

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
WALDESLADE ROUND WOOD SITE
WALDESLADE WOODS, BOXLEY, KENT

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AMENDED

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- S.1 An ecological appraisal of land at Walderslade Woods was undertaken, in order to update a previous assessment undertaken in 2012 by Lloyd Bore Ltd.
- S.2 Proposals involve the redevelopment of the site to provide 12 residential units.
- S.3 Two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) lie within 6km of the site. However, due to the distance (1.2km at nearest point) and the limited scope and size of the proposed development, it is not anticipated that a significant adverse impact is likely.
- S.4 The habitat within the site has not been recently managed, and as such rough poor quality semi-improved grassland, ruderal vegetation and bramble scrub are encroaching on the site. These habitats were not apparent during the 2012 assessment, when the grassland had been managed as amenity grassland.
- S.5 Surveys for reptiles were conducted between 20th July and 7th August 2015. Slow worm are present within land at Walderslade Woods. See associated report for further details and survey results.
- S.6 Surveys for hazel dormice were conducted on the 24th July and 22nd August 2015. Hazel dormice are present within land at Walderslade Woods. See associated report for further details and survey results.
- S.7 The vegetation within the periphery of the site and surrounding area provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are recommended.
- S.8 Nesting habitat should ideally be removed during the period October to February (inclusive) to avoid the bird nesting season. Alternatively, if this is not possible, a check for any nesting birds should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to works. Any active nests will need to be left in situ until birds have stopped using them.
- S.9 Habitat removal should not commence until a European Protected Species Mitigation licence for hazel dormice has been granted. The precise works, timing of works and other measures will be included in a dormouse mitigation document that will form part of the EPSM licence.
- S.10 Based upon drawing number 07.10.02 'the Proposed Site Plan', those trees that are likely to be removed to facilitate works were assessed for bat potential. No significant features of bat potential were noted on the majority of the trees.
- S.11 Other protected species are unlikely to occur on site and no additional survey work is recommended.
- S.12 This report contains further details of ecological avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measurements. Therefore, the details of this report should be read in full.

1. INTRODUCTION

INSTRUCTION

- 1.1. Lloyd Bore Ltd was instructed by Henry Clark of Kent County Council on 27th April 2015 to undertake an ecological appraisal of land at Walderslade Round Wood, Walderslade Woods, Boxely, Kent, (approximate centre: TQ796616).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2. The proposals will redevelop the site to provide 12 residential units.
- 1.3. The survey site extends to approximately 0.3226 hectares (ha).
- 1.4. The development will fund a 25 year management plan for the surrounding woodland.

SCOPE OF WORKS

- 1.5. The instruction included a site visit, biological records search and ecological appraisal report.
- 1.6. This report updates the existing ecological scoping report undertaken by Lloyd Bore Ltd in October 2012 (Lloyd Bore Ltd, 2012).
- 1.7. The scope of works did not include any specific protected species surveys or associated reports.
- 1.8. Further protected species surveys have been recommended within this assessment. Both the reptile and hazel dormouse further survey works have been conducted. Therefore, this report is considered suitable for submission to the Local Planning Authority following the issue of guidance by CIEEM and is in keeping with the principles of BS 42020. This report has therefore been described as an ecological appraisal.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

- 1.9. The objectives of the survey and report are to:
- Record the existing habitats on site;
 - Identify habitats and/or structures that have potential to support legally protected species;
 - Make recommendations, if required, for further protected species surveys, avoidance measures, mitigation or, if necessary, compensation measures;
 - Determine the ecological value of the site where it is possible to do so; and
 - Identify potential enhancement measures that could improve the ecological value of the site for notable habitats and species.

2. SITE LOCATION PLAN

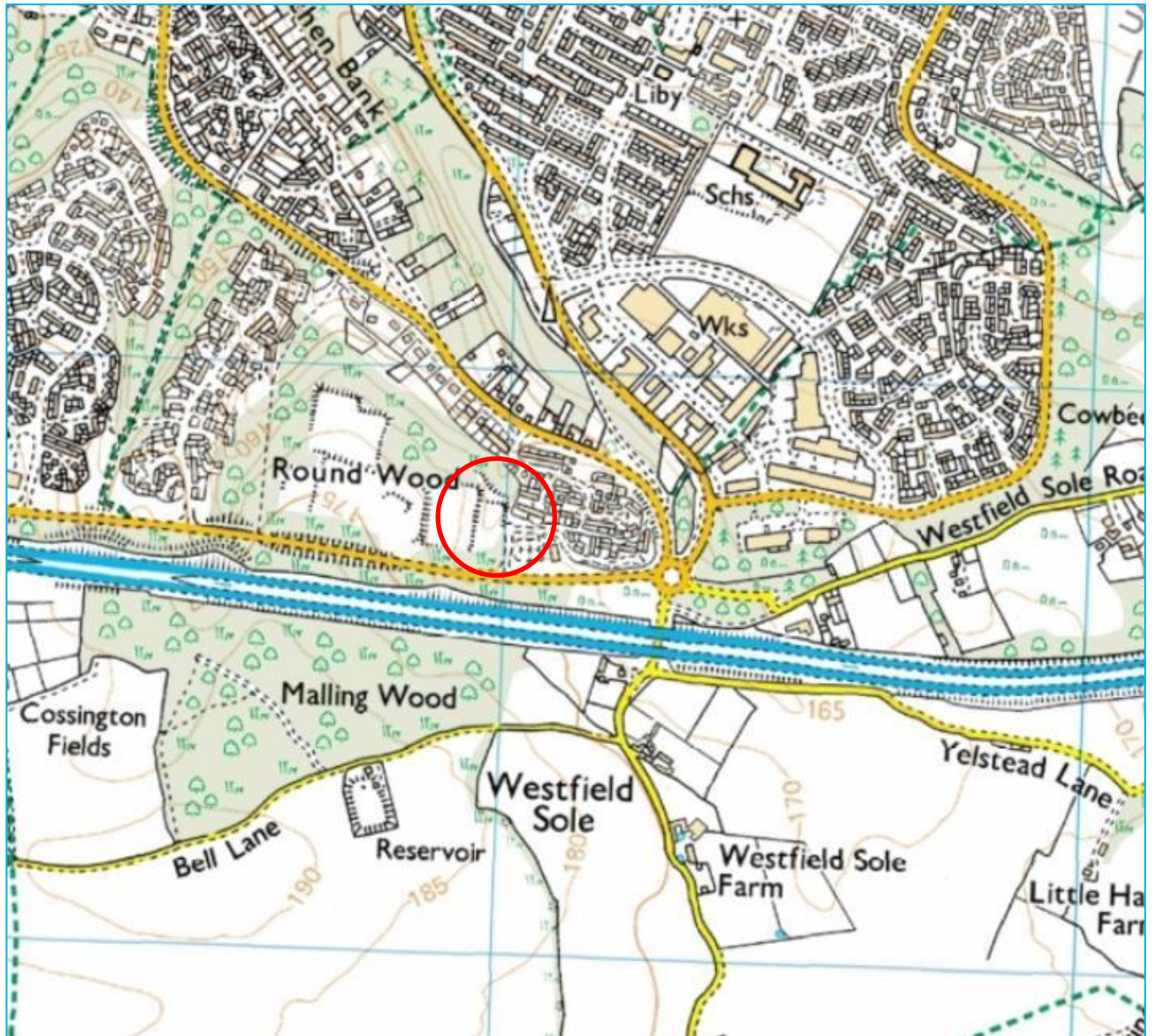


Fig. 1: Site location plan. Reproduced from (OS explorer 148, 1:25,000) by permission of Ordnance Survey. © Crown Copyright (2008), All rights reserved. AR 100029570.

3. RED LINE BOUNDARY OF SITE

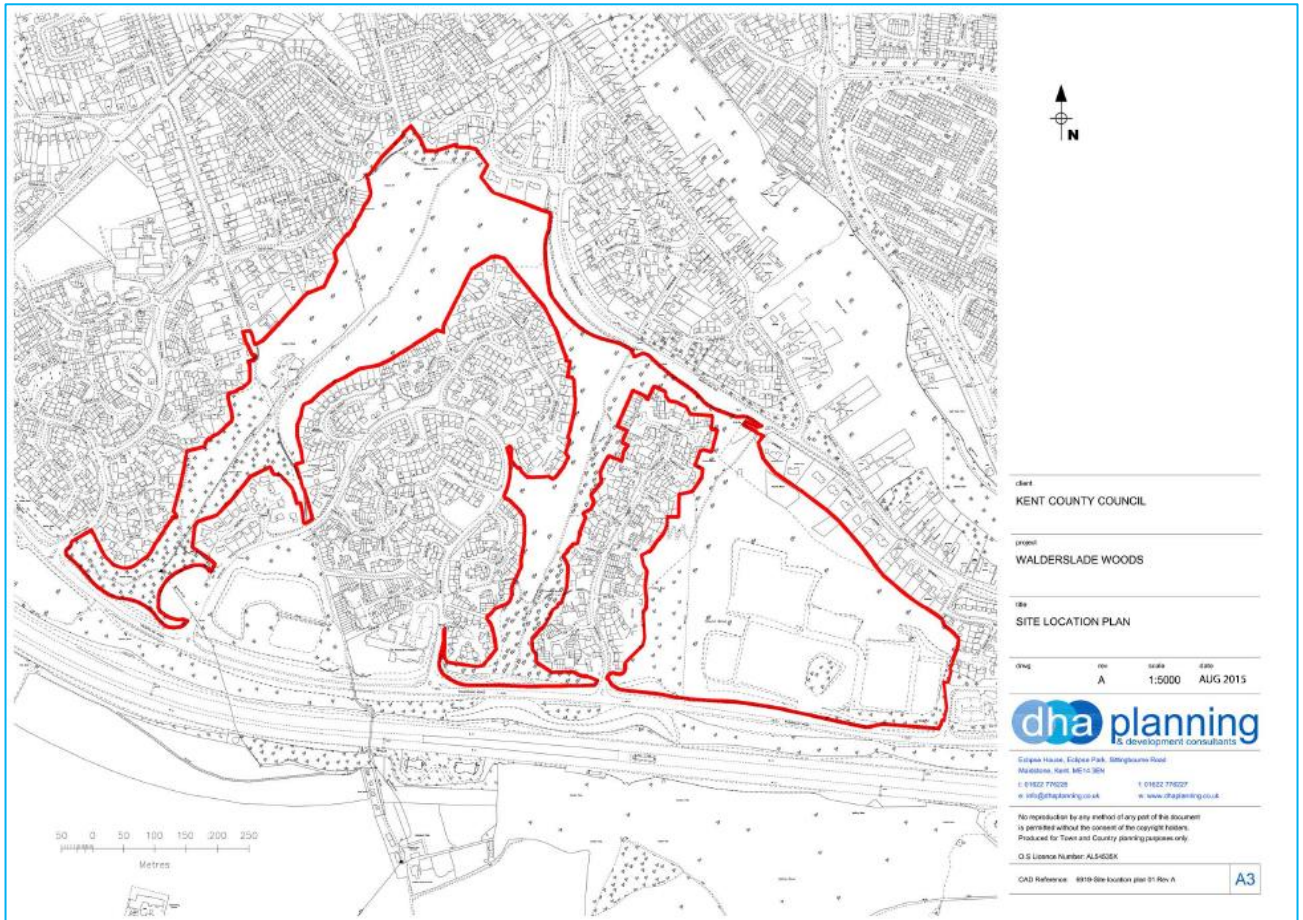


Fig. 2: Red line boundary of the site to include adjacent woodland habitats. The survey area comprises the plot present in the south-east corner (drawing 'DHA Planning Walderslade Woods Site Location Plan Revision A' dated August 2015').

4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

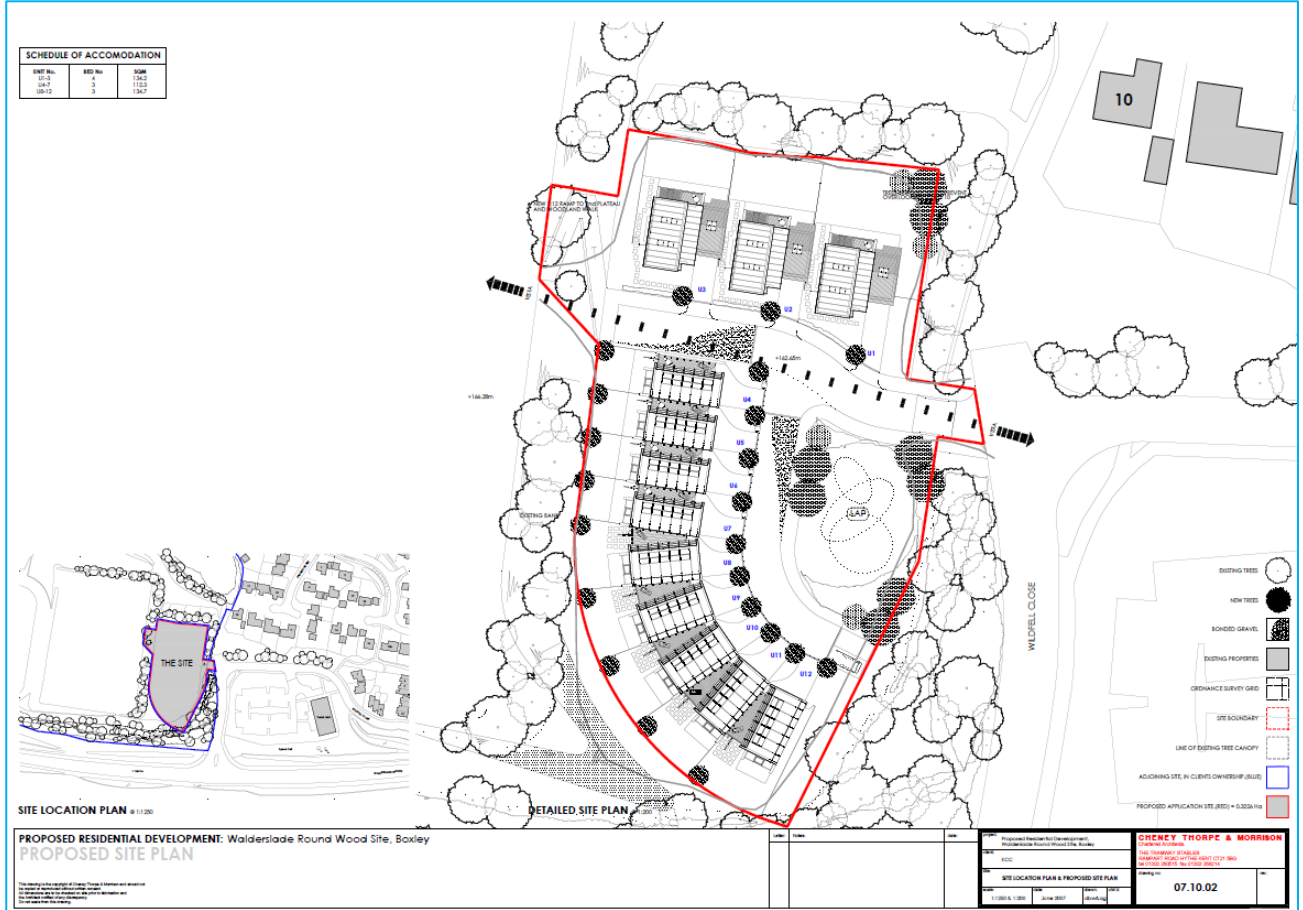


Fig. 3: Site location and proposed site plan (Drawing Cheney Thorpe & Morrison Site Location Plan & Proposed Site Plan 07.10.02' dated June 2007).

5. HABITAT PLAN

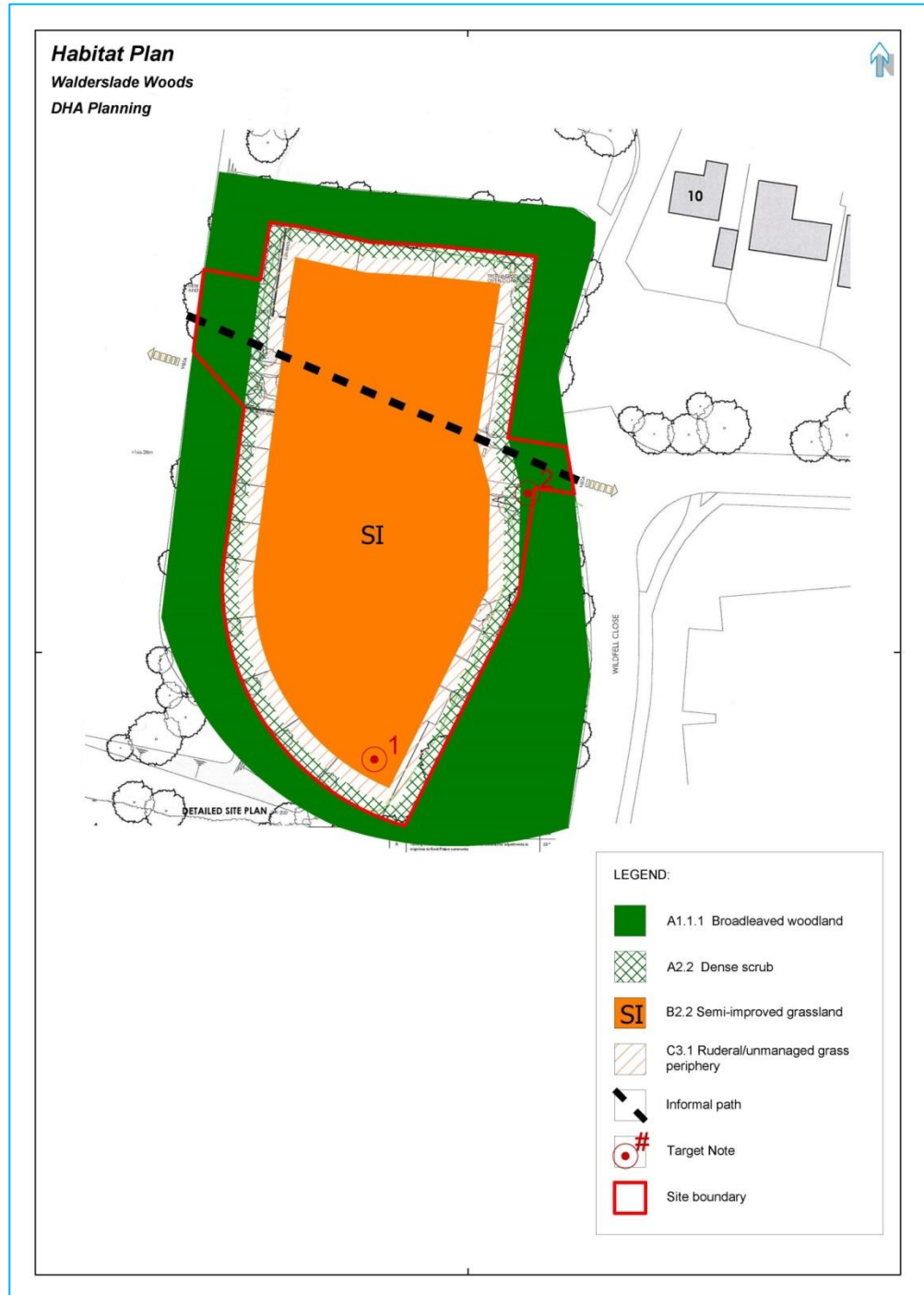


Fig. 4: Habitat plan (see Appendix 2 for larger image).

6. METHOD

SURVEY DETAILS

Survey:	6th May 2015
Surveyor (s):	Kate Baldock BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM
Weather:	Dry, still, overcast.

SURVEY METHOD

- 6.1. The survey comprised a site walkover and ecological assessment of habitats. Vegetation was classified according to the standardised habitat descriptions (JNCC 2003; 2010).
- 6.2. The survey included an assessment of the potential of the site to support legally protected species. ARG UK (2010) and Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2012) have been used to assess the risk of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and bat roosts being present.
- 6.3. Any evidence or known occurrence of invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), for example Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), were noted.

DESK STUDY

- 6.4. A data search was undertaken in April 2015 by the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) of land within 1km of the site. A 5km search radius was used for records of bats.
- 6.5. The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was used to obtain information about statutory designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR), within 1km of the survey site.
- 6.6. The search radius was extended to 6km when examining potential effects on International level designated sites.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- 6.7. The assessment has been conducted in accordance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal guidelines (CIEEM, 2013). The report broadly follows the CIEEM 2015 report guidance.
- 6.8. Where possible, the evaluation of ecological features has followed industry standard guidelines (IEEM, 2006).
- 6.9. Habitat criteria listed in best practice guidelines for individual species or species groups, such as Oldham *et al.* (2000), ARG (2010), Bright *et al.* (2006) and BCT (2012), have been used to assess the suitability of habitats to support protected and/or notable species.
- 6.10. Where best practice guidelines are unavailable or unclear, experienced ecologists have used their judgement to categorise the suitability of habitats to support protected or notable species.
- 6.11. The need and scope for further protected species surveys has been determined on the basis of the suitability of the habitats to support protected species, the potential impacts of the proposed development and the nature of the legal protection afforded to the species most likely to be present.
- 6.12. Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 has been used to identify habitats and species considered to be of conservation priority on a national scale. These are

also called Habitats or Species of Principal Importance. The value of these habitats and species are recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and may be a material consideration in planning.

- 6.13. County and local biodiversity action plans (BAPs), as well as county Red lists, have been used to identify species and habitats that are likely to be of conservation priority at a local level.
- 6.14. Although it does not offer any legal protection, The Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (2009) provides guidance on the conservation status of UK bird species. Thus it can be used to inform judgements on the ecological value of bird populations and the habitats that they rely on, particularly at a local level. Red status species are those species of highest conservation concern and green status species are those of low or no conservation concern. Amber status species are those species of some conservation concern.
- 6.15. A summary of relevant wildlife legislation and national planning policies can be found in Appendix 1.

ZONE OF INFLUENCE

- 6.16. The potential impact of a development is not always limited to the boundaries of the site concerned. A development may also have the potential to impact on ecologically valuable sites, habitats or species beyond the site boundaries. The area over which a development may impact ecologically valuable receptors is known as the Zone of Influence (ZoI).
- 6.17. The ZoI is determined by the source/type of impact, a potential pathway for that impact and the location and sensitivity of the ecologically valuable receptor beyond the boundary.
- 6.18. The majority of the direct and indirect impacts associated with the proposed development are likely to be limited to the red line boundary of the site and areas just beyond.

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

- 6.19. The ecological appraisal provides an initial view of the likelihood of protected and notable species occurring on site. This is based on the suitability of the habitat, any previous surveys of the site and any direct evidence of presence. The initial survey does not constitute a full and definite survey of any protected species group and is only valid at the time the survey was undertaken.
- 6.20. The survey and ecological appraisal are considered to provide a robust assessment of the site's ecological conditions and therefore suitable to fulfil the aims of the report.

7. SURVEY RESULTS

DESIGNATED SITES

Statutory protected sites

- 7.1. There are two statutory designated sites of International Importance within 6km of the development. These are:
- North Downs Woodland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is 1.2km to the south-west at the closest point. The site is designated for its beech forests and yew woodlands.
 - Peter's Pit SAC, 5.1km to the north-west. This is designated for its great crested newt population.

Non-statutory designated sites

- 7.2. Walderslade Woods Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is adjacent to the site.
- 7.3. There is a large network of ancient woodland within 1km of the site, with the closest point being adjacent to the site.

HABITATS

- 7.4. A habitat plan is shown in Figure 4, Section 5.
- 7.5. The majority of the site comprises semi-natural grassland, used by walkers. On the periphery of the site, the habitats comprise scrub and ruderal vegetation, which are encroaching into the site. The site is bounded on all sides by mature broad-leaved woodland.

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- 7.6. KMBRC data returned records of number of protected species, including bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), and a number of orchid species including common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), white helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*), broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), common twayblade (*Neottia ovata*), bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*), fly orchid (*O. insectifera*), early-purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*), lady orchid (*O. purpurea*), man orchid (*O. anthropophora*) and pyramidal orchid (*A. pyramidalis*). These plants species are associated with sites beyond the development boundary.
- 7.7. Given that the grassland was previously managed as amenity grassland, it is considered unlikely that orchids will be present within the proposed development site. The amenity grassland management is unlikely to favour orchids and a number of the above species are associated with woodland habitats. Some of the orchids, such as fly orchid, are known to present within the adjacent Walderslade Woods.
- 7.8. Plant species recorded within the site are shown in Table 1. The associated DAFOR score is also shown (i.e. Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional or Rare).

Table 1: Botanical species recorded during site visit, with associated DAFOR score.

Central Grassland		
Common name	Species	DAFOR
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>	F
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	O
Soft rush	<i>Jucus effusus</i>	O
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	D
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	F
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	F
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	A
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	A
Sweet vernal grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	A

Edge habitat (scrub and ruderal)		
Common name	Species	DAFOR
Cuckoo flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	F
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>	F
Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	A
Dock sp	<i>Rumex sp.</i>	F
Soft rush	<i>Jucus effusus</i>	F
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	D
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	F
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	F
Common vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Locally dominant
Bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	F
Trefoil sp	<i>Trifolium sp.</i>	O
Creeping cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	F
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	O
Herb-Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	F

Western woodland		
Common name	Species	DAFOR
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	A
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	F
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Locally abundant
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	D
Pedunculata oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	R
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	F
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	F
Common dog violet	<i>Viola riviniana</i>	O
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	O
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	O
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	O

Eastern, southern and northern woodland		
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	D
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	F
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	O
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	A
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	A
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	O
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	R
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	O
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	O
Wood anemone	<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	F
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	O
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	O
Cuckoo flower	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	O
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	O
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	D

7.9. The site is unlikely to support legally protected or notable plants.

7.10. No evidence of Schedule 9 plants were found during the site survey.

INVERTEBRATES (INCLUDING WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH)

7.11. The site is only likely to support common and widespread invertebrate species.

7.12. No water bodies are present within the red line boundary of the site or areas adjacent to it. Therefore, white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) will not be present.