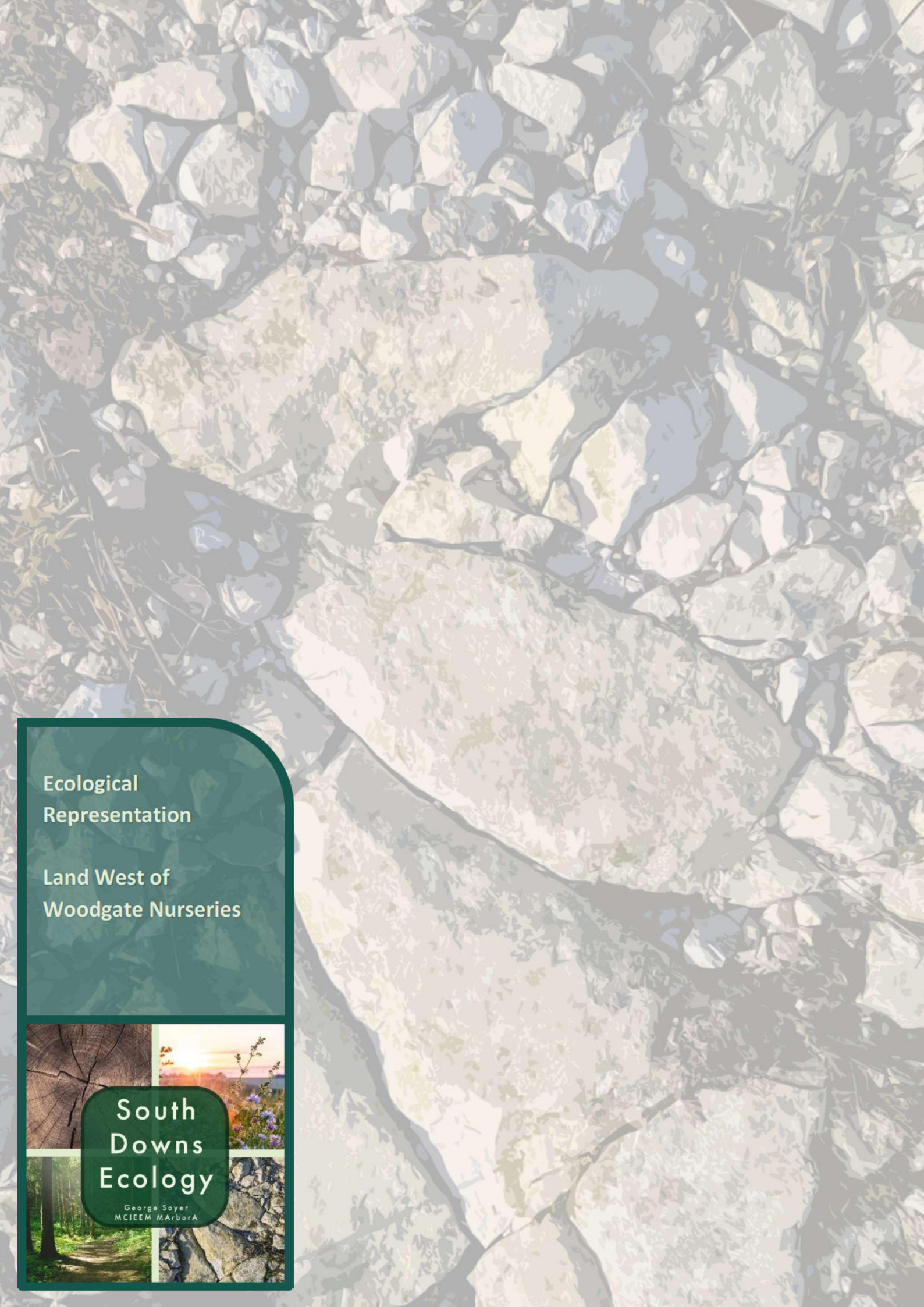
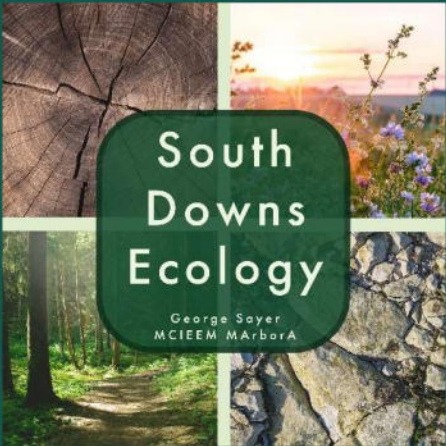




Ecological Representation

Land West of
Woodgate Nurseries



South
Downs
Ecology

George Sayer
MCIEEM Member

Ecological Representation

Land West of Woodgate Nurseries

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report serves as an Ecological Representation and summary regarding ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the draft proposals for development of Land West of Woodgate Nurseries, Lidsey Road, Woodgate, West Sussex, which falls within the administrative district of Arun District Council. It is intended to inform a pre-application screening to Arun District Council.
- 1.2 The information discussed within this letter includes the results of a desk-based study, including the gathering of biological information from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal conducted by The Ecology Co-operation Ltd on 12th August 2020, an update site visit conducted by South Downs Ecology on 10th October 2025, and protected species surveys undertaken during 2021 and 2025 by The Ecology Co-operation Ltd. Surveys were undertaken for Badger, bats, breeding birds, hazel dormice, great crested newts and reptiles. The walkover update and this summary have been produced by George Sayer MCIEEM MArborA, Principal Ecologist and Arboriculturalist of South Downs Ecology, who has ten years of full-time ecological expertise.
- 1.3 This summary details the walkover update of the site and is intended to advise of any changes to either the site or the planning, arboriculture and ecology context of the proposals.

2.0 Site Description and Context

- 2.1 The site (central grid reference: SU 9340 0374) comprises arable land, small patches of bramble scrub, an unsealed track, small areas of developed land, hedges and ditches. The site covers approximately 10.9 hectares (ha) of land to the south-western edge of the village of Woodgate.
- 2.2 The wider landscape is characterised by rural villages, towns, farmland and woodland parcels. The A29 is 2.7 kilometres (km) west and Bognor Regis is approximately 4.6km south-west of the site. The site is bounded by the railway line to the north, consented housing sites to the east, the de-commissioned Lidsey Landfill to the west and the landfill access road to the south.

Figure 1 – Illustrative Masterplan. Davies Landscape Architects Drawing:



3.0 Designated Sites

- 3.1 Designated sites information is included below so that the site can be considered within the ecological context of the surrounding area, guiding decisions related to habitat change and protected species.
- 3.2 All international and national statutory designated sites within their respective boundaries are detailed in Table 1. These sites are legally protected by UK and International legislation for their biodiversity value.
- 3.3 Relevant Zones of Influence (Zoi) of designated sites have been determined as follows:
- International (SPA, SAC, Ramsar): 12.0 km from site
 - National (SSSI, LNR, NNR): 2.0 km from site
 - Local (SNCI/LWS): 1.0 km from site

Site Name	Reason for designation	Approximate distance from site
The Brooks (Bersted Brooks) LNR	Wide areas of meadow, narrow reedbeds and ditches, permanent and temporary ponds, and an extensive newly planted floodplain woodland. The Brooks floods every winter, making it a good place for wetland wildlife.	1.6 km S
Pagham Harbour Ramsar, SPA (also LNR, SSSI)	The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive by supporting wintering ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> (10% of the British wintering population) and breeding populations of little tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i> and common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> . The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive as it supports in winter dark-bellied brent geese <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (2% of the European wintering population). The site also supports nationally important wintering populations of pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> , grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> and black-tailed godwits <i>Limosa limosa</i> .	7.8 km SW
Duncton to Bignor Escarpment SAC	The site is an example of mature beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> woodland located on the steep scarp face of the South Downs. The site has developed over chalk which is overlain in places by a clay-with-flints capping. Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 9130 <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests	9.6 km NE
Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar, SPA (also Chichester Harbour SSSI)	A large, sheltered estuarine habitat comprising extensive mudflats, saltmarsh, and support a number of priority and migratory breeding birds, invertebrates and flora.	9.8 km W
Solent Maritime SAC	Supports priority Annex 1 habitats including tidal mudflats and estuaries. The only site for smooth cordgrass (<i>Spartina alterniflora</i>) in the UK	9.8 km W
Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC	Disused railway tunnels providing significant roost and hibernation features, particularly for Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i> and Bechstein's Bats <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> .	11.7 km NW

Table 1. A list of international statutory designated sites within 12km of the site.

- 3.4 There are no non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the site.
- 3.5 The proposals are distant from any designated sites and direct impacts would be highly unlikely. The sites are sufficiently distant that any indirect impacts would also be negligible. The site lies outside any nutrient or recreational impact zones.
- 3.6 The site lies just within 12.0 km of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC. The Policy determined between the South Downs National Park Authority (within whose jurisdiction the SAC lies) and Natural England is that, within 12.0 km of the SAC, any significant impacts upon bats and severance of flightlines must be considered in the context of potential impacts upon the designated site, and requiring assessment under the Habitats Regulations.

4.0 Habitats

- 4.1 Habitats within the site are as follows. A Site Habitat Plan is set out in Appendix 1 of this report:

Habitat Type	UKHab Code	Area (Ha) / Length	Priority Habitat Y/N	Description
Arable	c1	10.192	N	Arable fields across the site.
Modified grassland	g4	0.177	N	Strips of modified grassland along the field boundaries. The grassland is species-poor and mown, dominated by perennial rye-grass <i>Lolium perenne</i> with occasional cocks-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> , ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> and daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i> .
Bramble scrub	h3d	0.029	N	Comprises patches of bramble scrub <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> in the centre-eastern section of the site.
Native hedgerow with trees	h2a6	0.17 0.68 0.14 0.13	Y	Intact species-rich hedgerows along the field boundaries across the site. The hedgerows comprised hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> , hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> and pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i> . Some hedges are lined with ditches.
Ditches	r1g (50)	0.68 0.14	N	Run along the road boundary east-west and along the boundary to the west of the site.
Developed land, sealed surface	u1b	0.017	N	Small hardstanding.
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	U1c	0.146	N	Unsurfaced track accessing the site.

5.0 Protected / Notable Species

Surveys Undertaken

5.1 The following surveys were undertaken at the site:

Species	Surveys Undertaken	Season Undertaken
Bats (tree roosting)	Ground-based inspection of trees in hedgerows for Potential Roost Features (PRFs).	Throughout surveys, last updated 10 October 2025.
Bats (foraging and commuting)	Nocturnal walked transects along hedgerows and linear features from sunset to c. 2 hours post-sunset. 3 static detectors deployed for a minimum of 5 nights each.	29 Apr 2025, 16 Jul 2025, 30 Sep 2025. Static Monitoring at each survey season (April, July, September) 2025.
Reptiles	Presence/likely-absence refugia survey using artificial refuges (roofing-felt mats) placed at c. 20 m spacing along suitable field margins and hedgerows.	July-August 2024.
Dormice	Nest-tube survey with 50 tubes set at c. 20 m spacing along suitable hedgerows and scrub, following Dormouse Conservation Handbook.	Surveys April-September 2021 and 2024.
Great Crested Newts	Desk-based pond/ditch search within 500 m; Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment for potential breeding ditches; targeted eDNA sampling of 3 waterbodies.	3 waterbodies sampled in 2021 and 1 re-sampled in 2024.
Breeding Birds	Territory-mapping style transect adapted from RSK Biocensus/Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group guidance: 6 visits between late March–early July, mainly dawn–mid-morning with one evening visit.	17 Apr, 30 Apr, 14 May, 28 May, 20 Jun, 3 Jul 2025.
Wintering Birds	Winter walk-transect surveys following RSPB Bird Monitoring Methods (Gilbert et al. 2002).	Winter walk-transect surveys in November 2023 – February 2024.

5.2 The following considerations for protected and notable species were observed:

Species	Suitable Habitat(s)	Records from Local Area - SxBRC	Notes
Bats (roosting)	None on-site	TBC	No buildings are present on-site. No trees offer any significant bat roost suitability.
Bats (foraging and commuting)	Boundary vegetation	TBC	The bat activity surveys revealed at least 8 species using the boundaries of the site (common, soprano, and Nathusius' pipistrelle, serotine, Nyctalus sp., serotine, long-eared sp., barbastelle and Myotis sp. Activity was moderate with mostly common and soprano pipistrelle, and in particular around May and September. Rarer species of barbastelle was recorded but only infrequently.
Reptiles	Margins	TBC	Reptile surveys on the site confirms it supports a good population of slow-worms and a low population of common lizard.
Dormice	Boundary scrub and hedges	TBC	Surveys of the site did not record dormice, however a dormouse nest was located in an area just north-east of the site with good connectivity. As such dormice are considered to be present in suitable connected habitats.
Great Crested Newts	Margins and Ditches	TBC	8 waterbodies were identified within 500.0m, only 3 ditches from these were considered connected or sufficiently suitable; eDNA analysis in 2021 and 2024 all returned negative results.
Breeding Birds	Margins and Arable Land	TBC	23 species of bird were recorded during the surveys; of these, 4 species are 'red' listed under the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) and 4 are 'amber' listed. The following species recorded during the survey are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006): dunnoek <i>Prunella modularis</i> and linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i> .
Wintering Birds	Margins and Arable Land	TBC	19 species of bird were recorded during the survey; of these, 3 species are 'red' listed under the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) and 7 are 'amber' listed. The following species recorded during the survey are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006): herring gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> .

6.0 Constraints and Opportunities

Designated Sites

- 6.1 The proposals are distant from any designated sites and direct impacts would be highly unlikely. The sites are sufficiently distant that any indirect impacts would also be negligible. The only exception is the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC; however, the proposals do not significantly impact boundary vegetation to the extent that any impacts would occur. It is considered possible to scope out any likely significant effect on the site.

Priority Habitats

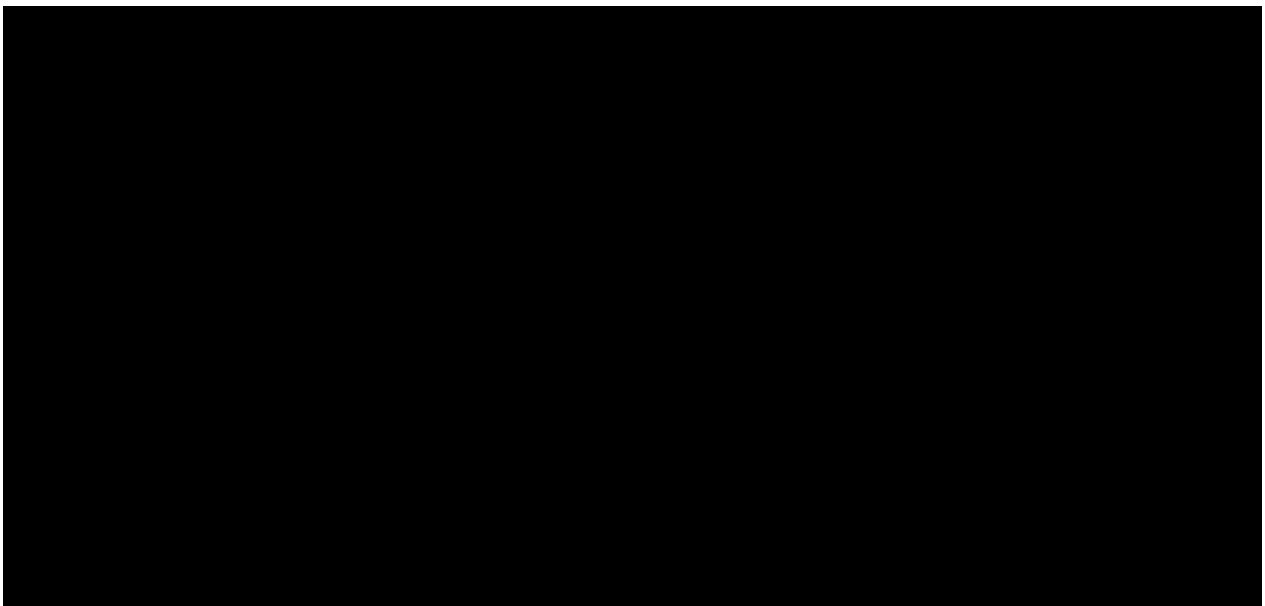
- 6.2 Hedgerows are present to the boundaries, which would constitute Priority Habitats. The hedgerows will be retained and protected during the proposals, and new native hedgerows planted to achieve a significant gain and improvement to connectivity.

Bats - Roosting

- 6.3 It is highly unlikely that any bats roost on-site.

Bats – Foraging and Commuting

- 6.4 The boundaries of the site are used by a range of species, including barbastelle bats. To ensure the integrity of the commuting and foraging features is retained, boundary vegetation will be retained and protected during construction and ultimately enhanced with reinforcement marginal scrub and neutral grassland planting. This intends to form a continuous ring of vegetation throughout the western, northern and southern boundaries, strengthening existing commuting routes and providing more habitat for invertebrate prey items. New bioswales might also increase the foraging resource.
- 6.5 Any external lighting shall be the minimum necessary and shall accord with the principles enshrined within the BCT/ILP Guidance Note 08/23. A detailed lighting design shall ultimately be provided to ensure that significant lightspill onto boundary vegetation would not occur.



Dormice

- 6.8 Surveys suggest that dormice inhabit the surrounding vegetation, and as such they are likely present in the site boundary vegetation. Any works which disturb or remove this vegetation is likely to require a Natural England Mitigation Licence.
- 6.9 The highway access requires the cutting-through of two sections of hedge, each of between 12-15.0m width. As a precaution, it is recommended that a Natural England Mitigation Licence be obtained for these works, and the works proceed under full licenced supervision with measures as required by Natural England. The wider connectivity for dormice is unlikely to be significantly altered and broader mitigation is unlikely to be necessary, given the quantum of hedge planting proposed on-site.
- 6.10 No hedges are proposed for removal although a small access way through a central hedge (H3 on the Habitat Plan) is proposed to enable a footbridge. Should the removal be less than 5 linear metres, this would be possible without a Mitigation Licence, subject to the completion of works under the direct supervision of a dormouse-licenced ecologist. Such works would involve initial nest and nut checks, manual removal of vegetation to c.150mm height, then manual digging of roots and stumps between April-October (to avoid the risk of harming hibernating dormice).
- 6.11 Areas of scrub not connected to the boundary can be cleared without licence, as the likelihood of dormice being present is very low. Such work should be supervised by an ecologist who will inspect for any evidence of dormice. Works shall cease should any such evidence be found until a licence can be obtained.
- 6.12 There is likely to be a minor increase in cat predation due to an increase in the residential population on-site. Thorny scrub planting (blackthorn and buckthorn) will be used to buffer the hedgerows and scrub areas to minimise this impact.
- 6.13 New hedgerow planting and reinforcement scrub to the margins will significantly increase the dormouse potential of the site.

Great Crested Newts

- 6.14 Great crested newts are likely absent from the site. No precautions above those below for reptiles are necessary. Should a GCN be found at any time works must cease until an appropriate course of action is determined.

Reptiles

- 6.15 Populations of both common lizards and slow worms were found on the site. These were generally concentrated around discrete, limited areas of the margins, including along the edge of the existing farm track.
- 6.16 Given the locations of reptiles and the relative population sizes, a site-wide translocation is not considered necessary. Instead, discrete areas of highest impact (i.e. along the farm track) where habitats will not be retained will be subject to translocation. The reptiles will be translocated into marginal habitats specifically designated and enhanced prior to works for this purpose. Following this, habitat manipulation will be undertaken to encourage any other individual/incidental reptiles into the margins. A cut-and-chase approach of undertaking first a high pass cut, followed by a low cut 24 hours later will be adopted, with areas of interest then subject to a supervised destructive search for reptiles when these areas of the site are cleared.
- 6.17 Temporary protective reptile fencing would likely be a necessity to ensure reptiles do not enter the construction areas and would also serve to protect the buffer areas. This could align with tree and hedge protective fencing.

Breeding Birds

- 6.18 Breeding birds on the site consist of relatively common species. Extremely minor scrub removal is necessary which has the potential to disturb nests. Appropriate timing of works would avoid the risk of disturbance, and tree protection measures would protect further nests in trees and hedges.
- 6.19 There is no meaningful risk of disturbance of ground-nesting birds, but grassland clearance should as a precaution be preceded by a walkover check to ensure this situation has not changed.
- 6.20 The only red-listed bird which might suffer from loss of agricultural land is the linnet; however, creation of significant new neutral grasslands with hedges would more than compensate for this.

Wintering Birds

- 6.21 The changes to the site would not have a significant impact on wintering birds, other than the red-listed herring gull which has a preference for arable land over grasslands. The addition of bioswales which would likely be wet for much of the year (given the local hydrology) would more than compensate for any such losses.

7.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.1 A high-level Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been undertaken of the site. The baseline consists largely of arable land. This would be removed as would a small bramble scrub patch, areas of developed land. The mixed scrub would be retained and enhanced, and all trees would be retained. Two areas of grassland are being created as part of drainage for adjacent developments (outside of this application). For the purposes of this application, as these are previously-approved, the baselines here are shown as poor modified grassland, being retained (as this will be the final likely habitat). The habitats could equally be shown as retained arable land, or arable land converted to grassland, with little influence on the metric results.
- 7.2 The proposals would include mixed scrub creation to the boundaries; enhancement of marginal grassland to a neutral grassland with in-seeding of hedgerow wildflower; seeding of large swathes of the margins with neutral grassland seed mixes; planting of a large number of individual trees and creation of bioswales. Alongside this is the creation of moderate-condition modified grassland to some communal areas, vegetated garden and introduced shrub in private and communal areas. The assessment indicates that a gain of 10-15% would be achievable within the site area.
- 7.3 The site contains long lengths of hedgerows, some of which are associated in BNG-terms with ditches and others where the ditches are sufficiently-permanent to be separate features. Small sections of hedge and treeline would be removed to enable the highway access. Providing 0.23 km of new species-rich native hedgerow planting would be sufficient to achieve the 10% gain and is considered easily achievable.
- 7.4 One central ditch would be enhanced to moderate condition by means of new seeding and planting; the long western ditch would remain in poor condition but have its encroachment reduced by means of removing of damaging agricultural practices from the riparian zone. It is also cautiously assumed that up to 0.04 km of ditch would be lost to culverting. Overall the above enhancements would allow a gain of approximately 15% to watercourse units.
- 7.5 Overall, it is determined that a fully-compliant BNG is possible within the redline site boundary, which exceeds the minimum requirements in all habitat categories. The proposals would require a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan to detail how creation and management would occur. Having assessed the Arun Guidance: Securing Significant On-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from developments (2025), the on-site enhancements might require legally-securing through a Section 106 agreement, but this would be subject to discussion with the LPA ecologist.
- 7.6 The proposals will include a range of other enhancements, including reptile hibernacula, log piles, bird and bat boxes to existing trees and integrated bird and bat features to new dwellings, including swift bricks/integrated boxes.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 This ecological representation determines that a development scheme would be feasible on this site in line with the illustrative masterplan, and would accord with the relevant legislation, local and national policy.
- 8.2 Moreover, our initial assessment of these indicative proposals, demonstrates that the scheme would be able to deliver in the range of 10-15% on site BNG. This would meet the prescribed requirements in legislation and exceed policy requirements in the current 2018 Local Plan (Policy ENV DM5).

9.0 Appendix 1 – Site Habitat Plan

