitats were assessed for their suitability to support breeding great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* (as well as other amphibians) using the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This method was developed by Oldham et al. (2000) and provides a numerical index, between 1 and 0, based on a number of factors which influence GCN presence (e.g., surrounding habitat, geographical location, shading, presence of waterfowl and fish) (Table 5). In general ponds with high HSI scores are more likely to support GCN than those with low scores.

Table 5: HSI score categories (Oldham et al., 2000)

| HSI score | Pond suitability |
|------------|------------------|
| < 0.5 | Poor |
| 0.5 – 0.59 | Below average |
| 0.6 – 0.69 | Average |
| 0.7 – 0.79 | Good |
| > 0.8 | Excellent |

Invertebrates

2.22 The site was assessed for its potential to support rare or notable invertebrate species. Suitable habitats

generally include vegetation with a mosaic of differing heights, and areas of deadwood.

Reptiles

2.23 The site was assessed for its suitability for the four commoner reptile species: common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and adder *Vipera berus*. Specific habitat requirements vary between species. Common lizards favour rough grassland however, they can be found in a variety of habitats ranging from woodland glades to walls and pastures. Slow-worms use similar habitats to common lizard and are often found in gardens and derelict land. Grass snakes have similar habitat requirements to common lizards but have a greater reliance on ponds and wetlands where they hunt amphibians. Adders occupy areas of rough, open countryside and are often associated with woodland edge habitats.

Other Notable Species

2.24 The site was assessed for its potential to support Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 species of principal importance which are likely to occur in the local area especially hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, harvest mouse *Micromys minutus*, polecat *Mustela putorius* and common toad *Bufo bufo*.

Assessment of Nature Conservation Value

2.25 CIEEM guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (2022) have been utilised to assess the impacts upon habitats within the ZoI of the site. CIEEM suggests that it is best to use the geographical scale (i.e., International, National, Regional etc.) at which a feature (i.e. a habitat, species or other ecological resource) may or may not be important as the appropriate measure of value. As such, data from the data search and UKHab survey have been reviewed and the likely occurrence of protected and notable species/species groups assessed. This has allowed predictions of impacts to be made along with recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancement. Further targeted survey will refine the evaluation and associated recommendations.

2.26 The following geographical scale categories are considered appropriate:

- International;
- National (England);
- Regional (South-east);
- County (Essex);
- District (Colchester);
- Local (Great Horkesley); and
- Site.

Constraints

2.27 Desktop data searches are a valuable tool in evaluating a site's potential to hold rare and protected species, they are not however an absolute in confirming presence or absence of notable species due to the nature of how the records are collected.

2.28 Where any data supplied by the client, or any other sources have been used, it has been assumed that

the information is correct. No responsibility can be accepted by SES for inaccuracies in the data supplied by any other party. The conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on the assumption that all relevant information has been supplied by those bodies from whom it was requested.

- 2.29** All the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent at different seasons. The initial assessment of the Site was undertaken in December 2025, which falls outside the optimal plant growing season. It is therefore recommended that a further botanical survey is undertaken within the optimal time period to provide a comprehensive flora species list for the site, at which point the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment could be undertaken.

3.0 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Site Description

- 3.1 The site consisted of four arable fields with associated hedgerows and lines of trees, mixed scrub, scattered trees with a margin of modified grassland on the edge of each field. The site was bordered by Coach Road to the west, Old House Road to the north, residential development to the east and further arable land to the south. In a wider context the surrounding environment comprised of mixed farmland and urban development.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

European Designated Sites

- 3.2 There were four European designated sites within 13km, three of which were Ramsar sites and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), with two also being a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Details of all European designated sites within 13km of the site are provided in Table 6. The site also falls within the ZoI of the Essex Coast RAMS, for the Blackwater Estuary Ramsar SPA, Colne Estuary Ramsar SPA & SAC, Essex estuaries SAC and Stour & Orwell Estuaries Ramsar & SPA.
- 3.3 Ramsar sites, SPAs and SACs are considered important at an **International** level.

Nationally Designated Sites

- 3.4 There was one nationally designated site within 5km of the site, Bullock Wood SSSI, located approximately 4.3km to the southeast. The site also falls within the Natural England Impact Risk Zone (IRZs) for this site. The potential development meets the criteria to trigger mitigation or consultation with Natural England (100 or more residential units).
- 3.5 SSSI sites are considered important at a **National** level.

Locally Designated Sites

- 3.6 There were four locally designated sites within 5km of the site, all of which are designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These include Hilly Fields LNR, Spring Lane Meadows LNR, Lexden Park LNR and Bull Meadows LNR. Details of these sites are provided in Table 6.
- 3.7 LNR sites are considered important at a **Local** level.

Non-statutory Designated Sites

- 3.8 There were five non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site, all designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). These include Aldercar Wood, Pitchbury Wood, Harrow Wood, West Bergholt Church and West Bergholt Heath. Details of these sites are provided in Table 6.
- 3.9 LWS sites are considered important at a **County** level.

Table 6: Statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the vicinity of the site

| Name and Site Designation | Approximate Distance and Direction from Site | Size (Ha.) | Designated Features |
|--|--|------------|--|
| European Designated Sites 13km | | | |
| Abberton Reservoir Ramsar & SPA | 9.4km S | 718.3 | Habitats: Reservoir Species: Nationally and internationally important numbers of waterbirds |
| Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar & SPA | 10.6km E | 3672.6 | Habitats: Mudflats, low cliffs, saltmarsh, vegetated shingle Species: Nationally and internationally important numbers of waterbirds; notable invertebrate and plant assemblages |
| Essex estuaries SAC | 10.8km SE | 46111.43 | Habitats: Mudflats, low cliffs, saltmarsh, vegetated shingle, tidal rivers, lagoons, estuary Species: Internationally important numbers of dark-bellied brent goose, black-tailed godwit, knot and dunlin; nationally important numbers of avocet, grey plover, redshank, ringed plover and little tern; notable estuarine invertebrate communities and saltmarsh and seagrass plant assemblages. |
| Colne Estuary Ramsar SAC & SPA | 11.3km SE | 2714.0 | Habitats: Mudflats, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, reedbeds, sand and shingle spits Species: internationally important numbers of brent geese and black-tailed godwit; nationally important numbers of little terns and five other species of waders; notable invertebrate and plant assemblages. |
| National statutory designated 5km | | | |
| Bullock Wood SSSI | 4.3km SE | 23.5 | Habitats: Ancient semi-natural woodland, oak-hazel coppice with standards, mixed deciduous woodland, woodland rides and glades. |
| Local Statutory designated sites within 5km | | | |
| Hilly Fields LNR | 3.8km S | 37.5 | Habitats: Grassland meadow, heathland and woodland |
| Spring Lane Meadows LNR | 3.9km S | 2.0 | Habitats: Riverside wildflower meadows Species: Otter, kingfisher, bats |
| Lexden Park LNR | 4.1km S | 8.1 | Habitats: Grassland meadow, lake and woodland |
| Bull Meadows LNR | 4.5km SE | 1.4 | Habitats: Riverside wildflower meadows Species: Notable invertebrates |
| Non-statutory designated sites within 2km | | | |
| Aldercar Wood LWS | 0.2km NE | 0.5 | Habitats: Woodland |
| Pitchbury Wood LWS | 0.2km SW | 18.2 | Habitats: Ancient woodland |
| Harrow Wood LWS | 1.4km NE | 1.7 | Habitats: Woodland |
| West Bergholt Church LWS | 1.4km SW | 0.4 | Habitats: Acid grassland Species: Population of harebell |
| West Bergholt Heath LWS | 1.6km SW | 0.9 | Habitats: Acid grassland, heathland Species: Significant population of harebell |

Habitats

3.10 The UK Habitat map of the site is provided within Appendix 4 and the plant species recorded per habitat type are tabled in Appendix 5. Site photos can be found in Appendix 6.

3.11 The UKHab types within the Site are listed below followed by a description of each habitat type:

- c1c7 Arable cereal crop;
- g4 – 32 Broadleaved scattered trees;
- h3d Mixed scrub;

- g4 Modified grassland;
- h2a Native hedgerows;
- g4 – 33 Line of trees; and
- h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow.

c1c7 Arable cereal crop

3.12 The site was dominated by four large arable fields, all planted with young cereal crop at the time of the survey (Appendix 6).

q4 – 32 Broadleaved scattered trees

3.13 Of the three scattered trees, two were English oak *Quercus robur*, one large, one small and the third tree was a large ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. All three of which were located west of the centre of the site.

h3d Mixed scrub

3.14 There were two areas of mixed scrub on site, the first was located on the west boundary. This section of habitat was dominated with bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* with abundant bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and frequent cleavers *Galium aparine*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and common sedge *Carex nigra*. The second section was located centrally on site and appeared to be a succession of young trees with other scrub species. Black poplar *Populus alba* was abundant, with frequent English oak, dog rose *Rosa canina*, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata* and common sedge.

q4 Modified grassland

3.15 Each arable field had a margin of modified grassland approximately 3 meters in width (range 1-4m). The same habitat type bounded each arable parcel connecting between fields forming a network of corridors. The modified grassland contained abundant common sedge and perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with frequent creeping bent, dandelion *Taraxacum agg.*, cleavers and cranes-bill *Geranium sp.* Overall, the habitat had low species diversity with a mostly uniform sward length of approximately 150mm.

h2a Native hedgerow

3.16 Five native hedgerows were located along the boundaries of the four fields. A brief description of each hedgerow is provided below with a summary of species:

- **H1-** A well maintained hedgerow 4m tall by 1.5m wide dominated by hawthorn with occasional bramble, common ivy *Hedera helix*, and dog rose. The hedgerow bisected two arable fields marking the northwest boundary.
- **H2-** A hedgerow with trees forming the northern boundary of the site. It was approximately 2-6m tall and 2-5 m wide. The most common species within the hedgerow was black poplar found in abundance with frequent hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and bramble with occasional English oak, dog rose, common nettle *Urtica dioica* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*.
- **H3-** A hedgerow with trees on the north boundary which had not been laid or trimmed recently, gaps were noted in the lower half. The hedgerow was 4m tall and 4-6m wide. Species included

frequent blackthorn, English Oak, bramble, common nettle and black poplar with occasional common ivy, hawthorn, elder *Sambucus nigra*, dog rose and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*.

- **H4** – A defunct hedgerow with trees forming the east end of the northern boundary of the site. The hedgerow was poorly maintained with a height of 4m and an unclear width due to the hedge merging with adjacent habitats offsite of woodland and mixed scrub. Species comprised abundant blackthorn and frequent common nettle and bramble, and occasional elder, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, common ivy and cherry *Prunus sp.*
- **H5**-A species-poor hedgerow forming the eastern boundary of the site. The hedgerow appeared to have been recently laid for the adjacent housing development. Species included blackthorn with abundant hawthorn and occasional English oak.

g4 – 33 Line of trees

- 3.17** There were three lines of trees bisecting the four fields across the site. The first (LT1) bounded the west side of the northernmost field. It was dominated with mature black poplar, occasionally featuring common ivy. The second (LT2) divided the north field from the remainder of the site. LT2 was dominated with mature black poplar, with occasionally present English oak, hawthorn, common ivy, bramble and blackthorn. The third line of trees (LT3) bounded the south side of the additional western parcel boundary from the private residence and in part contained a poor condition drainage ditch. It was dominated by mature English oak, with frequent holly *Ilex aquifolium*, and occasional elder and hazel *Corylus avellana*.

h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow

- 3.18** One non-native ornamental hedgerow (H6) was identified on the southwest corner of the additional western parcel boundary. This hedgerow was dividing a residential garden from the arable field and therefore contained many non-native species for ornamental purposes, including laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and bamboo *Fargesia spp.*

Protected Habitats

Hedgerows and Lines of trees

- 3.19** The native hedgerows and lines of trees on site are considered to meet the definition for classification as UK NERC Act (2006) habitat of principal importance, (i.e., more than 80% UK native woody species) (JNCC, 2008).
- 3.20** Hedgerows and lines of trees within the site were valued at the **Local** level with confidence in this assessment high.
- 3.21** The remaining arable, modified grassland and scrub habitats were valued at the **Site** level with confidence in this assessment high.

Protected and Notable Species

Rare and Notable Plants

- 3.22** There was one record of *Schedule 8* protected bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (as listed under the

WCA 1981) within 2km of the site. There were no records of invasive *Schedule 9* species within 2km of the site although SES recorded two giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* plants along the southern boundary of the site during surveys in 2019 (SES, 2019a).

- 3.23** No protected or non-native, invasive flora were recorded on the site during the updated survey in 2025, although the survey took place out of flowering season for giant hogweed (June to August). It is therefore considered that this species may be present on the site.

Badgers

- 3.24** There were three records of badger within 2km of the site. The closest of which was 1.2km from the site boundary in 2017.
- 3.25** No evidence of badger activity or sett building was recorded within the site. The habitats on site were considered to provide suitable foraging and dispersal opportunities for individuals that may be present in the wider landscape. The drainage ditch underneath the line of trees LT3 on the southern border of the additional western parcel boundary was suitable sett building habitat.
- 3.26** The site is assessed as being of **Site** value for badger and confidence in this assessment is high.

Bats

- 3.27** There were three records of two bat species within 2km of the site including two Soprano pipistrelle records, the closest being 0.7km from 2023 and one Natter's bat was recorded 1.7km away in 2020.

Bats - Roosting

- 3.28** Trees within the site varied considerably in species, age and size. Of the trees recorded on site there were two trees which held potential to support roosting bats, both were considered to be of 'low' potential for roosting bats (as shown in Appendix 6 and 7) in accordance with Collins, 2016 guidance, and are considered to be relevant in accordance with updated guidance (Collins, 2023). Trees with negligible potential have not been included in this report. A summary of trees with bat roost potential can be seen below in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of trees with bat roost potential on site

| Tree | Species | Potential roosting features (PRFs) | Suitability (Collins, 2016) | Suitability (Collins, 2023) |
|------|--------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Black poplar | Centre south facing: Rotten trunk on dead tree, open cavity facing south approx. 3m | Low | PRF-I |
| 2 | Oak | Centre: Rot throughout trunk, large open fissure. Tree has long been dead and trimmed down to approx 3.5m. | Low | PRF-I |

- 3.29** The site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for roosting bats and confidence in this assessment is moderate, pending further surveys.

Bats – Foraging/Commuting

- 3.30** Boundary habitats (hedgerows and lines of trees) were considered to be of 'moderate' suitability for foraging/commuting bats (Collins, 2023). In addition, the site had good connectivity with neighbouring

suitable habitat of potential value to bat species such as hedgerows and woodland.

- 3.31** The site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for foraging/commuting bats and confidence in this assessment is moderate, pending further surveys.

Birds

- 3.32** There were records of 20 bird species within 2km of the site. Of these, four were red-listed birds of conservation concern (BoCC) and five were amber-listed BoCC (Eaton *et al.* 2021). Additionally, there were three species listed under *Schedule 1* of the WCA 1981 including redwing *Turdus iliacus*, red kite *Milvus milvus* and peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*.
- 3.33** Redwing is highly unlikely to nest on the site due to their migration patterns (breeding in Scandinavia, only visiting the UK in the winter months). Peregrine falcon is also highly unlikely to nest on site due to selecting high buildings/man-made structures or quarries/cliffs habitat for nesting. Red kite has potential to nest on site due to utilising tall trees amongst broadleaved woodland and farmland and the site hosts a number of mature trees.
- 3.34** The site provides suitable nesting opportunities for a range of common and protected/notable bird species on the red and amber birds of conservation concern list. The small extent of the site limits its ability to support notable assemblages of wintering birds, however, the open arable habitat could support wintering species such as fieldfare and redwing.
- 3.35** The site is considered to be valued up to **Local** level of importance for bird assemblages and confidence in this assessment is moderate, pending further survey.

Great Crested Newt

- 3.36** There were no records of GCN within 2km of the site. There were no waterbodies on site and six were located offsite, within 250m of the site boundary. The closest offsite waterbody being approximately 90m north (Appendix 8). At the time of the survey, access to ponds in the surrounding area had not been granted so a thorough assessment was not conducted.
- 3.37** The site is considered to provide suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN such as hedgerows, modified grassland, and mixed scrub.
- 3.38** It is considered possible that a breeding population of GCN are utilising the suitable terrestrial habitat present on the site, and therefore it is recommended that eDNA surveys are undertaken within waterbodies within 250m of the site boundary to determine their presence.
- 3.39** The site is considered to be valued up to **Local** level of importance for GCN and confidence in this assessment is moderate, pending further survey

Hazel Dormouse

- 3.40** There were no records of hazel dormouse within 2km of the site. The closest record is c.5.9km north associated with Grange Wood, Nayland.
- 3.41** No signs of hazel dormouse were recorded during the survey, although boundary habitats on site

(hedgerows and mixed scrub) are considered to be suitable for dormice; several species favoured by the species were present including bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn, and the site is considered to be well connected to further suitable and more extensive habitats (such as Pitchbury Wood to the northwest, and Aldercar Wood to the east).

- 3.42** Noting that the survey was undertaken in winter, as a precaution the structural complexity of the scrub and hedgerows habitats has been assumed as low suitability in order to prompt a higher survey effort for dormouse, with reference to the latest guidance from Wells *et al.*, 2025. This should be refined during updated habitat survey.
- 3.43** Following the latest guidance (Wells *et al.*, 2025), the mixed scrub habitats were considered to be of poor quality (based on moderate species diversity and assumed low structural complexity). The hedgerows were considered to be of fair quality (high species diversity and assumed low complexity). The Line of Trees were considered to be of fair quality (based on high species diversity and assumed low structural complexity).
- 3.44** Despite the lack of records within 5km of the site, due to the presence of suitable dormouse habitat on site as well as links to other suitable habitat in the wider landscape, the site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for hazel dormice and confidence in this assessment is currently moderate, pending further surveys.

Invertebrates

- 3.45** There was only one record of species listed under the NERC Act 2006 within 2km of the site, which was the Cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaeae* recorded 1.3km away in 2023.
- 3.46** The habitats on site (modified grassland, mixed scrub, native hedgerow and lines of trees) provide opportunities for a range of invertebrate species. Given the size of the site, the relatively common habitats on site and the relatively low value habitat within the wider landscape (farmland and urban development) the site is not considered likely to support a notable or important assemblage of invertebrates.
- 3.47** The site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for invertebrates and confidence in this assessment is high.

Reptiles

- 3.48** There were two records of common lizard within 2km of the site, the closest of which was 1.9km away from 2018.
- 3.49** The modified grassland margins of the fields were considered to provide suitable foraging and basking habitat for common reptile species. In addition, the hedgerows and lines of trees provide cover and foraging habitat. As such, it is considered that reptiles present in the wider landscape may be utilising the suitable habitat on site.
- 3.50** The site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for common reptile species and confidence in this assessment is moderate, confidence will increase with further surveys.

Riparian Mammals

- 3.51** There and one record of otter *Lutra lutra* 1.8km away from 2018. No records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius*.
- 3.52** There was no suitable habitat for riparian species within the site. Although there were two ditches located adjacent to the site, these were considered unsuitable to support otter or water vole noting their shallow depth during the survey. The next nearest drainage ditch is located approximately 10m south of the site boundary, however, noting surveys undertaken on the adjacent site, this ditch has been recorded as unsuitable. The nearest likely major watercourse is the Black Brook, approximately 0.9km south. Due to the site's lack of suitable habitat and connectivity, the site was considered to be of **Negligible** value for otter and water vole, with confidence in this assessment as high.

Notable Species

- 3.53** There was one record of European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* 1 km away from 2016. No notable mammals were observed during the site visit.
- 3.54** The site provided suitable habitat for European hedgehog in the form of hedgerows, lines of trees, mixed scrub and modified grassland on site, as well as suitable habitat for brown hare in the form of arable fields. The site is considered to be valued up to **Site** level of importance for European hedgehog and brown hare and confidence in this assessment is currently high.

Summary

Table 8: Summary Evaluation of Features

| Feature | Summary Description | Importance | Confidence |
|------------------------------|--|---------------|------------|
| Ramsar/SPA/SAC | Four Ramsar/SPA/SAC sites within 13km of the site. Site lies within the ZoI for three Ramsar/SPA/SAC sites | International | High |
| SSSI | One SSSI within 5km of the site, and the site lies within the IRZ for four SSSI's. | National | High |
| LNRs | Four LNR site within 5km of the site | Local | High |
| LWS | Five LWS sites within 2km of the site. | County | High |
| Hedgerows and Lines of Trees | Hedgerows and Lines of Trees considered to be habitats of principal importance | Local | High |
| Other Habitats | Arable, scattered trees, mixed scrub and modified grassland habitats | Site | High |
| Flora | Common and widespread grassland, scrub and hedgerow species. Invasive giant hogweed historically present on site | Site | High |
| Badgers | Suitable foraging, dispersal and sett-building habitat on site. No setts of field signs present on site. | Site | High |
| Bats (roosting) | No buildings/structures on site. Eight trees with 'low' bat roost potential along the boundary habitats. | Site | Moderate |
| Bats (foraging/commuting) | Hedgerows with trees and lines of trees along the boundaries provide 'moderate' foraging/commuting habitat for bats. | Site | Moderate |
| Birds | Potential for common and some protected/notable species to utilise the site for breeding and wintering. | Local | Moderate |
| Great crested newt | No attenuation basins on site, 6 ponds within 250m of the site. Some suitable terrestrial habitats on site. | Local | Moderate |
| Hazel dormouse | Suitable foraging, dispersal and nesting habitat on site. Ecologically connected to suitable hedgerow and woodland habitat. | Site | Moderate |
| Invertebrates | Suitable habitat for invertebrates although site lacks size and microhabitats for significant population of notable invertebrates. | Site | High |
| Reptiles | Suitable foraging, dispersal and basking habitat on site | Site | Moderate |
| Riparian mammals | Unsuitable habitats on site and adjacent. | Negligible | High |
| Notable species | Suitable habitat for European hedgehog and brown hare | Site | High |

4.0 Preliminary Prediction of Impacts, Recommendations and Mitigation Measures

Development Description

- 4.1 The proposal for the site is for residential development. The proposed framework plan for the wider parcel (Appendix 2) outlines the development of 400 residential dwellings with associated landscaping, public open space, vehicular access from Coach Road and Old House Road, and connections to adjacent public rights of way (PRoWs). It is proposed that the majority of hedgerows and lines of trees will be retained (Appendix 2).

Statutory/Non-statutory Sites

Internationally Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.2 As the closest European designated site is 9.4km from the site, direct impacts such as pollution, disturbance and habitat loss are highly unlikely.
- 4.3 However, the site does fall within the Zol of the Essex Coast RAMS. As the potential proposed development is a relevant residential development (i.e., for more than one dwelling), it is possible that coastal European designated sites will be impacted from indirect effects through increased recreational pressure (when considered alone or in combination with other developments). This risk will need to be mitigated via a financial contribution to the RAMS of £169.45 per unit (this payment is index linked). This will fund strategic off-site measures such as wardening and signage at coastal European protected sites.
- 4.4 A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) produced by SES in 2025 for the adjacent coach road site, found that the provision of on-site Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGS) as well as links to adjacent PRoWs and a financial contribution to the Essex Coast RAMS would fully mitigate any potential impacts of increased recreational pressure on these internationally designated sites. It is recommended that a HRA is also produced for these site proposals.
- 4.5 Subject to the production of an HRA and implementation of recommendation, it is predicted that the development could result in a **Neutral** residual effect on internationally designated sites.

Nationally Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.6 Four LNRs were located within 5km of the site boundary, the closest being Hilly Fields LNR, 3.8km south of the site. Given the size of the development and the distance from these designated sites, direct impacts such as noise, lighting and pollution are considered highly unlikely.
- 4.7 Given the size of the development (combined up to 400 dwellings), the distance between the site and the nearest LNR, and the lack of PRoWs between the development and these designated sites, it is considered unlikely that there will be a significant increase in recreational pressure on these nearby LNRs.
- 4.8 As the site meets the criteria to trigger Natural England IRZs for a nearby SSSIs (100 or more residential units), it is recommended that mitigation measures are put in place to reduce recreational impacts of the development on nearby SSSIs, and consultation is sought with Natural England. It is considered that mitigation measures detailed in the proposed HRA report would also mitigate against any significant

increased recreational pressures on nearby SSSIs.

- 4.9 Subject to consultation with Natural England and implementation of measures set out in the HRA, it is predicted that the potential development would result in a **Neutral** residual effect on nearby statutory designated sites.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.10 Five LWSs were located within 2km of the site boundary, the closest being Aldercar Wood LWS, 0.2km north-east of the site. Given the size of the site and the distance from the designated sites, direct impacts such as habitat loss, noise, lighting and pollution are considered highly unlikely.
- 4.11 There are no PROWs between the site and nearby LWSs, three of the LWSs are also on private land. Given this, and the size of the development (combined up to 400 dwellings) it is considered unlikely that there will be a significant increase in recreational pressure on these designated sites as a result of the development. Furthermore, it is considered that the provision of on-site SANGS will further reduce any potential impacts of increased recreational pressure on these designated sites.
- 4.12 It is considered that the potential development will result in a **Neutral** residual effect on nearby non-statutory designated sites.

Habitats

- 4.13 Current framework plans show that that majority of existing hedgerows will be retained (Appendix 2). It is recommended that retained and created hedgerows and woodland are enhanced through the infilling of gaps with native species planting. Proposed public open space should also feature areas of wildflower grassland and attenuation basins should be managed as wet grassland.
- 4.14 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows and grassland as well as the creation of wildflower grassland and attenuation basin will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on habitats.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.15 A BNG assessment should be completed on receipt of landscape plan and a condition assessment during the optimal season (April – September). However, noting the low-value habitats present, and the proposals include a good proportion of open space provision, it is predicted that the proposals have ample opportunities to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

Protected and Notable Species

Rare and Notable Plants

- 4.16 Although no *Schedule 9* species (as listed under the WCA 1981) were found on site, It is recommended that a pre-construction invasive flora walkover (in conjunction with incidental observations made during other recommended ecological surveys) is conducted no more than 12 months prior to the commencement of the development in order to ascertain if giant hogweed remains present on the site.

Badgers

4.17 Current framework plans show that the majority of badger foraging habitat (hedgerows, modified grassland and mixed scrub) will be retained (Appendix 2). The potential proposed development will, therefore, likely result in a reduction in suitable badger foraging habitat across the site. The development may also cause the death/injury of foraging badgers during construction.

4.18 The following precautionary techniques that are sympathetic to badgers are recommended during construction:

- Covering trenches at night or leaving a plank of wood leant against the side to ensure badgers can escape if they were to accidentally fall in.
- Covering open pipework with a diameter of greater than 120mm at the end of the workday to prevent animals from entering and becoming trapped.
- Storing chemicals according to COSHH regulations overnight and covering them if left unattended at any time.
- Regular removal of litter

4.19 Retained hedgerow habitats and well as proposed woodland creation should be enhanced for badgers through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include a scrub buffer and planting of native fruit and seed-bearing trees and shrubs such as those listed in Appendix 9.

4.20 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows and proposed woodland habitat will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on badgers.

Bats

Bats - Roosting

4.21 Current framework plans show that both trees with bat roost potential will be unaffected by the development. In the event of requiring removing trees with bat roost potential, further assessment may be required. Further assessment for any impacted trees with suitability for roosting bats would include at least one PRF inspection survey to accurately categorise the PRF/tree(s). This survey involves the use of tree climbing or access equipment to gain access to PRFs and allow a more detailed assessment. If bat droppings were found, where possible a sample would be collected for DNA analysis.

4.22 If a tree is downgraded to / remains as PRF-I during the first PRF inspection survey, no further surveys would be required. Precautionary measures would be recommended (e.g. pre-fell inspections likely required, soft felling) for any PRF-I trees lost, as well as bat boxes to 'maintain' the roosting resources (i.e. 1 bat box per PRF-I tree lost). Tree works should also be undertaken in accordance with a site specific Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS).

4.23 If a tree/PRF is still considered to have / is upgraded to PRF-M suitability, a total of three PRF inspection surveys would be necessary for the relevant tree/PRF(s), PRF inspection surveys would comprise three visits undertaken between May and September, with at least two in the period May to August, spread at least three weeks apart. Where access is not possible for aerial inspection or PRFs cannot be fully inspected, dusk emergence surveys using night vision aids (NVAs) would be undertaken as an alternative. This would comprise three surveys between May and September, with at least two surveys

between May and August, and surveys spaced at least 3 weeks apart.

- 4.24** If trees with suitability for roosting bats are impacted, if further surveys do not detect a roost or if the tree remains as being of PRF-I suitability, the tree / PRF should be 'soft felled' by an arborist who is aware of the protection afforded to bats. Branches should be lowered carefully and gently to the ground and left overnight for bats (if present) to leave off their own accord.
- 4.25** If a bat roost is discovered, and will be impacted by proposals, then a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence will be required to permit works. Application for a licence can only be made once full/detailed planning permission has been granted, and a licence will only be issued once all relevant wildlife related conditions have been discharged. Potential mitigation for loss of any existing roost could comprise bat boxes installed on retained trees/integrated into new buildings or translocation of the original roost feature to a tree set to be retained (involving removal of the associated limb and attachment to a nearby tree).
- 4.26** The potential proposed development provides the opportunity to enhance the surveyed area for bats through the provision of additional roosting areas on retained trees and new buildings. Bat boxes should be integrated into new buildings and installed upon retained trees. A variety of bat boxes that can integrate seamlessly into the design of new buildings are available, such as the Habibat Bat Box, which can be supplied plain for a rendered finish, or faced with brick (see Figure 1). Alternatively, there are a wide range of woodcrete bat boxes with a long lifespan that are suitable for installation on trees (see Figure 2). Ongoing tree management also has potential to deliver favourable habitats for roosting bats, through new natural roost feature creation (e.g. deliberate cutting of crevices) and/or transplantation of suitable features from trees that need to be removed for health and safety reasons.

Figure 1: Habibat Integrated Bat Box

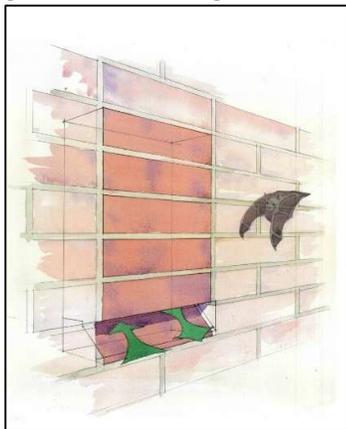


Figure 2: Schwegler 2F Bat Box



Bats – Foraging/Commuting

- 4.27** The Current framework plans show that some of the bat foraging habitat (hedgerows and lines of trees) will be removed. The potential development will therefore result in the loss of a proportion of the bat foraging habitat.
- 4.28** Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (Collins, 2023) recommends surveys should be undertaken where the likely impacts of a proposed development would negatively impact upon bats and their habitats. Therefore, in order to fully assess the potential impacts of the development upon local bat populations

and focus mitigation and enhancements efforts, it is recommended that a bat activity survey is undertaken to provide the necessary data set. The habitats on site have been valued at moderate suitability; best practice guidance recommends seasonal transects and monthly automated surveys using static bat detectors, between April and October.

- 4.29 Retained hedgerow habitats and well as proposed woodland creation should be enhanced for foraging/commuting bats through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include planting of native nectar-rich trees and shrubs (to attract flying insects) such as those listed in Appendix 9.
- 4.30 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows and created woodland as well as the installation of bat boxes throughout the development will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on bats.

Birds

- 4.31 All breeding birds and their nests are protected from deliberate destruction under the WCA 1981. Impacts could include damage or destruction to active bird nests during construction.
- 4.32 Current framework plans show that the majority of bird nesting habitat (hedgerows and lines of trees) will be retained. The majority of suitable foraging habitat for wintering birds (arable field, modified grassland and mixed scrub) will also be lost as a result of the potential development. Due to the suitability of the habitats present on and adjacent to the site for notable and protected breeding and wintering birds, it is recommended that a six-visit breeding bird survey is undertaken between March and August (inclusive) and a six-visit wintering bird survey is undertaken between November and February (inclusive). The aim of these surveys is to assess which bird species use the site during the breeding and wintering seasons and their status, distribution and density within the site.
- 4.33 Any nesting bird habitat to be lost or disturbed through construction, should be cleared outside of the nesting season (which is generally March to August) or after an ecologist has confirmed active nests are not present.
- 4.34 Retained hedgerow habitats and well as proposed woodland creation should be enhanced for birds through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include planting of native fruit and seed-bearing trees and shrubs such as those listed in Appendix 9. Swift bricks and house martin cups should also be installed throughout the development integrate into proposed buildings (Figures 3, and 4).

Figure 3: House Martin Cup

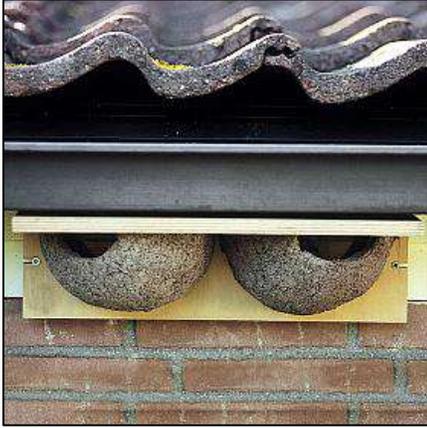


Figure 4 Manthorpe Swift Brick



- 4.35 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows and created woodland as well as the installation of bird boxes throughout the potential development will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on bird assemblages.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.36 GCN are legally protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Taken together, it is an offence to destroy/damage or obstruct access to a resting or breeding site, to kill/injure or disturb individual GCN, or to deliberately disturb GCN in such a way to be likely to significantly affect their ability to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young or their local distribution.
- 4.37 Given the suitable terrestrial habitat on site, and ponds in the local vicinity, further surveys are recommended. The surveys would seek to determine GCN presence/likely absence in ponds within the ZOI of the site, assess the significance of any GCN population, and define appropriate avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures. To accord with published guidance (English Nature, 2001), it is advised that presence/likely absence surveys are conducted via an environmental DNA (eDNA) survey, following published guidance (Biggs et al., 2014). eDNA can be undertaken at any time of year, but in order to evidence likely absence needs to take place between 15th April and 30th June. Dependent on the results, follow-up surveys may be required to determine population class size and to accurately determine mitigation.
- 4.38 If GCN are confirmed and impacts cannot be avoided, a licence may be required (either District Level Licence (DLL) or standard mitigation licence). Mitigation would differ depending on the licensing route, but could include trapping/translocation and sensitive clearance of suitable habitat, along with creation of a receptor site, managed long term for this species. Given the characteristics of the site, mitigation is considered to be fully achievable.

Hazel Dormouse

- 4.39 Current framework plans show that some of the Hazel dormouse foraging, dispersing and nesting habitat (hedgerows and mixed scrub) will be removed (Appendix 2). The potential proposed development will, therefore, likely result in the loss of suitable hazel dormouse habitat and may result in the death/injury of hazel dormice as well as the destruction of their nests, if present on site.

- 4.40** Given the suitability of habitats on site, proximity and connectivity to the wider landscape and areas of more suitable habitat, it is considered likely that if hazel dormouse were in the local area, they could utilise the site. Given this, a nest tube survey is recommended to determine presence/likely absence. Best practice guidance (Wells, D. *et al.*, 2025) indicates survey effort for sites where habitat quality is fair or poor should comprise a minimum of 100 tubes deployed, and checked a set number of times at monthly intervals from April to November, with the support of a minimum of 30 footprint tunnels. If hazel dormice are recorded during this survey, then removal of suitable habitat (hedgerows and scrub) will likely take place under a EPSM license from Natural England.
- 4.41** Retained hedgerow habitats and well as proposed woodland creation should be enhanced for hazel dormouse through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include planting of native fruit and seed-bearing trees and shrubs such as those listed in Appendix 9.
- 4.42** It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on hazel dormouse.

Invertebrates

- 4.43** The current framework plans show that the majority of suitable invertebrate habitat (native hedgerow boundaries, modified grassland and mixed scrub) will be retained. No surveys or specific mitigation measures are considered necessary although it is recommended that retained hedgerow and lines of tree habitats and well as proposed woodland, attenuation basin and public open space creation should be enhanced for invertebrates through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include planting of native fruit and seed-bearing trees and shrubs such as those listed in Appendix 9 as well as areas of wildflower grassland throughout public open space. It is recommended that habitat such as hedgerows are created with gradients (from hedgerow to scrub, then to tall grass) to provide a mosaic of suitable invertebrate habitat and create suitable micro habitats for notable invertebrates.
- 4.44** It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows as well as the creation of woodland, attenuation basins, public open space and wildflower grassland will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on invertebrates.

Reptiles

- 4.45** The current framework plans show that the majority of common reptile foraging, dispersing and basking habitat (modified grassland) will be retained although some areas will be removed to facilitate the potential development (Appendix 2). The potential proposed development will, therefore, likely result in the loss of suitable reptile habitat and may result in the death/injury of reptiles, if present on site.
- 4.46** As such, a seven-visit reptile survey is recommended in order to determine the presence/likely absence of common reptile species on the site. This survey should consist of the distribution of artificial reptile refugia (0.5m x 0.5m) at a density of 10 per hectare. These should then be used to observe reptiles basking during 'suitable' days for reptiles (10-17C), as follow best practice (Froglife, 1999) (Gent and Gibson, 2003). If common reptile species are recorded, then mitigation is likely to involve the removal of all individuals from the development area to avoid injury/death, potentially requiring translocation. Mitigation is likely to include the retention of suitable areas of undeveloped habitat within the site,

which may have to be fenced during construction and maintained and enhanced through the provision of log piles.

- 4.47 Retained hedgerows and grassland as well as proposed public open space and attenuation basins should be enhanced for reptiles through the provision of log-pile hibernacula buffered by long-grass areas. Hibernacula design and construction should follow the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom Advice Note 11 (ARG UK, 2018) (Figures 5 & 6).
- 4.48 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows as well as the provision of open space on site with areas of wildflower grassland will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on reptiles.

Notable Species

Hedgehog

- 4.49 The current framework plans show that some of the hedgehog foraging and dispersing habitat (modified grassland, native hedgerow and lines of trees) will be removed. The proposed development will, therefore, likely result in the loss of suitable hedgehog habitat and may result in the death/injury of hedgehogs, if present on site.
- 4.50 Suitable hedgehog habitat should be removed outside of the hedgehog hibernating season (generally November to February inclusive) in a staged way to ensure animals can move from the area. The optimum time to remove vegetation would be during September/October as this avoids both the nesting bird season and the reptile hibernation season. If vegetation clearance is to take place outside this period, an ecologist should first confirm that no hedgehogs are present. It is recommended that the woodland habitat is retained and enhanced.
- 4.51 To retain access into the site it is recommended that hedgehog highways are added to garden fences to maintain access by creating *ad hoc* 13cm x 13cm holes in fencing/walls. This size gap is too small for most pets and can be undertaken by raising a fence panel per garden; installing hedgehog friendly fencing; removing a brick at the bottom of a wall or cutting a hole in fencing / walls.

Figure 5: Example hedgehog highway with signage sold by the People's Trust for Endangered Species.



- 4.52 Retained hedgerow habitats and well as proposed woodland, attenuation basin and public open space creation should be enhanced for hedgehogs through additional planting and a sensitive long-term management plan. In addition, the proposal should include planting of native fruit and seed-bearing trees and shrubs such as those listed in Appendix 9.

4.53 It is considered that the enhancement of retained hedgerows as well as the creation of woodland, attenuation basins and public open space will result in a **Minor Beneficial** residual effect on invertebrates.

Brown hare

4.54 The current framework plans show that the majority of brown hare habitat (arable fields) will be lost as a result of the potential development (Appendix 2). The proposed development will, therefore, likely result in a reduction in suitable brown hare foraging habitat across the site. It is recommended that incidental observations of brown hare should be recorded in conjunction with other recommended ecological surveys taking place at dusk/dawn (bat surveys, bird surveys). From these surveys, the presence/likely absence of brown hare will be assessed.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 A summary of likely impacts and mitigation is provided below in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of Likely Impacts, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures and Residual Impacts

| Feature | Likely Impacts | Further Surveys/works | Mitigation and Enhancement Measures | Likely Residual Impact |
|------------------------|---|--|--|------------------------|
| Ramsar/SPA/SAC | Increased recreational pressure | Production of a sHRA | Contribution per unit to Essex RAMs (£169.45), provision of SANGs & links to PRoWs | Neutral |
| LNR/SSSI | Increased recreational pressure | Production of a HRA | Provision of SANGs & links to PRoWs | Neutral |
| LWS | No likely impacts | N/A | No mitigation/enhancement required. | Neutral |
| Habitats | Loss of habitats | BNG assessment Update condition assessment at appropriate time of year | Hedgerows retained/enhanced where possible. Grassland retained/enhanced where possible. Created public open space to feature areas of wildflower grassland Created attenuation basins to be managed as wet grassland | Beneficial |
| Rare and notable flora | Spread of non-native invasive flora | Pre-construction invasive flora walkover Incidental observations for invasive flora | Invasive flora removal and control (possible) | Neutral |
| Badgers | Loss of foraging habitat. Death/injury to badgers | N/A | Enhancement of retained hedgerows and lines of trees Precautionary construction methods | Beneficial |
| Bats | Potential loss of trees with roosting potential. Loss of habitats of value to foraging bats. | Bat activity surveys | Implementation of wildlife sensitive lighting (possible) Enhancement of retained hedgerow, and proposed woodland through additional planting. Addition survey effort on potential bat roost features if impacts are likely. Replacement roost provision under Natural England Licence (possible) Provision of bat boxes throughout the development | Beneficial |
| Birds | Loss of nesting and foraging habitat for breeding birds Loss of foraging habitat for wintering birds Destruction of nests and death/injury of chicks/eggs | Breeding bird surveys Wintering bird surveys | Suitable measures to avoid nest destruction through nesting season. Enhancement of retained hedgerow, and grassland habitats through additional planting Provision of bird boxes throughout the development | Beneficial |

| Feature | Likely Impacts | Further Surveys/works | Mitigation and Enhancement Measures | Likely Residual Impact |
|--------------------|---|--|--|------------------------|
| Great crested newt | Death/injury, disturbance and damage/loss of a resting place/place of shelter | DNA surveys Possible requirement for entry into DLL/standard mitigation licence depending on survey results | To be confirmed | Neutral to positive |
| Hazel dormouse | Death / injury and habitat loss | Dormouse presence/absence survey | Additional survey effort for dormouse. Dependent on the outcome of the surveys, habitat removal under a EPSM license Enhancement of retained hedgerow, lines of trees and proposed woodland through additional planting | Beneficial |
| Invertebrates | Habitat loss | N/A | Enhancement of retained hedgerow, lines of trees, and grassland habitats | Beneficial |
| Reptiles | Death / injury and habitat loss | Reptile presence/absence survey | Reptile translocation and staged habitat removal followed by a destructive search under a method statement (possible) Suitable measures to avoid vegetation clearance through reptile hibernation season. Enhancement of retained hedgerow, lines of trees and grassland habitats as well as proposed woodland and attenuation basins through additional planting Creation of hibernacula | Beneficial |
| Riparian Mammals | No impacts likely | N/A | None required | Neutral |
| Notable Species | Injury and/or death of hedgehog Loss of hedgehog and brown hare habitat. | N/A | Suitable measures to avoid vegetation clearance through hedgehog hibernation season. Enhancement of retained hedgerow, lines of trees and grassland habitats through additional planting Creation of hibernacula Implementation of hedgehog highways throughout the development | Beneficial |

5.2 Through the above survey and precautionary methods, it is considered that all significant impacts upon biodiversity, including any potential adverse impacts upon specific protected species, habitats and designated sites will likely be able to be wholly mitigated in line with relevant wildlife legislation, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2024); and CBC policy ENV1 (Appendix 3).

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Appendix 1: Location Plan



Appendix 2: Site Framework Plan



Appendix 3: Legislative and Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy

This document has not been prepared by a legal or planning professional and should be read as an interpretation of relevant statutes and planning policy guidance only. The information presented within this document has been reported in good faith and are the genuine opinion of SES on such matters. SES does not accept any liability resulting from outcomes relating to the use of this information or its interpretation within this document.

National Planning Policy

The NPPF (MHCLG, 2024) states that:

Paragraph 8

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 11

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

- a) All plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

Paragraph 20

Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Paragraph 25

Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans. They should also engage with their local communities and relevant bodies including Local Nature Partnerships, the Marine Management Organisation, county councils, infrastructure providers, elected Mayors and combined authorities (in cases where Mayors or combined authorities do not have plan-making powers).

Paragraph 27

Once the matters which require collaboration have been identified, strategic policymaking authorities should make sure that their plan policies align as fully as possible with those of other bodies where a strategic relationship exists on these matters, and take into account the relevant investment plans of infrastructure providers, unless there is a clear justification to the contrary. In particular their plans should ensure that: a) a consistent approach is taken to planning the delivery of major infrastructure, such as major transport services/projects, utilities, waste, minerals, environmental improvement and resilience; and strategic health, education and other social infrastructure (such as hospitals, neighbourhood health facilities, universities, schools, major sports facilities and criminal justice accommodation);

Paragraph 29

Non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies.

Paragraph 77:

The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way. In doing so, they should:

a) consider the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the area's economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains;

Paragraph 109

Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This should involve:

f) identifying, assessing and taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains.

Paragraph 124

Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

Paragraph 125

Planning policies and decisions should:

a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;

b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

Paragraph 136

Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are treelined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newlyplanted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.

Paragraph 151

Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land. Where Green Belt land is released for development through plan preparation or review, the 'Golden Rules' in paragraph 156 below should apply.

Paragraph 151

The National Forest and Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns and cities, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. The National Forest Strategy and an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within the National Forest and Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies for controlling development in Green Belts.

Paragraph 187

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basking management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Paragraph 188

Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Paragraph 192

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 193

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) 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;
- b) 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;
- c) 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
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 194

The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites;
- c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 195

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

Paragraph 198

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

Local Planning Policy

The policies related to nature conservation in Colchester District Councils Adopted Local Plan 2017-2033 (CDC, 2022) are set out below.

Policy ENV 1 Environment

The Local Planning Authority will conserve and enhance Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside, and coastline. It will safeguard biodiversity, geology, history, and archaeology through the protection and enhancement of sites of international, national, regional, and local importance. Development must comply with and contribute positively towards the aims of the Anglian River Basin Management Plan.

A. Designated sites

Development proposals that adversely affect the integrity of Habitats Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), or the special qualities of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (including its setting), either alone or in combination, will not be supported.

B. Essex Coast RAMS

Contributions will be secured from qualifying residential development within Zones of Influence towards mitigation measures identified in the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS), in compliance with the Habitats Directive and Regulations.

C. Biodiversity and geodiversity

Development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests will be supported in principle. For all proposals, development will only be supported where it:

- (i) Is supported with appropriate ecological surveys where necessary; and
- (ii) Where there is reason to suspect the presence of a protected species (and impact to), or Species/Habitats of Principal Importance, applications should be accompanied by an ecological survey assessing their presence and, if present, the proposal must be sensitive to, and make provision for their needs and demonstrate the mitigation hierarchy has been followed; and
- (iii) Will conserve or enhance the biodiversity value of greenfield and brownfield sites and minimise fragmentation of habitats; and

- (iv) Maximizes opportunities for the preservation, restoration, enhancement, and connection of natural habitats in accordance with the UK and Essex Biodiversity Action Plans or future replacements; and
- (v) Incorporates beneficial biodiversity conservation features, **measurable biodiversity net gain of at least 10% in line with the principles outlined in the Natural England Biodiversity Metric**, and habitat creation, where appropriate.

Proposals for development that would cause significant direct or indirect adverse harm to nationally designated sites or other designated areas, protected species, Habitats and Species of Principle Importance will not be permitted unless:

- (i) They cannot be located on alternative sites that would cause less harm; and
- (ii) The benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the features of the site and the wider network of natural habitats; and
- (iii) Satisfactory biodiversity net gain, mitigation, or as a last resort, ~~and~~ compensation measures, are provided.

The Local Planning Authority will take a precautionary approach where insufficient information is provided about avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures and secure mitigation and compensation through planning conditions/obligations where necessary.

D. Irreplaceable habitats

Proposals that would result in the loss of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland, Important Hedgerows and veteran trees will not be permitted unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy, to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, exists.

E. Countryside

The local planning authority will carefully balance the requirement for new development within the countryside to meet identified development needs in accordance with Colchester's spatial strategy, and to support the vitality of rural communities, whilst ensuring that development does not have an adverse impact on the different roles, the relationship between and separate identities of settlements, valued landscapes, the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and visual amenity.

The intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be recognised and assessed, and development will only be permitted where it would not adversely affect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and complies with other relevant policies. Within valued landscapes, development will only be permitted where it would not impact upon and would protect and enhance the factors that contribute to valued landscapes.

Policy ENV 2 Coastal Areas

Development within the Coastal Protection Belt and along the undeveloped coast will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- (i) The development requires a coastal location and is located within the developed area of the coast;
- (ii) The proposed use is appropriate to the Flood Zone, will be safe from flooding over its planned lifetime, and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change;
- (iii) The proposal will not significantly harm nature conservation, heritage assets, maritime uses, or the landscape and seascape character of the coast;

- (iv) The development delivers or sustains social and economic benefits important to coastal communities;
- (v) Opportunities for adaptation to climate change are incorporated; and
- (vi) The proposal does not hinder the future creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed England Coast Path.

Policy ENV 3 Green Infrastructure

The Local Planning Authority will protect, enhance, and deliver a comprehensive green infrastructure network comprising strategic green links between rural areas, urban Colchester, river corridors, and open spaces. Development proposals should:

- (i) Contribute to the delivery of projects identified in the Colchester Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the Colchester Orbital route;
- (ii) Improve connectivity between new developments, existing green infrastructure, and the wider countryside;
- (iii) Provide new paths and links constructed to a suitable standard for year-round use by all, ensuring safety and accessibility;
- (iv) Avoid harm to the green infrastructure network unless the benefits of development outweigh adverse impacts, and provide mitigation where harm is unavoidable;
- (v) Support the creation of allotments, orchards, community gardens, and local food-growing spaces; and
- (vi) Enhance water bodies through measures such as de-culverting, buffer strips, and wetland creation to manage flood risk and improve water quality.

Policy ENV 4 Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Development within or affecting the setting of the Dedham Vale AONB will only be supported where it:

- (i) Makes a positive contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, including tranquility and dark skies;
- (ii) Does not adversely affect the character, quality views, or distinctiveness of the AONB or threaten public enjoyment of these areas;
- (iii) Avoids adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB or provides appropriate mitigation; and
- (iv) Supports wider environmental, social, and economic objectives as set out in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan.

Applications for major development within or near the AONB will be refused unless exceptional circumstances demonstrate that the development is in the public interest and mitigation or compensation measures are provided.

Policy ENV 5 Pollution and Contaminated Land

Development proposals must demonstrate that they will not result in unacceptable risks to public health, safety, the environment, or amenity due to air pollution, noise, water contamination, or land pollution. Proposals within Air Quality Management Areas or those likely to impact air quality must include an air quality assessment and mitigation measures. Development on contaminated land must include an assessment of contamination and risks, and where necessary, remediation and verification measures to ensure the land is safe for its intended use.

Wildlife Legislation

The two principal wildlife statutes are the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (The Habitats Regulations 2019) that deals with internationally important sites and species, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 that deals with nationally important sites and species.

Certain habitats and species within discrete sites are protected as SSSI under the WCA 1981. A proportion of these are more strictly protected as proposed or designated SPA, SAC and Ramsar sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019). These designations protect features and resources listed as being of international importance from both direct and indirect effects arising from a range of issues including proposed development. In addition, non-statutory designated sites (e.g., Local Wildlife Sites) are protected under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, (1949) Section 21.

Certain species listed on Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981, including all bat species, great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*, hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and otter *Lutra lutra* are also protected under Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations 2010 making them European Protected Species. Taken together it is illegal to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture any wild animal of EPS.
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any EPS in such a way to be likely to significantly affect:
- The ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young; or
- The local distribution of that species.
- Recklessly disturb an EPS or obstruct access to their place of rest.
- Damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places of such animals.
- Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal.
- Possess or transport any part of an EPS, unless acquired legally; and/or
- Sell, barter or exchange any part of an EPS.

A range of species other than birds, including water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, is protected from disturbance and destruction under the WCA 1981 through inclusion on Schedule 5.

All breeding birds are protected from deliberate destruction under the WCA 1981. Certain species are further protected from disturbance at their nest sites being listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA 1981.

Common reptiles including common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and adder *Vipera berus* are protected under the WCA 1981, they are listed as schedule 5 species, therefore part of Section 9(1) and section 9(5) apply; the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) also strengthens their protection.

Badger *Meles meles* is protected from sett disturbance and destruction under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Section 40 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 places a legal duty on Local

Authorities to conserve biodiversity. Section 41 (S41) sets out a list of 943 species and habitats of principal importance. These species are known as England Biodiversity Priority (EBP) species and are those identified as requiring action under the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

Native, species-rich hedgerows that fit certain criteria are protected as being 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, along with other introduced and invasive species are listed under Schedule 9 of the WCA 1981. Japanese knotweed is highly invasive and its rhizomes cause damage to built structures. Hence it is also classed as controlled waste under the Environment Protection Act 1990 and has therefore either to be removed or disposed of in a licensed landfill or the rhizomes buried to a depth of at least 5m.

Appendix 4: UK Habitat Plan



Appendix 5: Plant Species

D= Dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Mixed scrub | Modified grassland | Hedgerows | | | | | Line of trees | | |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---------------|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Ash | <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> | | | R | R | | | | | R | |
| Black poplar | <i>Populus nigra</i> | F | | | A | F | | | D | D | |
| Blackthorn | <i>Prunus spinosa</i> | | | | O | F | A | D | | O | F |
| Bracken | <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> | A | | | | | | | | | |
| Bramble | <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> | F | R | O | F | F | F | F | | O | |
| Broadleaved dock | <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cleavers | <i>Galium aparine</i> | F | F | | O | O | | | | | O |
| Cock's foot | <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> | O | F | | | | A | | | | |
| Common holly | <i>Ilex aquifor</i> | | | | | F | | R | | R | F |
| Common ivy | <i>Hedera helix</i> | | | O | | O | O | R | O | O | |
| Common mallow | <i>Malva sylvestris</i> | R | | | R | | | | | | |
| Common nettle | <i>Urtica dioica</i> | O | O | | O | F | F | | | | O |
| Common sedge | <i>Carex nigra</i> | F | A | | F | | | | | | A |
| Common vetch | <i>Vicia sativa</i> | | O | | | | | | | | |
| Cow parsley | <i>Cerastium fontanum</i> | R | O | | R | R | O | | | | |
| Crane's bill | <i>Hardy geranium</i> | R | F | | | R | | | | | |
| Creeping bent | <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> | O | F | | | | | | | | |

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Mixed scrub | Modified grassland | Hedgerows | | | | | Line of trees | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---------------|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Dandelion | <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> | | F | | | | | | | | |
| Dog rose | <i>Rosa canina</i> | F | | O | O | O | | | R | R | |
| Elder | <i>Sambucus nigra</i> | R | | R | | O | O | | | | O |
| Elm | <i>Ulmus procera</i> | | | | R | | | | | | |
| English oak | <i>Quercus robur</i> | O | | | O | F | | O | | O | D |
| Field maple | <i>Acer campestre</i> | | | | | | R | | | | |
| Goat willow | <i>Salix caprea</i> | R | | | | | | | | | |
| Hawthorn | <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> | | | D | F | O | F | A | | O | |
| Hazel | <i>Corylus avellana</i> | | | | | | | | | | O |
| Perennial ryegrass | <i>Lolium perenne</i> | | A | | O | | | | | | |
| Ribwort plantain | <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> | | R | | | | | | | | |
| Silver birch | <i>Betula pendula</i> | | | | | | R | | | | |
| Spindle | <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> | | | | | O | | | | | |
| Sycamore | <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> | | | R | | | | | | | |
| Travellers joy | <i>Clematis vitalba</i> | | | | R | | | | | | |
| Wild cherry | <i>Prunus avium</i> | | | | | | O | R | | | |

Appendix 6: Site photos

Arable habitats





Modified grassland





Mixed scrub



Scattered trees





Lines of Trees



LT1



LT2



LT3

Native hedgerows



H1



H2



H3

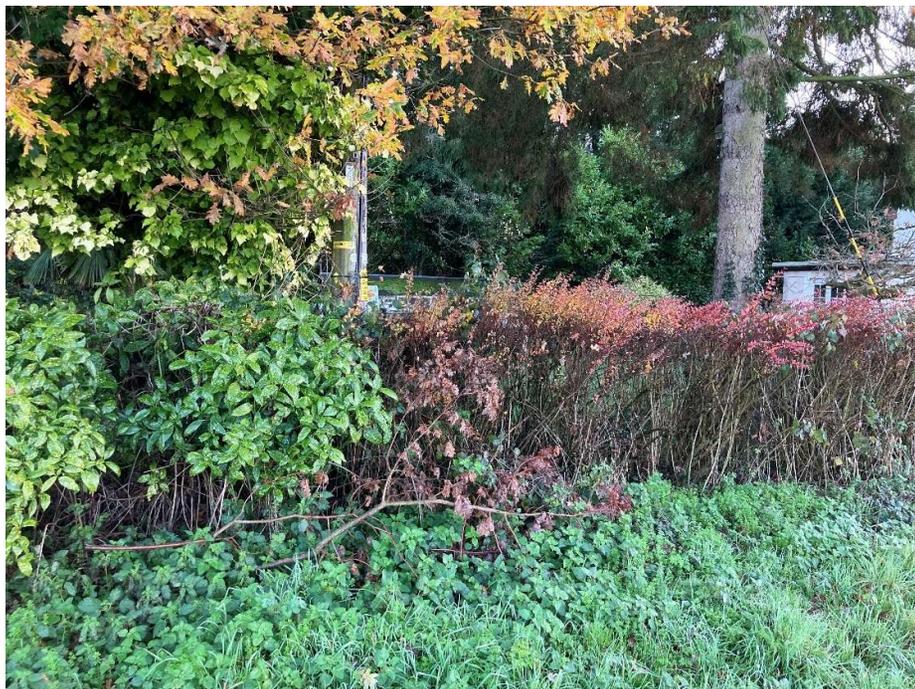


H4



H5

Non-native ornamental hedgerow



H6

Bat trees



BT1



BT2

Appendix 7: Trees with Bat Roost Potential



Appendix 8: Waterbody Location Plan



Appendix 9: Recommended Planting Lists

Table A9.1 Plant species of known benefit to wildlife

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Benefits |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Shrubs | | |
| Barberry * | <i>Berberis spp.</i> | Nectar, fruit, nesting cover |
| Blackthorn | <i>Prunus spinosa</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Broom | <i>Cystisus scoparius</i> | Nectar, larval foodplant |
| Buckthorn # | <i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> | Nectar, berries, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Butterfly bush* | <i>Buddleja davidii</i> | Nectar, nesting cover |
| Californian lilac* | <i>Ceanothus spp.</i> | Nectar, nesting cover |
| Cherry laurel*# | <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> | Nectar (including extra-floral nectaries) |
| Dog Rose | <i>Rosa canina agg.</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Dogwood | <i>Cornus sanguinea</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant |
| Elder | <i>Sambucus nigra</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Field rose | <i>Rosa arvensis</i> | Nectar, larval foodplant, fruit |
| Firethorn* | <i>Pyracantha spp.</i> | Nectar, fruit, nesting cover |
| Flowering currant * | <i>Ribes sanguineum</i> | Nectar, larval foodplant |
| Garden lavender* | <i>Lavandula x intermedia</i> | Nectar |
| Gorse | <i>Ulex europaeus</i> | Nectar, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Guelder rose | <i>Viburnum opulus</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant |
| Hawthorn | <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Hazel | <i>Corylus avellana</i> | Nuts, larval foodplant |
| Hebe * | <i>Hebe spp.</i> | Nectar |
| Holly | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Laurustinus* | <i>Viburnum tinus</i> | Nectar, nesting cover |
| Mexican orange * | <i>Choisya ternata</i> | Nectar |
| Portuguese laurel * | <i>Prunus lusitanica</i> | Nectar, fruit, nesting cover |
| Rosemary * | <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> | Nectar |
| Spindle # | <i>Euonymus europaeus</i> | Nectar, fruits |
| Tutsan | <i>Hypericum androsaemum</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant |
| Wayfaring tree | <i>Viburnum lantana</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant |
| Yew# | <i>Taxus baccata</i> | Berries, nesting cover |
| Climbers | | |
| Clematis* | <i>Clematis tangutica</i> | Nectar, seeds |
| Honeysuckle | <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Ivy | <i>Herdera helix</i> | Nectar, fruit, larval foodplant, nesting cover |
| Traveller's joy | <i>Clematis vitalba</i> | Nectar, seeds, larval foodplant |

Table A9.2 Plant species of known benefit to hazel dormice

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Flower Nourishment* | Insect Plant Food | Seeds and Fruits** | Three-dimensional Structure | Further Information |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Time of year | | Apr - May | Jun - Aug | Sep - Nov | n/a | |
| Trees and Shrubs | | | | | | |
| Ash | <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> | | | Y | Y | |
| Birch sp. | <i>Betula sp.</i> | | | Y | | No competition with Squirrels for seeds |
| Blackthorn | <i>Prunus spinosa</i> | | Y | | Y | |
| Cherry | <i>Prunus sp.</i> | Y | | | | |
| Crab Apple | <i>Malus sylvestris</i> | Y | | | | |
| Dog Rose | <i>Rosa canina agg.</i> | Y | Y | Y | Y | |
| Dogwood | <i>Cornus sanguinea</i> | Y | Y | Y | | |
| Elder | <i>Sambucus nigra</i> | Y | | | | |
| Field Rose | <i>Rosa arvensis</i> | Y | Y | Y | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------|----------|---|
| Gorse | <i>Ulex europaeus</i> | Y | Y | | Y | |
| Guelder Rose | <i>Viburnum opulus</i> | Y | Y | Y | | |
| Hawthorn | <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> | Y (whole) | | Y | Y | Key species: Flowers early |
| Hazel | <i>Corylus avellana</i> | Y | Y (2) | Y** | Y | Key species: Provides nuts with high fat content |
| Holly | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> | Y | Y | Y | Y | |
| Hornbeam | <i>Carpinus betulus</i> | | | Y | Y | No competition with Squirrels for seeds |
| Oak | <i>Quercus sp.</i> | Y | Y (1) | | Y | Key species: Highest insect biomass |
| Rowan | <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> | | | Y | | |
| Sweet Chestnut | <i>Castanea sativa</i> | Y | | Y** | Y | |
| Wayfaring | <i>Viburnum lantana</i> | Y | | | | |
| Willow sp. | <i>Salix sp.</i> | | | Y | Y | |
| Yew | <i>Taxus baccata</i> | | | Y** | Y | |
| Climbers | | | | | | |
| Bramble | <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> | Y | | Y | Y | Key species: Provides flowers & fruits at times when others are sparse |
| Honeysuckle | <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> | Y | Y | Y | Y | Key Species: Provides nesting material |
| Ivy | <i>Herdera helix</i> | Y | Y | | Y | |

Table A9.3 Plant species of known benefit to bats

| Plant species | Common name | Extensive green roofs | Living walls | Rain gardens | Hedge/ trees | Beds/ borders |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>Acer campestre</i> | Field maple | | | | Y | |
| <i>Achillea millefolium</i> | Yarrow | | | | Y | |
| <i>Ajuga reptans</i> | Bugle | Y | | Y | | |
| <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> | Kidney vetch | Y | | | | |
| <i>Betula pendula</i> | Sliver birch | | | | Y | |
| <i>Cardamine pratensis</i> | Cuckoo- flower | | | Y | | Y |
| <i>Carpinus betulus</i> | Hornbeam | | | | Y | |
| <i>Centaurea nigra</i> | Common knapweed | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Clematis vitalba</i> | Old man's Beard | | | | Y | |
| <i>Corylus avellana</i> | Hazel | | Y | | Y | |
| <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> | Hawthorn | | | | Y | |
| <i>Daucus carota</i> | Wild carrot | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Dianthus spp.</i> | Pinks | Y | Y | | | Y |
| <i>Digitalis purpurea</i> | Foxglove | | | | Y | Y |
| <i>Erica cinera</i> | Bell heather | | | | | Y |
| <i>Eupatorium</i> | Hemp agrimony | | | Y | | Y |
| <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> | Beech | | | | Y | |
| <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> | Common Ash | | | | Y | |
| <i>Hedera Helix</i> | Ivy | | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> | Bluebell | | Y | | Y | Y |
| <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> | Holly | | | | Y | |
| <i>Linaria vulgaris</i> | Toadflax | Y | | | | Y |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> | Honeysuckle | | Y | | Y | |
| <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> | Bird's foot trefoil | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Myosotis spp.</i> | Forget me not species | Y | Y | | | Y |
| <i>Origanum vulgare</i> | Marjoram | | | | Y | |
| <i>Populus alba</i> | White poplar | | | | Y | |
| <i>Primula veris</i> | Cowslip | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Primula vulgaris</i> | Primrose | Y | Y | | Y | Y |
| <i>Prunus avium</i> | Wild cherry | | | | Y | Y |
| <i>Prunus spinosa</i> | Blackthorn | | | | Y | |
| <i>Quercus petraea</i> | Sessile oak | | | | Y | |
| <i>Quercus robur</i> | Common oak | | | | Y | |
| <i>Rosa canina</i> | Dog rose | | | Y | Y | Y |
| <i>Salix spp.</i> | Willow species | | | Y | Y | |
| <i>Sambucus nigra</i> | Elder | | | | Y | |
| <i>Saponaria officinalis</i> | Soapwort | | | | | Y |
| <i>Saxifraga oppositifolia</i> | saxifage | Y | Y | | | Y |
| <i>Scabiosa columbaria</i> | small scabious | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Silene dioecia</i> | Red campion | | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> | Rowan | | | | Y | |
| <i>Thymus serpyllum</i> | Creeping thyme | Y | Y | | | Y |
| <i>Trifolium spp.</i> | Clover species | Y | | | | Y |
| <i>Valerina spp.</i> | Valerian species | | | Y | | Y |
| <i>Verbascum spp.</i> | Mulliens | | | | | Y |
| <i>Viburnum lantana</i> | Wayfaring tree | | | | Y | Y |
| <i>Viburnum opulus</i> | Guelder rose | | | Y | Y | |
| <i>Viola tricolor</i> | Pansy | Y | Y | | | Y |