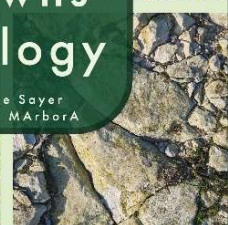
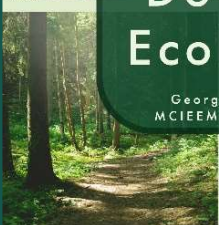
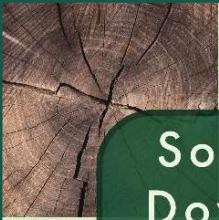




## Ecological Impact Assessment

### Unit 1 Strategic Park



## South Downs Ecology

George Sayer  
MCIEEM Marbora

# Ecological Impact Assessment

## Unit 1 Strategic Park

Version 1 – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

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### *Summary*

The applicant has commissioned a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Ecological Impact Assessment of proposals for change of use and minor alterations to Unit 1 Strategic Park, Southampton, SO30 4DA (*TQ 02606 02116, hereafter referred to as 'the site'*). A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site was carried out on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The proposal area consists of existing building and sealed surfaces, of negligible ecological value, surrounded by young woodland and introduced shrub planting.

The proposals are for change of use and minor external alterations to fenestration and landscaping.

The proposals are not anticipated to have any significant impact upon ecology; the habitats proposed for removal offer no significant potential for protected species. The building overall offers 'negligible' bat roost potential and the proposals offer negligible risk of disturbing or harming bats. Some potential for disturbance to birds exists and basic mitigation is proposed to avoid this.

When mitigation and enhancements have been taken into account, the proposals are not considered to have a negative impact upon designated sites, habitats or protected species in accordance with planning policy and once enhancements are considered, would result in a minor net gain. The proposals would therefore accord with the relevant Local Plan Policies.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicant has commissioned a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Ecological Impact Assessment of proposals for change of use and minor alterations to Unit 1 Strategic Park, Southampton, SO30 4DA (TQ 02606 02116, hereafter referred to as 'the site'). A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site was carried out on the 6th December 2023.
- 1.2 The following ecological impact assessment report has been completed by George Sayer (*BSc (Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MA ArborA, MCIEEM, NE Licence Holder – Bats Level 2 and GCN - Ecologist*). This appraisal consisted of a site visit to identify existing habitats on site; the habitats have been categorised broadly following the UK Habitats Classification Guidance V2.01 (*UKHabs Ltd 2023*). In addition, an assessment of habitats and structures on the site was made to determine their potential for protected species. Following this an on-site and desktop assessment was undertaken, of the likelihood of National or European Protected Species being present on or near site, and the constraints these may pose on the development proposals.
- 1.3 Based on the results of the appraisal, recommendations for potential ecological enhancements have been provided.

### Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.4 The site consists of an existing modern commercial building, surrounded by access, parking, ornamental planting and planted woodland. The building covers c.6300sqm. Unit 2 with associated parking is present to the north; to the south lies woodland with a double row of housing beyond; to the east lies open land between the site and M27; and to the west is Comines Way, lined with narrow areas of woodland before meeting the A334.

### Proposals

- 1.5 The proposals are for Change of use from Class B8 and/or Class E (g)(iii) with ancillary offices, to a flexible use including Class E(g), Class B2 and Class B8. Replacement of 2.no loading bays with sectional shutter doors and other alterations to the fenestration. External storage compound. External works and alterations including plant and landscaping.

## **2.0 Scope of Appraisal**

- 1. Identify habitats or features which may have potential for protected species;*
- 2. Identify whether any signs of protected species are present on-site;*
- 3. Recommend whether further surveys are required, or whether there are any relevant constraints with regards to protected species;*
- 4. Identify impacts of the proposed development and set out appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures;*
- 5. Provide suggestions as to how the site and proposals could be enhanced with regards to protected species and habitats.*

- 2.1 This appraisal and assessment is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of 18 months due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site. Should the site or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the appraisal is still valid.

### 3.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

#### National Planning Policy

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. 'Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' states that development should be 'minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'
- 3.2 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

#### Local Planning Policy

- 3.3 The site is within the Eastleigh District; The 2016-2036 Eastleigh Local Plan was adopted on 25th April. This contains the following policies relevant to ecology:
- 3.4 **Policy DM1, General criteria for new development:** All new development should (as relevant):
- i) not have an unacceptable impact on, and where possible should enhance: a.residential amenities of both new and existing residents; the character and appearance of urban areas, the countryside and the coast; b. biodiversity (avoiding significant adverse impacts); and c. the significance of heritage assets; ...
  - iv) not involve the loss of or damage to trees, woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, priority habitats or other landscape features of value to the character of the area, for appearance or biodiversity unless they can be replaced with features of equivalent or enhanced value, (recognising that some species and habitats may be irreplaceable);
  - vii) provide satisfactory management arrangements for all landscape, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement;
- 3.5 **Policy DM3, Adaptation to climate change:** All development should be designed to adapt to the predicted climate change impacts for the Borough. i) To reduce the potential impacts of surface water flooding, sustainable drainage systems need to be implemented as part of an integrated SuDS strategy for the site in accordance with policy DM6 (Sustainable surface water management and watercourse management) and as part of the landscape framework for the site including green open space and green roofs where appropriate.
- 3.6 **Policy DM8, Pollution:** Development will not be permitted if it is likely to cause loss of amenity or impact on public health or other unacceptable environmental impacts through:
- i) air pollution (including odours or particulate emissions); ii) pollution of surface, underground, coastal waters or other watercourses; iii) noise or vibration; iv) light intrusion both generally and with respect to the South Downs National Park's status as an International Dark Night Skies reserve; or v) land contamination.

- 3.7 Development susceptible to particular forms of pollution will not be permitted: i) where it will be affected by such pollution, unless measures can be taken that adequately mitigate the polluting effects; or ii) where it would inhibit existing economic or other activities giving rise to
- 3.8 acceptable polluting effects. Where a development site is known or suspected to be contaminated, before the site is developed the Borough Council will require the contamination to be remediated to a standard where as a minimum it cannot be defined as 'contaminated land' under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 3.9 2.9 Policy DM10, Water and Waste Water: Where new water supply or waste water infrastructure is required or proposed in support of new development the development will be phased alongside the provision of the infrastructure to ensure:
- compliance with the Habitats Regulations;
  - that there is no deterioration of the status of water bodies which might impact adversely on Water Framework Directive requirements; and
  - the avoidance or mitigation of any other adverse impacts.
- 3.10 Wherever possible the council would wish to see developers implement measures which would improve the water environment.
- 3.11 **Policy DM11, Nature conservation:** The Borough Council will work with statutory and voluntary agencies and developers to: i) Protect, conserve and enhance areas subject to international, national and local nature conservation designations; ii) Assist in achieving national, county and local biodiversity targets as set out in Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs); iii) Protect, conserve and enhance networks of natural habitats and features, including the Priority Biodiversity Areas and Priority Biodiversity Links identified in the Eastleigh Borough Biodiversity Action Plan 2012-2022, and watercourses and wetland complexes, woodland trees, trees and hedgerows important to biodiversity and local character; and iv) Seek a net gain of biodiversity on all development sites (including sites for redevelopment) through the protection, enhancement and connection of existing and provision of new habitats and features compatible with the native biodiversity characteristics of the Borough.
- 3.12 The Council will work with PUSH, Natural England, the Environment Agency and other wildlife organisations to develop and implement a strategic approach to the protection of European sites from the direct and indirect effects of development including recreational disturbance. Within Eastleigh Borough this will include: a) implementing the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy and contributions to recreation mitigation for the New Forest or alternative agreed approaches if required; b) preserving the water quality and flows within the Itchen and Hamble; c) protection of the River Itchen SAC in particular the maintenance and where appropriate restoration of habitats and species to favourable conservation status (as defined by article 1 of the Habitats Directive) and d) contributing to major elements of the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy and other strategies for the provision and enhancement of multifunctional green infrastructure including green routes, ecological networks and biodiversity enhancements (see strategic policy S10). Development which is likely to adversely affect the integrity of an international or European nature conservation site will not be

permitted. Any mitigation measures required to ensure no adverse impact must be implemented.

- 3.13 Development will not be permitted if it is likely to have a direct or indirect adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Local Nature Reserve as shown on the policies map (or on a more recent plan provided by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre), or on the local ecological network, unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Borough Council that: i) the adverse impacts are unavoidable; ii) measures are taken to mitigate or, if this is not possible, compensate for the adverse effects, such that the development will result in at least no net loss of biodiversity; iii) the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the adverse effects on the nature conservation value of the site; and iv) buffers free from development are provided to Locally designated sites within or adjacent to developments to alleviate recreational impact and impacts on edge habitats and to maintain dark skies.
- 3.14 Impacts on priority habitats and protected and priority species will not be permitted unless the applicant can evidence that;
- there has been thorough habitat and species surveys;
  - there is an overall biodiversity gain;
  - impacts that cannot be avoided, have been mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, and the needs of priority and protected species and priority habitats have been taken into consideration within the development design, including facilitating adaptation to climate change wherever possible;
  - the great crested newt strategic survey and strategy have been considered in all developments within 500m of a great crested newt pond; - the strategic bat trapping survey has been considered in all developments within the locality of a woodland surveyed or connected habitat networks. Development will not be permitted if it results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees), unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
- 3.15 In determining planning applications, the Borough Council will: a) seek opportunities to create or enhance habitats and features of nature conservation interest, having regard to local geodiversity and soils; b) have regard to the need to protect, and opportunities to enhance the Priority Biodiversity Areas and the Priority Biodiversity Links set out in the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan; and c) for residential developments within 5.6 km of the Solent Special Protection Areas (SPAs), require contributions to the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy or site specific measures to address recreational disturbance as agreed by the Council and Natural England.
- 3.16 **Strategic policy S10, Green infrastructure:** Through new development and other initiatives the Borough Council will seek to achieve the provision, retention and/or enhancement of the following forms of multi-functional green infrastructure, including provision of: i) landscape scale strategic links across the Borough boundary, to and between the Borough's settlements, the countryside, the coast, and the major areas of open space including the country parks (see

strategic policy S13); ii) interlinked publicly accessible open space through new and existing development including for example formal sports facilities and informal amenity spaces and cemeteries (see policies DM34-DM36, Chapter 5 and detailed proposals in Chapter 6); iii) green infrastructure incorporated into all new development with multifunctional spaces connected by primary, secondary and tertiary green links; iv) interconnected urban green infrastructure within the fine grain of existing and new development including green, cycle ways, paths and linkages between community facilities and open spaces to link community facilities; v) green stepping stones such as street trees, green roofs and walls, pocket parks and urban copses (see policy DM1, Chapter 5); vi) connected habitats linking the network of designated sites and existing priority habitats, taking account of the Hampshire ecological network map (see policy DM11, Chapter 5); vii) incorporation of historic buildings and landscapes, including historic parks and gardens within the wider Green Infrastructure to protect their setting (see policy DM12, Chapter 5); and viii) opportunities for local food growing including allotments, community orchards and farms (see policies DM34 to DM36, Chapter 5 and detailed proposals in Chapter 6).

#### Legislation

3.17 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this EclA includes:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- The Protection of Mammals Act 1996.

3.18 All species of bat and their roosts are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

3.19 All UK bird species are protected against disturbance whilst occupying a nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Developments that could predictably disturb, kill or injure nesting birds could result in an offence. Furthermore, a number of bird species are targets of UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and listed as Species of Principle Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. This obligates local authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity with particular emphasis on targeted species.

3.20 All other mammals receive general protection against cruelty, inhumane killing or injuring under the Protection of Mammals Act 1996.

## 4.0 Methodology

### Desktop Study

- 4.1 A desktop study was conducted using the government 'MAGIC' Map GIS tool; a search was carried out for all international statutory designated sites (Ramsar, SAC, SPA) within 12.0 km of the site; national statutory designated sites (SSSI, NNR, LNR) within 2.0 km of the site; and non-statutory designated sites (SNCI) and priority habitats within 1.0 km of the site. These have been summarized below and their significance considered in the context of the development proposals. A search was also carried out to identify features of ecological interest in the area, such as water bodies and ancient woodland. Given the overall scale and nature of the site and the proposals, a full data search from HBIC was not considered appropriate. This is in accordance with CIEEM current guidance for such projects.

### Site Visit

- 4.2 A site visit was conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> December, during suitable weather (9 degrees, wind force 1; 1/8 cloud, dry). Habitats were recorded according to the UK-Habs Classification System as described within the UK Habitats Manual, V2.01 (UKHabs Ltd. 2023).
- 4.3 During the survey any constraints with regard to protected species were considered; the site was considered for their potential for protected species even when signs of these species were not noted at the time of survey.
- 4.4 The building was assessed externally by an experienced, licenced bat surveyor (George Sayer 2018-34434-CLS) for its potential to hold roosting bats; roof voids were assessed where relevant, and access points identified. Any evidence of bats such as grease marks, bat droppings, urine splashes were noted. The bat roost assessment was conducted following the recent Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2023).
- 4.5 Due to the site visit being carried out over one day, it is possible that some signs of protected species may not be apparent within this short timeframe. This is a constraint recognised within best practice guidelines and all reasonable effort has been made to identify evidence of protected species.

### Ecological Impact Assessment

- 4.6 The methodology for Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) follows best practice guidelines set by the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (CIEEM): 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment' (CIEEM, 2022). This includes identifying the baseline conditions on the site and subsequently rating the potential effects of the development based on the sensitivity and value of the resource affected, combined with the magnitude, duration and scale of the impact (or change). This is initially assessed without mitigation measures, and then assessed again after allowing for the proposed mitigation measures; this provides the residual effects. The assessment is divided into construction effects and longer-term operational effects.
- 4.7 Each ecological feature within the site has been considered within a defined Geographic context such as:
- International and European;
  - National;
  - Regional;
  - County;
  - District;
  - Local;
  - Site Level;
  - Negligible.
- 4.8 Based upon CIEEM guidance, value was determined with reference to the following factors:
- Its inclusion as a Designated Site or other protected area;
  - The presence of habitat types of conservation significance, e.g. Habitats of Principal Importance (NERC 2006);
  - The presence (or potential presence) of species of conservation significance e.g. Species of Principal Importance (NERC 2006);
  - The presence of other protected species e.g. those protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
  - The sites social and economic value.
- 4.9 Specifically in the case of bats, the impact assessment has been conducted in accordance with the recently published Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Reason and Wray 2023).

## 5.0 Baseline Ecological Conditions and Protected Species Assessment

### Desktop Study

#### *Designated Sites and Habitats*

- 5.1 The following is a summary of all protected and notable wildlife sites, with sites of local and national importance recorded within 2.0km of the site and sites of international importance within 12.0 km. These are divided into statutory and non-statutory; those with full legal protection and those without, but which the Local Planning Authority should still consider when deciding on planning policy and applications. These sites are summarized in tables 1 and 2 below. A description of locally designated sites is also made below.
- 5.2 This information is included so that the site can be considered within the ecological context of the surrounding area, guiding decisions related to habitat change and protected species; these sites are not necessarily representative of the habitat on or surrounding the site and may not be influenced by the proposals.
- 5.3 The site is within the Recreation and Nutrient Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) of Solent Suite of Sites, but non-residential proposals within this location do not have to demonstrate nitrate neutrality nor contribute to the Bird Aware Scheme to offset recreational impacts on the Solent Suite of Sites.

**Table 1: Statutory Protected Designated Sites**

| <b>Site Name</b>              | <b>Reason for designation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Distance from site</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Wildern LNR</i>            | <i>The 10 Hectare site is essentially a Wetland habitat featuring a mosaic of ponds, two flooded meadows, woodlands and a valley mire all linked by the streams which flow through the site. Bird species common to the site include various finches; Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Bullfinch and Siskin, the rarities being Lesser Redpoll and Brambling. Other species include Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatches and sightings of the Green Woodpecker and Treecreeper. Commonly sighted dragonflies include Southern Hawker, Broad-bodied Chaser, Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Emperor Dragonfly and Beautiful Demoiselle Damselfly. Butterfly regulars include Green-veined White, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Large Skipper (one of 3 types of Skipper in the area), and perhaps notably, Purple Hairstreak, these are just some of the 26 species of butterfly recorded in 2018.</i> | <i>525.0 m E</i>          |
| <i>Netley Common LNR</i>      | <i>It is the city's last remaining piece of open heathland including grassland with islands of scrub and gorse, surrounded by a mixed woodland fringe. Heathland is particularly rare and remnant fragments of heathland are of national biodiversity importance and are host to a variety of wildlife.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>1.13 km S</i>          |
| <i>Moorgreen Meadows SSSI</i> | <i>Neutral meadows and alder Alnus wood flanking a small tributary of the River Hamble on the Bracklesham Beds of the Hampshire Basin. The meadows lie on alluvium and clay with thin deposits of peat. The sward comprises at least 17 codominant herbs and grasses and is of exceptional scientific importance for its populations of marsh orchids Dactylorhiza. In particular the site includes a geographically isolated population of the Northern Marsh Orchid D. purpurella.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>1.4 km NE</i>          |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |           |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Solent Maritime SAC                      | <i>The Solent encompasses a major estuarine system on the south coast of England with four coastal plain estuaries and four bar-built estuaries. The site is the only one in the series to contain more than one physiographic sub-type of estuary and is the only cluster site. The Solent and its inlets are unique in Britain and Europe for their hydrographic regime of four tides each day, and for the complexity of the marine and estuarine habitats present within the area.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 3.3 km SE |
| Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar, SPA | <i>Comprises estuaries and adjacent coastal habitats of intertidal flats, saline lagoons, shingle beaches, reefs, saltmarsh, and reedbeds, damp woodland, and grazing marsh. Exhibits an "unusual strong double tidal flow" and has long periods of slack water at high and low tide. Designated under Ramsar criteria 1, 2 and 5. Supports internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl. Qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive for regularly supporting more than 1% of the GB Population of Mediterranean gull, sandwich tern, common tern, little tern, roseate tern and under Article 4.2 of the Birds Directive for regularly supporting more than 1% of the biogeographic Population of dark-bellied brent goose, teal, ringed plover and black tailed godwit.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 3.4 km SW |
| River Itchen SAC                         | <i>The Itchen is a classic example of a sub-type 1 chalk river. The river is dominated throughout by aquatic Ranunculus spp. The headwaters contain pondwater-crowfoot Ranunculus peltatus, while two Ranunculus species occur further downstream: streamwater-crowfoot R. penicillatus ssp. pseudofluitans, a species especially characteristic of calcium-rich rivers, and river water-crowfoot R. fluitans.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 3.5 km NW |
| New Forest Ramsar, SAC, SPA              | <i>The New Forest embraces the largest area of 'unsown' vegetation in lowland England and includes the representation on a large scale of habitats formerly common but now fragmented and rare in lowland western Europe. The intimate mosaic of habitats owes much to the local geology and traditional commoning grazing system, a situation which is uncommon in lowland England. The habitats include lowland heath, valley and seepage step mire, or fen, and ancient pasture woodland, including riparian and bog woodland. Nowhere else do these habitats occur in combination and on so large a scale. Within the matrix of habitats are pasture woodland and scrub dominated by oak, beech and holly; heathland and associated grassland; wet heath, valley mire-fen and plantations dating from various periods since the early 18th century, and a range of acid to neutral grasslands. The New Forest contains the most extensive areas of active wood-pasture in north west Europe comprising mature, semi-natural beech Fagus sylvatica, which represent Atlantic beech forests in the most southerly part of the habitat's range, together with old oak Quercus spp. This mosaic, with other types of woodland and heath, has allowed unique and varied assemblages of epiphytic lichens and saproxylic (dead wood) invertebrates – in particular the stag beetle, Lucanus cervus – to be sustained in situations where the woodland is open and the tree trunks receive sunlight. A large number of qualifying habitats and species are present. Designated an SPA under Article 4.1 for a number of bird species including nightjar, woodlark, Dartford warbler, honey buzzard and kingfisher. Also under 4.2 for hobby, wood warbler, lapwing, redshank, curlew, stonechat and redstart.</i> | 9.6 km SW |

- 5.4 The following non-statutory designated sites are within 1.0 km of the proposal site:

Table 2: Non-statutory Protected Designated Sites

| <i>Site Name</i>                  | <i>Reason for designation</i>                                                        | <i>Distance from site</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Telegraph Woods</i>            | <i>Pasture-woodland and succeeded heathland</i>                                      | <i>600.0 m NW</i>         |
| <i>Hogsty Corner</i>              | <i>Ancient woodland, wet woodland, succeeded heathland and fens/flushes/seepages</i> | <i>650.0 m E</i>          |
| <i>West End Covered Reservoir</i> | <i>Grassland covering a reservoir.</i>                                               | <i>670.0 m NW</i>         |
| <i>Dumbleton's Copse</i>          | <i>Heathland succeeded to woodland.</i>                                              | <i>810.0 m S</i>          |

### Habitats

#### *Desk Study*

- 5.5 UK Priority Habitats within 1.0 km of the site include lowland heathland and deciduous woodland. The description of the above SINCS suggest that areas of woodpasture and parkland, as well as ancient woodland are likely present.

#### *Site Assessment*

- 5.6 The site is given over to the habitats discussed further below.

#### *u1b5 - Buildings*

- 5.7 The site is dominated by a modern commercial building. The building is in good overall condition and offers **negligible ecological value** in a broader sense. The potential for the building to support protected species is discussed in the preliminary bat roost assessment and protected species assessment below.

#### *U1b - Developed Land; Sealed Surface*

- 5.8 The site is accessed along a tarmac road, with tarmac and block paved parking and access paths surrounding. The habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

#### *U1c – Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface*

- 5.9 The rear of the building is lined with a 2.0 m continuous strip of pea shingle, which acts as a French drain for the roof. The habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

*U1d 32 847 – Suburban Mosaic of Developed and Natural Surface – Introduced Shrub with Scattered Trees*

- 5.10 Several planting beds to the edges of the parking display introduced shrubs such as snowberry, shrub honeysuckle, Portuguese laurel and Japanese spindle. Small non-native varieties of pear, willow and ash are planted in such beds. The habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

*W1h5 523 – Other Woodland – Mixed – Mainly Broadleaf with Non-native Species*

- 5.11 The site is surrounded to the south and west, and to a small extent to the north-east by mixed woodland. The majority of this is native broadleaf species including pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, field maple *Acer campestre*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, although a number of established Scot's pines *Pinus sylvestris* are present, as are large hybrid poplars *Populus sp.* The understorey is largely native to the north-east and south, formed of holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. To the west the boundary with the site is lined with non-native shrubs including Portuguese laurel, Elaeagnus and cotoneaster. This appears to be the non-listed *Cotoneaster cornubia* but bears a resemblance to *Cotoneaster bullatus*, an invasive species listed on *Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) 1981*.
- 5.12 There is relatively limited ground flora owing to the dense planting of trees, limited to sparse bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.*, stinking iris *Iris foetidissima*, rare ferns *Dryopteris sp.*, ivy *Hedera helix*, false-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* and in places nettles *Urtica dioica*.
- 5.13 The majority of trees have been planted, with a large number of semi-mature trees now splitting out of rabbit guards. Given the high proportion of planted trees, the presence of both conifers and non-native species, the woodland habitat is not considered yet to be a priority habitat and is overall of **local ecological value**.

*H2b Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow*

- 5.14 The eastern aspect of the building is lined with a dense row of conifers. The habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

*G4 108 801 – Modified Grassland Road Verge, Frequently Mown*

- 5.15 The access road and paths are lined with a road verge formed of grassland. This was mown well making identification difficult, but appears to be ryegrass-dominated with common forbs such as daisy *Bellis perennis*, dovesfoot cranesbeill *Geranium molle* and similar. The habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

## 6.0 Protected Species Assessment

### Bats

#### *Desk Study*

- 6.1 4no. EPSML licences are recorded within 2.0 km of site, for common pipistrelle and brown long-eared. The nearest is c.900.0 m east. Hampshire contains at least 15 native bat species.

#### *Site Assessment*

- 6.2 The main building (B1) consists of a modern commercial building. The building is steel-framed with metal and glass panels on the walls, and a metal panel roof with a number of skylights. There is a wide, metal soffit which appears to have regular gaps at the end of steel sheets and a missing panel at the corner. Some soffits were being repaired allowing limited internal inspection from the upper floor. The space above the soffit appears bare and exposed with no suitable roost features. The main roof appears well-sealed.
- 6.3 There is no void present and no suitable internal roost features, with numerous glass sections and rooflights making it very bright internally. The roller-shutter doors appear modern, with rubber brushes to each side resulting in a tight seal to the doors. The two loading bays are of single skin metal construction with no suitable roost features. There are large rubber flaps to the entrances of each bay, with small folds in the joins. These were inspected and found to be devoid of bats or evidence thereof.
- 6.4 The building was assessed in detail and no evidence of bats such as droppings or feeding remains noted. Overall the building offers **negligible bat roost potential**.
- 6.5 The trees in the woodland are largely semi-mature, with no notable bat roost features present within a zone of influence of the proposals.
- 6.6 The main body of the site consists of building, hard surfaces and small areas of introduced shrub and tree planting. These areas offer **negligible foraging and commuting potential**. The site is lined with woodland, and is situated within a relatively green corridor running along the M27 south-east to north-west. As such this woodland is likely of **local foraging and commuting potential**. The proximity of major roads and large residential areas means this area is unlikely to be significant beyond this.

## Birds

### *Desk Study*

- 6.7 Numerous bird species are present in the local area, including a number of wetland and coastal species.

### *Site Assessment*

- 6.8 The building is well-sealed with the only potential access being into the soffit. This was devoid of evidence of birds and relatively inimical to nesting. The loading bays both displayed small piles of droppings indicative of pigeons. No nesting material was noted. It is most likely that feral pigeons use the bays as shelter in inclement weather/temporary perches over night. The surrounding shrubs and woodland are highly suitable for most garden birds as well as potential as a commuting corridor for migrant passerines such as warblers, although these are more likely to commute up the Solent directly. The building is of **low site value** to birds. The woodland is of **site-local value**.

## Other Species

- 6.9 There is limited evidence of mammal activity in the woodland, and no evidence of use by badgers in the form of setts, snuffle holes, latrines etc. in the immediate areas of woodland which could be inspected.
- 6.10 There is an EPSM Licence for dormice just to the north, possibly at the Golf Course or Ageas Bowl. The site is suitable but somewhat isolated for dormice.
- 6.11 There are no records of GCN within 2.0 km, with the nearest ponds being 440.0 m north. There is negligible potential for GCN to occur.
- 6.12 Widespread reptiles are likely to be present locally; the woodland offers some limited potential but is generally too shaded for active reptiles. The habitat may support hibernating reptiles from adjacent grassland.
- 6.13 There is no suitable habitat for water voles, otters or white-clawed crayfish on or adjacent site.
- 6.14 No impacts upon other protected species are considered likely and have not been assessed further.

## 7.0 Evaluation of Impacts and Mitigation

### Designated Sites

#### *Potential Impacts*

- 7.1 Given the intervening distances, and the nature of the proposals, any impacts upon local designated sites would be of minor magnitude and highly unlikely to occur. The site is within the Recreation and Nutrient Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) of Solent Suite of Sites, but non-residential proposals within this location do not have to demonstrate nitrate neutrality nor contribute to the Bird Aware Scheme to offset recreational impacts on the Solent Suite of Sites.
- 7.2 The site is 600.0 m from the nearest non-statutory site and is surrounded by urban habitats. No significant impacts would occur.

#### *Mitigation and Compensation*

- 7.3 None required.

#### *Residual Impacts*

- 7.4 The impacts will be negligible and non-significant.

### Habitats

#### *Potential Impacts*

- 7.5 The proposals would impact only the building and developed land. In the absence of mitigation, the proposals would include minor dust, noise and light pollution of woodland habitats or potentially compaction of root areas and soils, leading to woodland degradation. Such impacts might extend into the changed use of the building. Given the proposals' nature and scale, impacts are of **very minor magnitude** at no more than **site level**. The removal of the cooling plant and enclosure to the south, adjacent the woodland might reduce levels of noise and vibration very slightly.

#### *Mitigation and Compensation*

- 7.6 Any construction or alteration works will be undertaken in accordance with best practice advice with regards to control of dust, noise and emissions. Any chemicals or fuel shall be stored appropriately and on existing surfaces. All vehicles shall operate from existing hard or bare ground and with banksmen to ensure no harm occurs to trees or soils.

#### *Residual Impacts*

- 7.7 Once mitigation is taken into account, the impacts will be negligible and non-significant.

## Bats

### *Potential Impacts*

- 7.8 The building offers 'negligible' bat roost potential; there is no significant risk of disturbing a bat roost; however, individual pipistrelles roosting or hibernating in gaps in the building cannot conclusively be ruled out, with recent evidence suggesting urban pipistrelle roosts in apartment blocks do occur rarely.
- 7.9 Construction noise, dust, lighting and vibration may temporarily make the adjacent woodland slightly less suitable for foraging bats, and bats commuting along the habitats. Given the overall size and nature of the site, the potential impacts to foraging bats is very low.

### *Mitigation and Compensation*

- 7.10 Any works shall be undertaken with due consideration and measures to minimise dust, lighting, damage to trees, and noise. No external works lighting shall be used other than for emergency purposes. All new lighting shall accord with the principles of the BCT/ILP Guidance Note 08/23. No works shall be undertaken between 30 minutes before sunset and 30 minutes after sunrise when bats are active (i.e. April-October inclusive).

### *Residual Impacts*

- 7.11 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible. New roosting features and enhancement of the garden would result in a gain for bats.

## Nesting Birds

### *Potential Impacts*

- 7.12 No evidence of nesting birds was noted within the building; however evidence of perching birds, most likely pigeons was noted in the loading bays proposed for removal.

### *Mitigation and Compensation*

- 7.13 The bays should be subject to a final check for any birds prior to removal. Due to the simplicity of the structures an ecological check is not necessary provided no evidence of any vegetation or similar nest materials is noted. Pigeons can be dispersed from the bays through limited manual noise disturbance provided they are not nesting.

### *Residual Impacts*

- 7.14 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible.

### Other Species

#### *Potential Impacts*

- 7.15 No risk of harm to reptiles, amphibians, dormice, badgers or other species such as hedgehogs exists, provided the woodland areas are retained and protected.

#### *Mitigation and Compensation*

- 7.16 All woodland to be retained and protected according to the principles within British Standard 5837:2012. The works can and should all be carried out from existing hard surfacing, meaning no specific protection measures for trees are required other than taking due care. Any excavation or removal of elements resulting in holes, exposed pipes etc. should be covered overnight and checked daily to ensure no wildlife is trapped within.

#### *Residual Impacts*

- 7.17 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible.

## 8.0 Ecological Enhancements

8.1 As the proposals only affect the building and immediate surroundings, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate an overall positive impact on the natural environment as set out in Local Policy. The following ecological enhancements have been proposed as suited to the location and the proposals and would result in a Biodiversity Net Gain, in accordance with Local and National Policy. The enhancements are detailed within the submitted *230010-A-PL-017-RevC Biodiversity Enhancement Plan*:

- Incorporation of 2no. tree-mounted bird boxes to woodland trees, at least 2.0 m height and facing between north and east; one should be a small passerine box for species such as bluetit, whilst the other could be an open box, a larger box for birds such as starling, or a box for species such as nuthatch;
- Installation of a bat box onto a woodland tree; at least 3.0 m height, south facing, away from lighting and windows; This should be a box such as a 'Large Multi-Chamber Bat Box' which would support pipistrelles, long-eared and noctule bats;
- Creation of a log pile in the woodland, using different diameters of native timber with some buried wood element and some brash, with the pile being at least 1.0 m in all directions;
- Seeding of a verge on the access way into site with wildflower seed mix; Emorsgate EM1 General Purpose Meadow is proposed;
- Removal of tree guards from woodland trees, as they no longer provide any benefit. If biodegradable these should be sent to an appropriate composting facility. If not they should either be sent to an appropriate recycling facility, or donated where possible to e.g. a charitable tree-planting scheme for re-use;

## **9.0 Conclusions**

- 9.1 Overall, the proposals are considered to represent a 'negligible' impact upon ecology and no further surveys are recommended. The proposal area consists of existing building and developed land, of negligible ecological value, surrounded by woodland of local value.
- 9.2 The proposals are not anticipated to have any significant impact upon ecology; the proposals stand a 'negligible' chance of disturbing bats or their roosts provided basic avoidance measures are incorporated into construction. No further surveys are recommended at the site for these proposals. Minor impacts upon birds can easily be avoided.
- 9.3 No significant effects are anticipated upon any designated sites or priority habitats.
- 9.4 When mitigation and enhancements have been taken into account, the proposals are not considered to have a negative impact upon habitats or protected species in accordance with planning policy and once enhancements are considered, would result in a net gain.

## 10.0 References

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- British Standards Institution. (2013). BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. London: BSI
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC 2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit. Available online: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2468>
- CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
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- CIEEM (2022) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Revision 1.02. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- MAGIC Interactive Map Tool (Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023): [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)
- Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.
- Streeter, D. (2010). The Most Complete Guide to the Flowers of Britain and Ireland; Harper Collins, London.
- UKHab Ltd (2023). The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2.01 at <http://www.ukhab.org/>

## 11.0 Species Lists

### Trees, Shrubs and Hedges

| Common Name             | Scientific Name               | DAFOR |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Elephant Grass          | <i>Miscanthus sp.</i>         | O     |
| Hebe                    | <i>Hebe sp.</i>               | O     |
| Japanese spindle        | <i>Euonymus japonicus</i>     | LF    |
| Laurustinus             | <i>Viburnum tinus</i>         | O     |
| Leylandii               | <i>Cupressus x. leylandii</i> | LD    |
| New Zealand Broadleaf   | <i>Griselinia littoralis</i>  | LF    |
| Ornamental Ash          | <i>Fraxinus sp.</i>           | LF    |
| Pear                    | <i>Pyrus sp.</i>              | LF    |
| Portuguese Laurel       | <i>Prunus lusitanica</i>      | LF    |
| Red-berried Cotoneaster | <i>Cotoneaster cornubia</i>   | LF    |
| Shrub Honeysuckle       | <i>Lonicera pileata</i>       | O     |
| Silverberry             | <i>Elaeagnus sp.</i>          | LF    |
| Snowberry               | <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>   | LD    |
| Willow                  | <i>Salix sp.</i>              | LF    |

### Woodland

| Common Name     | Scientific Name                | DAFOR |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| Ash             | <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>      | O     |
| Bramble         | <i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>   | LF    |
| Elder           | <i>Sambucus nigra</i>          | R     |
| False-brome     | <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> | O     |
| Ferns           | <i>Dryopteris sp.</i>          | O     |
| Field Maple     | <i>Acer campestre</i>          | F     |
| Hawthorn        | <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>      | O     |
| Hazel           | <i>Corylus avellana</i>        | LF    |
| Holly           | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>         | O     |
| Ivy             | <i>Hedera helix</i>            | LA    |
| Nettle          | <i>Urtica dioica</i>           | LF    |
| Pedunculate Oak | <i>Quercus robur</i>           | F     |
| Pendulous Sedge | <i>Carex pendula</i>           | R     |
| Poplar          | <i>Populus sp.</i>             | LF    |
| Scots Pine      | <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>        | O     |
| Silver Birch    | <i>Betula pendula</i>          | F     |
| Stinking Iris   | <i>Iris foetidissima</i>       | O     |
| Sweet Chestnut  | <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>  | LF    |
| Sycamore        | <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>     | O     |

**Modified Grassland**

| Common Name          | Scientific Name                  | DAFOR |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Catsear              | <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>      | LF    |
| Cocksfoot            | <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>        | LF    |
| Daisy                | <i>Bellis perennis</i>           | LF    |
| Dandelion            | <i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i> | O     |
| Dovesfoot Cranesbill | <i>Geranium molle</i>            | O     |
| Fat Hen              | <i>Chenopodium album</i>         | R     |
| Mouse-ear Chickweed  | <i>Cerastium fontanum</i>        | O     |
| Perennial Ryegrass   | <i>Lolium perenne</i>            | D     |
| Red Fescue           | <i>Festuca rubra</i>             | LA    |
| Selfheal             | <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>         | O     |
| Spear Thistle        | <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>           | LF    |

## 12.0 Appendix 1 – Site Photos

Photo 1 – View of B1 from the north. Note loading bays.



Photo 2 – Limited view inside the soffit from the top floor.



Photo 3 – View of the loading bays.



Photo 3 Evidence of birds perching inside the loading bays.



Photo 5 – View inside the roller-shutter doors.



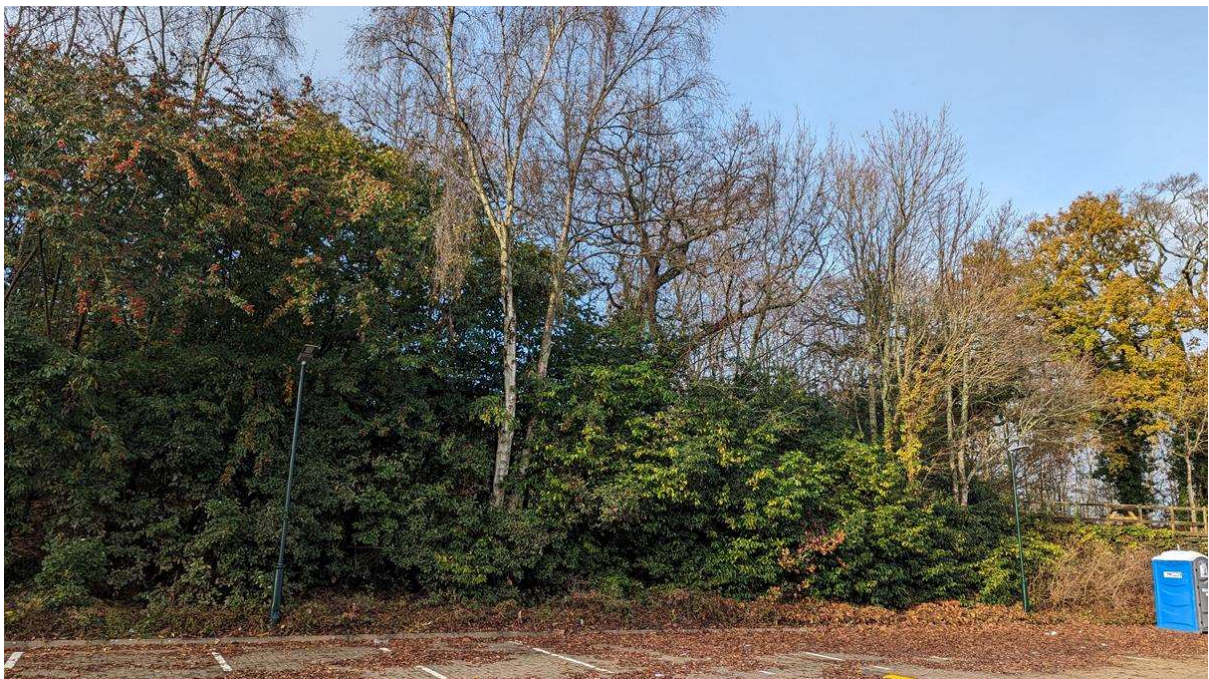
Photo 6 – External view of the roller-shutter doors.



Photo 7 – View of the rear (south) of the building with gravel and woodland.



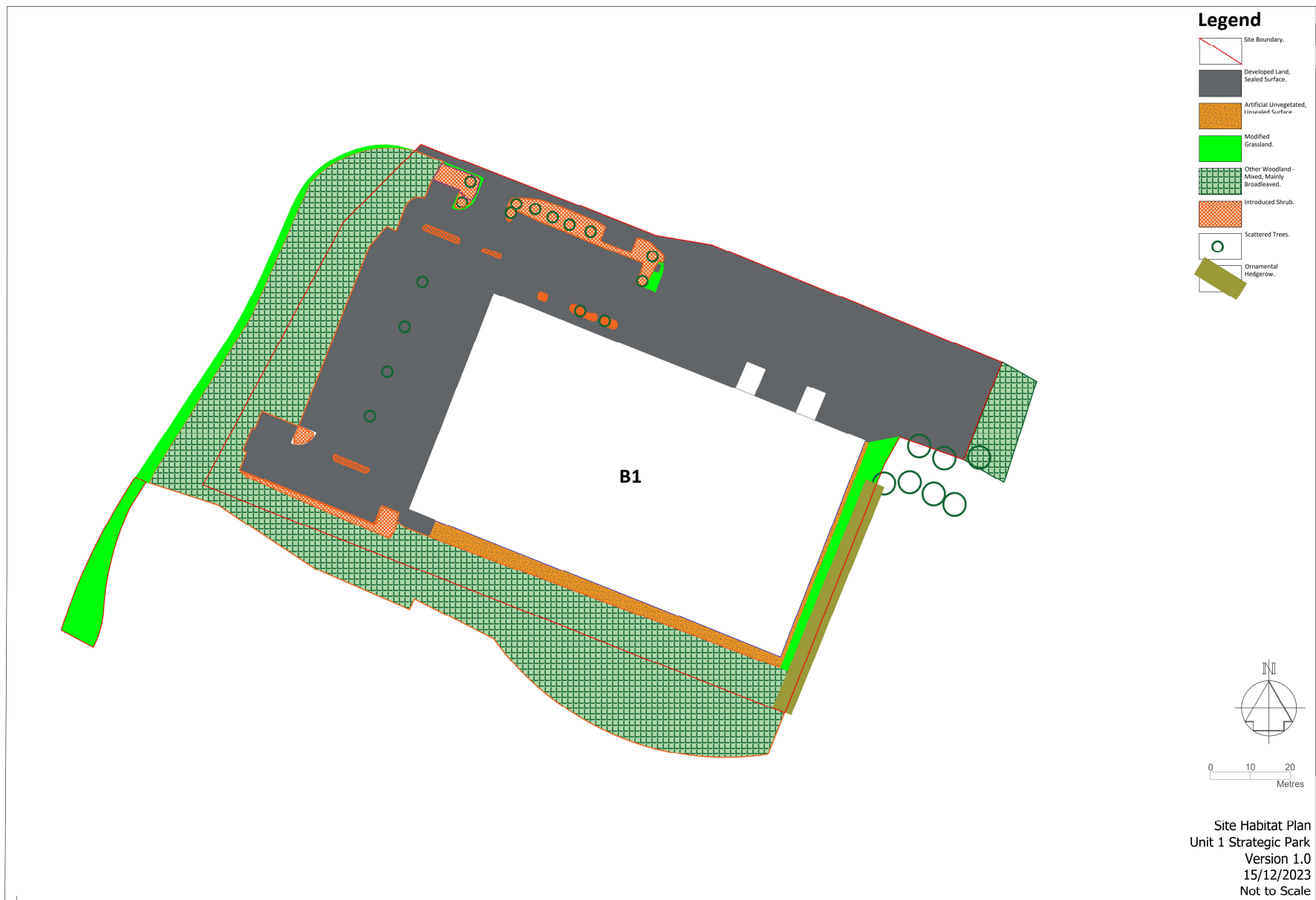
Photo 8 – Woodland with introduced shrubs on the western boundary.



13.0 Figure No. 01 - Site Aerial



14.0 Figure No. 02 – Site Habitat Plan



15.0 Figure No. 03 – Enhancement Plan

