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Ecological Impact Assessment

Cheping Gardens Retaining Wall
Cheping Gardens
Botley
Southampton
SO30 2FW

March 2026

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QUALITY CONTROL		
The information which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.		
Prepared by	Senior Ecologist Rebecca Carter-Whitehead BSc (Hons), MCIEEM	March 2026
Approved by		

This report remains valid for 2 years from date of issue.

Survey data are valid for 12-18 months from the date the survey was undertaken.

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Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living creatures are capable of migration and whilst protected species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on site at a later date.

The views and opinions contained within the document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to works.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Darwin Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Josh Fawcitt of Ellis Belk Associates Limited to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) of proposals for the buildings and habitats at Cheping Gardens Retaining Wall, Chewing Gardens, Botley, Southampton SO30 2FW. The assessment was required to support a planning application for re-enforcement to an existing retaining wall which spans the rear boundary of 19 residential gardens, and was informed by a desk study, habitat walkover survey, and an external structure inspection.

1.2. During the habitat walkover survey the wall itself was assessed as a man-made built linear feature. The immediate surrounding habitats in the gardens include developed land sealed surface, modified grassland, and ornamental and non-native hedgerow.

1.3. Due to the nature and scale of the proposed development, no further survey is recommended in this instance. It is assumed that common and widespread species of reptile, birds, and amphibians may be present within the gardens, and a pre-commencement check prior to works starting is required, followed by supervision by a suitably qualified ecologist.

1.4. A Construction Environmental Mitigation Plan (CEMP) should be produced to fully outline and detail the mitigative actions which will be followed throughout the works process to reduce the potential offence should a great crested newt be present on the site.

1.5. If any invertebrates, amphibians or reptiles are present within the existing retaining wall during the works period, due to the method required to install a new structurally supported wall, it is considered that standard mitigation and reasonable avoidance measures will not be able to fully protect these species from harm. It is not possible to confidently assure the protection of amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates due to the nature and scale of the construction activities involved. The process of installing a new wall in front of the existing criblock structure and subsequently pouring cement into the void between them will inevitably disturb the immediate habitat. These species often occupy small crevices, voids, and ground-level refuges within and around such structures, making them particularly vulnerable to entrapment, displacement, or mortality during works. As the void will be filled with cement, any organisms present within inaccessible sections cannot be safely relocated or excluded with certainty. Furthermore, the limited visibility into the structure and the potential for individuals to re-enter the area during construction further reduce the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Consequently, while reasonable precautions can be implemented to minimise harm, a complete guarantee of protection for these groups cannot be provided.

1.6. Suggested recommendations for the new wall include:

- Wall-mounted bird boxes suitable for species such as sparrows or swifts;

- Gaps in the fences at ground level, measuring approximately 15cm x 15cm will vastly improve the connectivity of the gardens for reptile species, as well as for hedgehogs;
- A dedicated insect box, such as the Woodstone Insect Block, should be installed on a the south-facing wall;
- At least two bee bricks, such as the Green & Blue Bee Brick, can be integrated on the south-facing wall.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

2.1. Darwin Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Josh Fawcitt of Ellis Belk Associates Limited to undertake an EcIA of proposals for the buildings and habitats at Cheping Gardens Retaining Wall, Chewing Gardens, Botley, Southampton SO30 2FW (hereafter referred to as 'the site')[1]. The assessment was required to support a planning application for re-enforcement to an existing retaining which spans the rear boundary of 19 residential gardens, and was informed by a desk study, habitat walkover survey, and an external structure inspection.

2.2. The proposed drawings on which this assessment is based are provided at **Appendix 1, Proposed Plans**.

2.3. The external inspection of the retaining wall followed the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Good Practice Guidelines (2023).

2.4. The habitat walkover survey followed the Chartered Institute for Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). Habitats on site were broadly mapped to a minimum of $5m^2$ in accordance with current guidance from *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 UKHab Ltd (2023).*

2.5. The subsequent EcIA follows the CIEEM Guidelines for EcIA in the UK and Ireland (2018).

Site Overview

2.6. The site is located in Botley, Hampshire, a market village approximately 8.50km from central Southampton. Directly north of the site is the village of Botley, and approximately 1.80km to the west is the town of Hedge End. The outskirts of Botley lie to the east.

2.7. The site comprises a Criblock retaining wall between 19 suburban gardens (see **Figure 1**).

2.8. The wider landscape to the south comprises a rural mosaic of arable and pastoral fields divided by hedgerows and tree lines, and interspersed by parcels of woodland and scattered low-density residential developments. The River Hamble splits and runs to the south and east, flowing approximately 0.04km to the south of the site at its closest. The A334 bisects Botley, running approximately 0.017km north of the site. Botley station and its associated railway line run approximately 0.085km to the northeast (see **Figure 2**).

Scope of Assessment

2.9. The process of EcIA aims to identify, quantify and evaluate the potential effects of development-related or other proposed actions on habitats, species and ecosystems.

[1] Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference SU 51179 12847.

2.10. Potential effects on the following ecologically sensitive receptors have been considered during the EcIA of the site:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated sites; and
- On-site habitats of intrinsic importance (such as buildings or discrete habitat features)
- Habitats with the potential to support protected species.

Figure 1: Site location within the local landscape (Copyright Google Earth Pro 2026)

Figure 2: Site location within the wider landscape (Copyright Google Earth Pro 2026)

3. LEGISLATION & POLICY

General Wildlife Legislation

3.1. Wildlife in the United Kingdom (UK) is protected through European and national legislation, supported by national and local policy and guidance. Development can contribute to conservation and enhancement goals outlined by these various legislation and policy by retaining and protecting the most valuable ecological features within a site and incorporating enhancements to provide biodiversity net gain.

3.2. This section provides a brief summary of the principle legislation and policy that triggers the requirement for preliminary and further ecological assessments in the UK. The presence of protected species within a site are a material consideration during the planning process. Preliminary and any necessary further ecological assessments provide an ecological baseline for a site and evaluation of the potential impact of proposals.

3.3. It is the responsibility of those involved with development works to ensure that the relevant legislation is complied with at every stage of a project. Such legislation applies even in the absence of related planning conditions or projects outside the scope of the usual planning process (i.e. permitted development projects or projects requiring Listed Building Consent only).

Bat Legislation

3.4. In England and Wales, all bat species and their roosts are legally protected under the European *Habitats Directive (1992)*; the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017)*; the *Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)*; the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000*; and the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006)*.

3.5. Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, and noctule *Nyctalus noctula* bats are all species of principal importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

3.6. You will be committing a criminal offence if you:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats;
- Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time);
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

3.7. The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for administering European Protected Species (EPS) licences that permit activities that would otherwise lead to an offence.

3.8. A licence can be obtained if the following three tests have been met:

- Regulation 53(9)(a) - there is "no satisfactory alternative" to the derogation, and;
- Regulation 53(9)(b) - the derogation "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" and;
- Regulation 53(2)(e) - the derogation is for the purposes of "preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".

National Planning Policy

3.9. The *National Planning Policy Framework (2024)* aims to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' details what local planning policies should seek to consider with regard to planning applications.

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

> *187 a)* Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
>
> *187 b)* Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
>
> *187 d)* minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
>
> *188)* Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and local designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement

of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries;

189) Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their settings should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

3.11. Specific policies regarding habitats and biodiversity comprise:

192) To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation and

b) Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

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

a) If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoid (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) Development on land within or outside of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the feature of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) Development whose primary objective is to conserved or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around development should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

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

a) Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

b) Listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and

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

Local Planning Policy

3.12. The local planning policy for the site is the Eastleigh Local Plan 2016 - 2036 (adopted April 2022), with relevant policies comprising:

Policy DM11, Nature Conservation:
General approach

1. The Council will work with statutory and voluntary agencies and developers, and will determine planning applications, to:

a) Protect, conserve and enhance all:

(1) International, national, and local nature conservation designations; and

(2) ii. Networks of natural habitats and features, including the Local Ecological Network, Priority Biodiversity Areas and Priority Biodiversity Links, watercourses, wetland complexes, woodland trees, and trees and hedgerows important to biodiversity and local character;

and facilitate their adaptation to climate change wherever possible;

b) Assist in achieving national, county and local biodiversity targets as set out in Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs);

c) 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 of nature conservation interest compatible with the native biodiversity characteristics of the Borough, having regard to local geodiversity and soils; and

d) contribute to major elements of the PfSH 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 S9).

International Designations

2. Development which is likely (either individually or in combination with other developments) to adversely affect the integrity of an international or European nature conservation site will not be permitted subject only to imperative reasons of overriding public interest and securing any necessary compensatory measures in the absence of alternative solutions. A 'project level' Habitat Regulations Assessment will be required where there are likely significant effects or uncertainty. Any mitigation measures required to ensure no adverse impact must be implemented at the appropriate time.

3. The Council will work with PfSH, Natural England, the Environment Agency and other wildlife organisations to develop and implement with developers a strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of international and European sites from the direct and indirect effects of development. Within Eastleigh Borough this will include:

   a) Implementing:

      (1) he Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy (requiring contributions from residential developments within 5.6 kilometres of the Solent Special Protection Area to the Strategy); and

      (2) the interim and any future New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy if required; or alternative agreed site specific measures to address recreational disturbance;

   b) Preserving the water quality and flows within the Itchen and Hamble, Southampton Water and Solent;

   c) Protecting the River Itchen SAC, in particular the maintenance and where appropriate restoration of habitats and qualifying species to favourable conservation status (as defined by article 1 of the Habitats Directive); and

   d) Seek contributions towards measures set out in the Southern Damselfly Conservation Strategy (or other strategy) specifically to deliver biodiversity net gain.

National and Local Designations

4. Development will not be permitted if it is likely (either individually or in combination with other developments) 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 (LNR) as shown on the policies map (or on a more recent plan provided by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre) unless it can be demonstrated that:

a) there are no alternative solutions;

b) the adverse effects are unavoidable;

c) measures are taken to mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects;

d) there is an overall biodiversity net gain; and

e) if there are any residual adverse effects which cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated, the benefits of the development must clearly outweigh the adverse effects on the nature conservation value of the site and any broader impacts on national and local designations.

Priority habitats, protected and priority species and the local ecological network

5. Development will not be permitted if it is likely (either individually or in combination with other developments) to have a direct or indirect adverse effect on priority habitats, protected or priority species, or on the local ecological network unless it can be demonstrated that:

a) there are no alternative solutions;

b) the adverse effects are unavoidable;

c) measures are taken to mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects;

d) there is an overall biodiversity net gain; and

e) if there are any residual adverse effects, the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the adverse effects on priority habitats, priority and protected species, and the local ecological network.

Irreplaceable habitats

6. 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.

Buffers

7. Buffers free from development will be provided to designated sites to avoid/mitigate impacts, including recreational impact and impacts on edge habitats, and to maintain dark skies.

Surveys

8. Development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:

a) there have been thorough habitat and species surveys;

b) the great crested newt strategic survey and strategy have been considered in all developments within 500m of a great crested newt pond; and

c) the strategic bat trapping survey has been considered in all developments within the locality of a woodland or connected habitat networks.

Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan

3.13. The local biodiversity action plan relevant to the site is Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan. It aims to set out a long-term strategy for biodiversity conservation within Hampshire and provide a series of objectives and actions for achieving successful conservation of habitats and species across the county.

3.14. The Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership was set up by Hampshire County Council to raise awareness of Hampshire's natural environment and increase commitment to its conservation. The Biodiversity Action Plan provides the platform from which the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership can take effect. Detailed habitat action plans for 21 key habitats are in development, as well as for action outline for 443 priority species that occur amongst these habitats. To advance biodiversity conservation in Hampshire, the following objectives have been identified:

- to audit the nature conservation resource of Hampshire;
- to identify from the audit habitats and species of priority nature conservation concern, including those which are locally distinct;
- to prepare action plans for habitats and species of priority concern and follow through with programmes of implementation and monitoring;
- to ensure that data on habitats and species is sufficient to enable effective implementation and monitoring of biodiversity objectives;
- to review general issues affecting biodiversity, such as agriculture and development, and chart a course of appropriate action;
- to raise awareness and involvement in biodiversity conservation across all sectors;
- to encourage individuals and organisations to review their role in biodiversity conservation and the resources required, and develop their own action in response to the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire;
- to maintain an ongoing partnership which will co-ordinate, develop and support action for biodiversity;
- to monitor and review progress towards meeting the above objectives and the targets set out in the habitat and species action plans; and
- to periodically update the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire and its component habitat and species action plans to take account of changing circumstances.

4. METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

4.1. A desk study was undertaken for designated sites, and protected species and habitat records within 2km of the site:

- The MagicMap website was reviewed, to obtain information on any designated sites of nature conservation interest within 2km of the site and details of any EPS licences issued within 2km;
- The Southampton City Planning Portal was searched for past and pending planning applications that may have associated ecological documents detailing results of bat surveys; and
- A data search was requested from Hampshire Biological Information Centre (HBIC) for non-statutory designated sites, and protected and notable species within 2km; and
- Google Maps and Ordnance Survey (OS) Leisure Maps was utilised to view aerial photographs and maps to assess the ecological context of the site within the wider landscape.

4.2. Natural England has developed a tool to help assess the potential risks to SSSIs by proposed developments. These are known as 'Impact Risk Zones' (IRZs) and they define the area around a SSSI that could be sensitive to development, considering the particular sensitivities of the feature for which the site is designated.

4.3. The IRZs help inform whether a development proposal may affect a SSSI and if so, whether it is necessary for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to seek pre-application advice from Natural England. Information on the IRZs was determined from the MAGIC website to determine if the LPA is required to seek consultation for the current development.

Habitat Walkover Survey

4.4. Senior Ecologist Rebecca Carter-Whitehead BSc (Hons) MCIEEM, and Assistant Ecologist Jordan Holman-Thatcher BSc (Hons) conducted a walkover survey at the site on 5th March 2026. The weather conditions at the time of the survey were dry rain with a light breeze with a temperature of approximately 14°C.

4.5. The walkover survey assessed habitats present within the application red line boundary for their potential to support protected species, including:

- Bats;
- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* and common amphibians;
- Reptiles;
- Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*;

- Other terrestrial mammals, including hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and badger *Meles meles*;
- Schedule 1 birds, including but not limited to; barn owl *Tyto alba*, Llapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and skylark *Alauda arevnsis*
- Breeding birds; and
- Invertebrates.

4.6. As there is no running water within the site, in combination with their nationally sparse distribution, it is considered highly unlikely that white clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* would be using the site and they are therefore not considered further in this report.

4.7. The site was also searched for non-native, invasive plant species, with particular care to search for the most commonly occurring and problematic species, such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Indian balsam *Impatiens grandiflora* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mentegasianum*.

Potential to support roosting bats

4.8. Each building/structure was assessed for its potential to support roosting bats as detailed in **Table 1** below which is taken from the Bat Conservation Trust 2023 guidelines Table 4.1, Table 7.1 and Table 7.2.

Table 1: Roost classification from the Bat Conservation Trust (2023) guidelines.

Category	Description of roosting habitat	Number of surveys required
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No further surveys
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No further surveys
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis by large numbers of bats.	Single survey between May to August
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, condition and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Two surveys with at least one survey between May to August.
High / Confirmed	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by a larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts.	Three surveys with at least two surveys between May to August.

Limitations

4.9. Ecological surveys are limited by factors that affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of the year, weather, and migration patterns. The habitat walkover survey was undertaken in March, which is a sub-optimal period for identifying many native plant species as many plant species have not grown into recognisable growth forms. Considering the context of the site, the urban nature of the site (residential gardens), and the habitats to be impacted by the proposals, it is considered unlikely that this would have a significant impact on the reliability of the survey results or conclusions.

4.10. Many species of bat in the UK are crevice-dwelling, and bats or signs of bats can be difficult to find within a building/structure. In addition, there may be areas that are inaccessible to the surveyor.

4.11. No other limitations were encountered, or assumptions made during either the desk study or the field survey and it is considered that with the access gained and recording undertaken an accurate assessment of the site's ecological importance has been made.

5. SURVEY RESULTS

Desk Study

5.1. MagicMap holds records of five statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary, comprising a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and three internationally designated sites, comprising a Special Protection Area (SPA), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Ramsar site. These are detailed in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

Designated sites	Name and designation type	Reason for designation	Approximate distance from site
Within Site Boundaries	There are no designated sites within the site boundaries		
Within 2km of Site	Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI	The site comprises the upper estuary of the River Hamble, encompassing the mudflats, salt marsh, reesswamp and surrounding ancient semi-natural woodland	0.37km southeast
	Solent & Southampton Water SPA	The site comprises estuaries and the adjacent coastal habitats of reefs, lagoons, intertidal flats, shingle beaches, salt marsh and reedbeds, grazing marsh and damp woodlands. There is a strong double tidal flow, with long periods of slack water at high and low tides. The site houses many wintering waterfowl, and rare invertebrate and plant species.	0.37km southeast
	Solent Maritime SAC	The site is primarily designated due to the presence of three Annex I habitat comprising: estuaries, the solent encompasses a major estuarine system on the south coast of England with four costal plain estuaries and four bar built estuaries; Spartina swards, the solent is the only site for smooth cord-grass Spartina alterniflora in the UK and is one of only two sites where significant amounts of small cord-grass S.maritima are found; and Atlantic salt meadows, The Solent contains the second-largest aggregation of Atlantic salt meadows in south and south-west England. Solent Maritime is a composite site composed of a large number of separate areas of saltmarsh.	0.37km southeast
	Solent & Southampton Water Ramsar	The site comprises estuaries and the adjacent coastal habitats of reefs, lagoons, intertidal flats, shingle beaches, salt marsh and reedbeds, grazing marsh and damp woodlands. There is a strong double tidal flow, with long periods of slack water at high and low tides. The site houses many wintering waterfowl, and rare invertebrate and plant species.	0.37km southeast

	Manor Farm LNR	The site is made up of restored farmland and gardens, restored to it's natural state of wet meadow, improved grassland and hedgrows. The thought-to-be locally extinct dotted fan moth *Macrochilo cribrumalis* has also been found on the reserve.	0.81km south

5.2. There are 27 non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site. These are detailed in **Table 3.**

Table 3: Non-Statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

Designated sites	Name and designation type	Reason for designation	Approximate distance from site
Within Site Boundaries	There are no non-statutory designated sites within the site boundaries		
	Pudbrook Lake SINC	1B: Other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving or supporting some characteristics of ancient woodland 8A: Sites designated as Local Geological Sites, formerly known as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)	0.1km southwest
	Church Lane Meadows SINC	1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species 2B: Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland. 5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent) 5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	0.4km south
	Sherecroft Farm Meadow SINC	5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent) 6A: *Cruciata laevipes, Lychnis flos-cuculi*	0.6km northeast
	Woodhouse Gully Wood SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland 1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species	0.8km northwest
	Botley Mill Woodland SINC	1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species	0.8km northeast

Within 5km of Site	Gould Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland 1B: Other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving or supporting some characteristics of ancient woodland	0.9km southwest
	Manor Farm Meadows (Central Field) SINC	5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	0.9km southwest
	Railway Line Field SINC	2B: Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland	1km northeast
	Trullmill & Pinkmead Copses SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	1km southeast
	Newhouse Farm Woodland & Swamp SINC	1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species 5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.1km north
	Wangfield Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	1.2km northeast
	Bottom Copse/Bushy Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland 1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species	1.3km northwest
	Tanhouse Meadow SINC	5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.4km southwest
	Dockdell Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	1.4km southwest
	Marshy Grassland, Botley SINC	5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.4km northeast
	Meadow West of Wangfield Copse SINC	2A: Agriculturally unimproved grasslands which are not of recent origin. 5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.4km northeast
	Manor Farm Plantation SINC	1B: Other woodland where there is a significant element of ancient semi-natural woodland surviving or supporting some characteristics of ancient woodland	1.5km southwest

	Holly Tree Farm Wood SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland 1Cii: Wet Woodlands such as Alder or Willow Woods and Birch Bog Woods which Support a Good Diversity of Woodland and/or Marsh/Swamp/Mire Species	1.5km northeast
	Holly Tree Farm Meadow SINC	2B: Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland 5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.5km northeast
	Outlands Copse & Meadow SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland 2B: Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland 6A: *Epipactis palustris*	1.5km east
	Kings Copse Meadow & Pond SINC	2B/5B	1.6km southwest
	The Glebe Field SINC	2A: Agriculturally unimproved grasslands which are not of recent origin. 6A: *Anacamptis morio*	1.8km northeast
	Landing Place Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	1.8km southeast
	Maddoxford Farm Meadows SINC	5B: Fens, flushes, seepages, springs and inundation grasslands of floodplains that support a flora and fauna of less-improved wet conditions (seasonal or permanent)	1.9km north
	St. Peter's Churchyard, Curdridge SINC	2B: Semi-improved grasslands which retain a significant element of unimproved grassland	2km northeast
	Hangmans Copse SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	2km southeast
	Botley Park Wood SINC	1A: Ancient and semi-natural woodland	2km north

5.3. The site falls within the IRZ of Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI.

5.4. There are no relevant planning applications that would cause cumulative effects on the local landscape.

5.5. There are numerous areas of priority deciduous woodland within 1km, with the closest being 0.039km south of the site, followed by areas located 0.15km, 0.18km southeast and

0.24km east. These areas of woodland are also registered on the National Forest Inventory 2020 or the National Trust Habitats Data 2021.

5.6. Further priority habitats within 1km of the site comprise ten coastal salt marshes, eight coastal and floodplain grazing marshes, seven mudflats, four seedbeds, three lowland calcareous grasslands, two lowland meadow and a good quality semi improved grassland.

5.7. There are two areas of ancient woodland within 1km of the application site, comprising Gould Copse (0.53km southeast) and Trullmill/Pinkmead Copse (0.63km southwest).

Habitat Walkover Survey

5.8. **Table 5** below outlines the summary of habitats identified on site, as well as their applicable secondary codes. The following habitat descriptions are broad assessments of the retaining wall and the 2m immediate landscape at its base within the residential gardens.

Table 5: Habitat applicable codes

Primary Habitat	UK Hab Primary Code	Applicable Secondary Code(s) used	Secondary Code(s) description
Built linear feature	u1e	-	-
Developed land sealed surface	u1b	-	-
Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface	u1d	108	Frequently mown
		846	Flower Bed
		847	Introduced shrub
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	h2b	-	-

Built Linear Feature

5.9. The criblock retaining wall itself is a man-made linear feature. It comprises precast concrete cribs filled with stone. The tall and wide flat of the wall is south-facing, and the overall height varies from approximately 3m at the lowest point to 5m at the highest.

5.10. The entire length of the top of the wall across all 19 properties and adjacent residential gardens was observed to host the flora species summarised in **Table 6**. Some gardens did not contain plants growing from the wall, which is possibly a result of the wall being maintained by the residents or a natural lack of plants currently established there. Some properties have allowed vegetation to grow out. No residents are maintaining the vegetation on the top of the wall however, as this is not accessible from the gardens. Vegetation at the top of the wall varies from a short sward of approximately 10cm, to large bushes approximately 1m in height.

Table 6: Species present

Common name	Scientific name
Bristly oxtongue	*Helminthotheca echioides*
Bramble	*Rubus fruticosus agg.*
Cleavers	*Galium aparine*
Honeysuckle	*Lonicera periclymenum*
Common Nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Common Ivy	*Hedera helix*
Common Poppy	*Papaver rhoeas*
Old man’s beard	*Clematis vitalba*

Table 6: Species present

Common name	Scientific name
Yorkshire-fog	*Holcus lanatus*
Broad-leaved Leek	*Allium nigrum*
Butterfly-bush	*Buddleja davidii*
Creeping Buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
Atlantic Ivy	*Hedera hibernica*
Red Campion	*Silene dioica*
Germander Speedwell	*Veronica chamaedrys*
Herb-Robert	*Geranium robertianum*

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

5.11. Some of the gardens include an area of hard standing, usually in the form of patio.

Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface (Secondary Codes: 108, 846, 847)

5.12. This grassland habitat across the 19 properties has a uniform short sward of approximately 5cm-10cm in height, which is regularly mown by all residents of all properties. Grass species present were mostly perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne.* Many of the gardens include non-native ornamental planting, such as yucca *Yucca spp..*

Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow

5.13. Some of the gardens contained short stretches of hedge that are maintained as ornamental hedgerows. Species include firethorn *Pyracantha spp..*

Habitat Walkover Survey Photos

Image 1: The retaining wall, as viewed from the rear of no. 19.

Image 2: The retaining wall, as viewed from the rear of no. 17.

Image 3: Ornamental introduced planting, in the rear of no. 15.

Image 4: The retaining wall, showing introduced planting, as viewed from the rear of no. 13.

Image 5: The retaining wall, as viewed from the rear of no. 4.

Image 6: The retaining wall, as viewed from the rear of no. 1.

Protected Species

Bats

5.14. MagicMap holds six records of EPS Licences for works impacting bat roosts within 2km of the site boundaries. These are detailed in **Table 7.**

Table 7: ESP licences granted for bats within 2km of the site

Case Reference	Licence dates	Species designation	Licensable Impact	Approximate distance from site
EPSM2012-5125	24/10/2012 - 30/09/2014	C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	0.05km south
EPSM2013-6597	09/01/2014 - 01/09/2015	C-PIP, S-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	0.96km south
EPSM2012-4681	08/04/2013 - 30/09/2016	C-PIP, S-PIP, BLE, NATT	Destruction of a resting place	0.96km south
2014-23119-EPS-MIT	01/08/2014 - 30/09/2017	BLE, C-PIP, NATT, S-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	0.96km south
2017-31423-EPS-MIT	13/10/2017 - 30/09/2022	C-PIP, S-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	1.60km southeast
2016-23119-EPS-MIT	20/05/2016 - 20/05/2021	C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	1.70km north

5.15. HBIC returned 609 records of bats within 2km of the site. These are summarised in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Bat records within 2km of the site

Species	Number of records
Barbastelle	10
Bechstein's bat	1
Brown long-eared bat	8
Common pipistrelle	165
Daubenton's bat	2
Leisler's bat	10
Long-eared bat species	54
Myotis bat species	66
Nathusius's pipistrelle	14
Natterer's bat	3
Noctule	55
Nyctalus bat species	18
Pipistrelle species	3

Serotine	72
Soprano pipistrelle	124
Whiskered bat	4

5.16. The surrounding landscape within the bounds of the residential gardens is of moderate ecological value. While modified grassland is not ideal habitat, the species present that create minor structural diversity (such as the bramble and ornamental hedges) provide commuting and foraging habitat.

5.17. The site is close to woodland to the south, which provides connectivity to the wider landscape through a network of tree lines.

5.18. The retaining wall itself is unlikely to support roosting bats. The crevices between the stones within the criblock are incredibly small, and do not provide a cavity that could be used by roosting bats. The criblock also has protective netting over it, which further reduces the suitability of the structure for bats to roost within. The wall is also likely lit by artificial light from the residential properties, further reducing the suitability for use of the wall by roosting bats.

5.19. The overall assessment of the wall for bats to roost is ‘Negligible’.

Great Crested Newt and Common Amphibians

5.20. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting great crested newt, great crested newt class survey licence returns, or great crested newt pond surveys 2017-2019 with a positive result within 1km of the site boundary.

5.21. MagicMap returned no great crested newt class survey licence returns within 1km of the site boundary. MagicMap returned no great crested newt pond surveys 2017-2019 with positive results within 2km of the site boundary. The closest positive great crested newt pond survey 2017-2019 is approximately 4.02km southeast of the site.

5.22. HBIC returned three records of common toad *Bufo bufo* from within 2km of the site. No records of great crested newt were returned.

5.23. There are no waterbodies within 250m of the site.

5.24. The site is within an ‘Amber' risk zone for great crested newt.

5.25. The retaining wall itself is likely to provide the correct habitat to support great crested newts and other amphibians in their terrestrial phases, should they be present in the area. The crevices between the stones within the criblock are small, however they do provide shelter that could be used by amphibians in their terrestrial phase.

5.26. Amphibians are more likely to be present at the sections of the wall near house numbers 1, 9, 10, and 19 as these edge properties are more likely to facilitate connection to the wider

landscape. The wall itself is also more likely to contain amphibians within the top half, which gets more hours of sunlight and will naturally be warmer, as well as containing the vegetated top of the wall that will allow for further commuting, foraging, and resting, however the wooden fence separating the Cheping Gardens and Mortimer Road properties may present a linear barrier to dispersal.

5.27. The surrounding landscape within the bounds of the residential gardens is of moderate ecological value, while modified grassland is not ideal habitat, the species present that create minor structural diversity (such as the bramble and ornamental hedges) provide commuting and foraging habitat.

5.28. There is potential that great crested newts and other amphibians may be **injured and killed** as a direct result of the proposed works.

Reptiles

5.29. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting rare reptiles within 1km of the site. The closest record of an EPS Licences for works impacting reptiles is approximately 14km southwest of the site.

5.30. HBIC returned three records of slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and two records of grass snake *Matrix helvetica* from within 2km of the site.

5.31. The retaining wall itself is likely to support reptiles. The crevices between the stones within the criblock are small, however they do provide shelter that could be used by reptiles. The south-facing nature of the wall means it will heat up in the sunlight, provide excellent basking areas for reptiles.

5.32. Reptiles are more likely to be present at the sections of the wall near house numbers 1, 9, 10, and 19 as these edge properties are more likely to facilitate connection to the wider landscape. The wall itself is also more likely to contain reptiles within the top half, which gets more hours of sunlight and will naturally be warmer, as well as containing the vegetated top of the wall that will allow for further commuting, foraging, and resting, however the wooden fence separating the Cheping Gardens and Mortimer Road properties may present a linear barrier to dispersal.

5.33. The surrounding landscape is of moderate ecological value, while modified grassland is not ideal habitat, the species present that create minor structural diversity (such as the bramble and ornamental hedges) provide commuting and foraging habitat.

Otters and Water Voles

5.34. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting otter and water vole within 1km of the site.

5.35. HBIC returned eight records of otter within 2km of the site. No records of water vole were returned.

5.36. The habitats within the wider landscape include rivers and estuaries, which are suitable habitat for otter and water vole to rest, commute and forage, however lack of connectivity on the site itself, it is unlikely that these species commute from the surrounding landscape into the red line boundary.

5.37. The closely mown grassland and hardstanding surrounding the retaining wall have negligible potential to support otter and water vole, given the lack of connection to other areas of suitable habitat.

5.38. As such the probability of otter and water voles being present on the site is considered to be negligible and they are not considered any further within this report.

Dormouse

5.39. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting hazel dormouse within 1km of the site. The closest record of an EPS Licences for works impacting hazel dormice is approximately 1.98km southwest of the site.

5.40. HBIC returned three records of hazel dormouse from within 2km of the site. These were all 1.8 to 1.9km away.

5.41. The woodland to the south of the site is likely to contain suitable habitat for dormice to rest, commute and forage, however lack of connectivity on the site itself, it is unlikely that dormice commute from the woodland into the red line boundary.

5.42. The closely mown grassland and hardstanding surrounding the retaining wall within the residential gardens have negligible potential to support dormouse given the non-continuous tree canopy and lack of connection to other areas of suitable habitat.

5.43. As such the probability of dormouse being present on the site is considered to be negligible and they are not considered any further within this report.

Other Terrestrial Mammals

5.44. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting badger or other terrestrial mammals within 1km of the site.

5.45. HBIC returned eight records of badger and 23 records of hedgehog from within 2km of the site.

5.46. No evidence of badger (such as hairs, mammal paths latrines, snuffle holes, or scat) or badger setts/sett entrances were identified on the site. Should badgers be present within 30m of the site boundary, it would be likely that the field signs would be present.

5.47. The modified grassland within the gardens offers some foraging potential for badger and hedgehog but is limited by its lack of structural variation. Additionally the fences present in between each of the 19 gardens precludes these species from accessing the site.

5.48. The site also offers suitable resources for other mammals such as rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and fox *Vulpes vulpes* but, as mentioned, the garden fences preclude these species from accessing the site.

Breeding Birds

5.49. HBIC returned 362 records of notable birds within 2km of the site. Of these, the birds of Red conservation concern, The Birds Directive Annex 1, and those listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act are summarised in **Appendix 1, Table 1**.

5.50. The hedges and ornamental planting within the gardens may offer some foraging, commuting, and nesting opportunities for a variety of common and widespread bird species.

5.51. The grassland may provide some foraging habitat for local birds. It is likely that the site supports an assemblage of common garden bird species.

5.52. The retaining wall itself only offers very small crevices between the stones within the criblock, which are unlikely to present nesting opportunities for breeding birds. However, many of the gardens have attached bird feeders and bird nest boxes to the wall. Some of these boxes showed signs of use with old nests visible.

5.53. No evidence of features suitable to support roosting barn owls were identified on site. The habitats on site do not offer suitable hunting habitat for barn owls, with the grassland present on site lacking the complexity and species diversity required to attract populations of birds.

Invertebrates

5.54. MagicMap did not return any records of EPS Licences for works impacting invertebrates within 1km of the site.

5.55. HBIC returned 90 records of stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* within 2km of the site.

5.56. The site is within approximately 0.37km of Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI which is designated for a narrow zone of mudflats hosting marine worms, crustaceans, and molluscs. While within close proximity to the site, the retaining wall does not contain ecological niches that would host these species.

5.57. The site is within approximately 0.37km of Solent Maritime SAC, which host the Annex II species Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*. Despite the close proximity, the retaining wall itself is unlikely to host this species.

5.58. The habitats on site provide limited opportunities for invertebrates with areas of grassland,, and woodland to the south provides a variety of suitable foraging and commuting opportunities.

5.59. It is likely that the site supports a variety of common invertebrates.

5.60. Stag beetle may use the stone wall as a vantage point and therefore may be present within the works area.

5.61. The site is unlikely to support populations of roman snail *Helix pomatia* due to a lack of suitable habitat on site.

6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Designated Sites and Priority Habitats

Status of on Site

6.1. The site does not lie within any statutory designated sites, but within approximately 0.37km southeast of the site lies Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI, Solent & Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar, and Solent Maritime SAC. Approximately 0.81km south of the site lies Manor Farm LNR.

6.2. The site falls within the IRZ of Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods SSSI.

Potential Impacts

6.3. The proposed works do not come under any description which would require the local planning authority to consult Natural England, as the works will not directly impact any of the designated sites, despite the close proximity.

6.4. It is not anticipated that the proposed works will impact any statutory designated sites, priority habitats or ancient woodlands through land take or other direct effects of the development, such as mechanical damage.

6.5. There will be no net increase in residential units and therefore no resulting impacts to surrounding designated sites, green spaces and wildlife sites through increased footfall or amenity pressures.

Recommendations

6.6. A Habitat Regulation Assessment has not been conducted for the proposed development as it was deemed inappropriate for a small-scale development. However, the following potential impacts to the statutory designated sites have been assessed as part of this report;

- *Reduction of habitat area* - The proposal to reinforce the retaining wall at the site occurs within the existing development footprint, as such, no habitat areas related to the SAC are being reduced.
- *Habitat fragmentation* - There will be no fragmentation of habitats within the site itself, as any development is situated outside of the SAC.
- *Species fragmentation* - Barriers to dispersal are not anticipated to impact designated species at the site.
- *Habitat and Species disturbance (Noise, lighting, air and water quality)* - During the construction and operational phase, an appropriate mitigation strategy will be in place to reduce impacts to noise, lighting, air and water quality. With these measures in place no significant impacts to the statutory designated sites are anticipated.

- *Natural resource requirements* - Extraction or abstraction is not included in development proposals; thus no impact is anticipated.

6.7. Mitigative steps should be taken throughout the works process to limit any direct and indirect impacts which may occur to the neighbouring designated sites and priority habitats, and care must be taken throughout the development process to ensure that there are no negative incidental impacts to the adjacent designated sites and priority habitats.

6.8. Best practice will be applied to prevent polluting materials from impacting on the neighbouring woodland habitats.

Habitats

Status of Habitats on Site

6.9. The site comprises modified a built linear feature, with the immediate surroundings including grassland that is kept with a short sward as an amenity space, hardstanding, and ornamental non-native hedgerow and planting. These habitats are of low intrinsic ecological value.

Potential Impacts

6.10. The proposed works will directly impact areas of modified grassland and hardstanding, but will not directly impact the ornamental non-native hedgerow. All habitats currently on site are anticipated to be directly albeit temporarily impacted as a result of the proposed works.

6.11. Overall, the proposed works will have a negative impact at site level.

Recommendations

6.12. Any future landscaping planting should seek to enhance biodiversity, improve connectivity to the surrounding habitats and provide food and shelter for a wide range of faunal species. All amenity planting and formal landscaped areas should be created from a palette of wildlife beneficial plants (not necessarily native) chosen for nectar or fruit. Care should be taken to manage habitats in a suitable way to encourage a wide variety of insects and other wildlife to use the site. Non-invasive species should be planted. Any invasive species found to be currently on site should be removed with care during vegetation clearance and disposed of appropriately.

6.13. Given the above mitigation strategies, it is considered likely that there will be no residual impacts on habitats.

Protected Species

Bats

Status of Bats on Site

6.14. The retaining wall itself was assessed as having ‘Negligible’ potential for roosting bats.

6.15. The site contained suitable foraging habitat for bats and it is considered likely that bats may access and utilise the site.

Potential Impacts

6.16. The wall is highly unlikely to support roosting bats, and as such no potential impacts on roosting bats are anticipated.

6.17. There will be an overall temporary impact to the grassland habitat which may currently be used by foraging bats.

Mitigation

6.18. *Toolbox Talk:* Before commencing any work on site, all contractors will be inducted by a suitably licensed ecologist or accredited agent in a tool box talk, to ensure they are aware of the risks to wildlife on site, particularly the presence of reptiles, amphibians, nesting birds, and bat roosts, their legal protection and of working practices to avoid harming protected wildlife and other species in order to ensure working practices on site follow legal requirements.

6.19. *Ecological Supervision:* Immediately prior to any works on site, the wall must be subject to an inspection by a suitably qualified and licensed bat ecologist to ensure as far as possible that no bats are present. This check will also include a search for reptiles, amphibians, and nesting birds, as there is potential for these species to be present within the criblock.

Great Crested Newt and Common Amphibians

Status on Site

6.20. The retaining wall offers a variety of habitats and niches that may be suitable to support great crested newts and other amphibians during their terrestrial phase of life.

6.21. The habitats surrounding the site are considered sub-optimal for amphibians, and were assessed as being moderately likely to support individuals or populations of these species during their terrestrial phase.

6.22. The wider landscape does contain suitable habitats, including a woodland, that could support a variety of amphibians in their terrestrial phase. However, no suitable waterbodies were identified within 250m of the site. Therefore, there is limited potential that individual amphibians may access and utilise the site on occasion.

Potential Impacts

6.23. Works to the retaining wall has potential to injure or kill great crested newts and other amphibians, as the wall cannot be searched thoroughly prior to the works occurring. The current proposals include the creation of a new wall in front of the existing one and backfilling the newly created space with cement.

6.24. The backfilling process will destroy the immediate habitat (soil, vegetation, and crevices), forcing any amphibians present to abandon the area, which may increases pressure on surrounding habitats and food resources.

6.25. Amphibians taking refuge within voids in the old wall or in the surrounding soil may be buried alive as backfill material is poured in. Amphibians can be killed or crushed by machinery, workers, or falling materials during the backfilling process, especially if they are hiding in rubble, debris, or vegetation adjacent to the work area.

6.26. There will also be some temporary impacts of suitable habitat for these species resulting from the proposed works, as the suburban mosaic may be affected during construction activities.

6.27. The Natural England great crested newt 'Rapid Risk Assessment' matrix states "Offence Highly Unlikely", as no ponds are within 250m of the site.

Table 8: Results of Natural England's Rapid Risk Assessment relating to the site.

Component	**Likely effect** (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

Recommendations

6.28. As it was assessed to be significantly unlikely that populations of great crested newt or common amphibian species would be present within the development boundary, no further surveys for these species have been recommended.

6.29. A Construction Environmental Mitigation Plan (CEMP) should be produced to fully outline and detail the mitigative actions which will be followed throughout the works process to reduce the potential offence should a great crested newt be present on the site.

6.30. If any amphibians are present within the development area during the works period, it is considered that standard mitigation and reasonable avoidance measures (outlined below) should be sufficient to protect these species. These include:

- Any ground vegetation within the application boundary should be maintained to a short sward length before the works begins to prevent the habitat becoming suitable wildlife refugia.
- Should the vegetation grow longer than 30cm then any vegetation clearance should by done by hand and only during the reptile key active season (March-September,

inclusive). Weather should be 9ºC or higher, and dry with no strong winds. This will allow active reptiles to move to more suitable habitat nearby, if they are present within the working area.

- Should vegetation grow to above 15cm vegetation removal should occur as a two-stage cut. The initial cut should be done by hand and reduce the vegetation to a height of 15cm. This should then be left overnight to allow for the dispersal of any amphibians and reptiles present. The second cut should occur the next day in weather suitable for reptiles and amphibians. Both cuts should be overseen by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- In addition, any areas of rubble/debris around the site should also be cleared by hand. This destructive clearance must be undertaken outside of the reptile and amphibian hibernation period to ensure that any individuals on site are active during the search.
- In order to prevent creating suitable refuges for amphibians during construction, all stored materials should be raised off the ground on pallets or skids. Aggregates, such as gravel or sand, must be delivered in bulk bags and stored on palettes.
- Any excavations or trenches on site must be covered whilst works are paused (such as overnight), or a ramp should be provided in order to prevent animals from becoming trapped.
- All works which may impact amphibians will be undertaken during the day.
- In the event an amphibian is discovered on site during the construction phase then all works must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted.

6.31. It is not possible to confidently assure the protection of amphibians due to the nature and scale of the construction activities involved. The process of installing a new wall in front of the existing criblock structure and subsequently pouring cement into the void between them will inevitably disturb the immediate habitat. These species often occupy small crevices, voids, and ground-level refuges within and around such structures, making them particularly vulnerable to entrapment, displacement, or mortality during works. As the void will be filled with cement, any organisms present within inaccessible sections cannot be safely relocated or excluded with certainty. Furthermore, the limited visibility into the structure and the potential for individuals to re-enter the area during construction further reduce the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Consequently, while reasonable precautions can be implemented to minimise harm, a complete guarantee of protection for these groups cannot be provided.

6.32. Given the above avoidance and mitigation strategies, it is considered likely that there will be <u>moderate residual impacts</u> on amphibians.

Reptiles

Status on Site

6.33. The retaining wall has potential to host reptiles, and it is assumed that common and widespread reptile species will be present within the wall and surrounding gardens.

6.34. The habitats surrounding the site are considered sub-optimal for amphibians, and were assessed as being likely to support individuals or populations of these species.

6.35. The wider landscape does suitable habitats that could support a variety of reptiles. Therefore, there is potential that individual reptiles may access and utilise the site on occasion.

Potential Impacts

6.36. Works to the retaining wall has potential to injure or kill reptiles, as the wall cannot be searched thoroughly prior to the works occurring. The current proposals including creation of a new wall in front and backfilling with cement.

6.37. The backfilling process will destroy the immediate habitat (soil, vegetation, and crevices), forcing any reptiles present to abandon the area, which may increases pressure on surrounding habitats and food resources.

6.38. Reptiles taking refuge within voids in the old wall or in the surrounding soil may be buried alive as backfill material is poured in. Reptiles can be killed or crushed by machinery, workers, or falling materials during the backfilling process, especially if they are hiding in rubble, debris, or vegetation adjacent to the work area.

6.39. There will also be some temporary impacts of suitable habitat for these species resulting from the proposed works, as the suburban mosaic may be affected during construction activities.

6.40. If reptiles are able to access the site during proposed works, they may become injured during construction or trapped in any excavations.

6.41. There will be some temporary impacts of suitable habitat for these species resulting from the proposed works, as the modified grassland may be affected during construction activities.

Recommendations

6.42. The above recommendations for amphibians are suitable for reptiles.

6.43. No further surveys are recommended in this instance, as the fence present at the top of the wall does not allow enough space for artificial refugia to be placed. As the wall is requiring works to fix areas that have collapsed, it is also not safe to access to the top of the wall. A cat was seen during the habitat walkover, which one resident remarked is a near-daily visitor and catches birds in their garden, and as such adding refugia to attract reptiles will

likely result in an increased predation risk rather than present accurate presence/absence survey results. It is also unlikely that access can be given to so many properties for all visits required for these surveys, should refugia be placed within the garden habitats at the bottom of the wall.

6.44. It is not possible to confidently assure the protection of reptiles due to the nature and scale of the construction activities involved. The process of installing a new wall in front of the existing criblock structure and subsequently pouring cement into the void between them will inevitably disturb the immediate habitat. These species often occupy small crevices, voids, and ground-level refuges within and around such structures, making them particularly vulnerable to entrapment, displacement, or mortality during works. As the void will be filled with cement, any organisms present within inaccessible sections cannot be safely relocated or excluded with certainty. Furthermore, the limited visibility into the structure and the potential for individuals to re-enter the area during construction further reduce the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Consequently, while reasonable precautions can be implemented to minimise harm, a complete guarantee of protection for these groups cannot be provided.

6.45. Given the above avoidance and mitigation strategies, it is considered likely that there will be moderate residual impacts on reptiles.

Other Terrestrial Mammals

Status on Site

6.46. The habitats on site provide limited foraging, commuting, and resting opportunities for terrestrial mammals. It is considered unlikely that the habitats on site would support individuals or populations of terrestrial mammal. Mammals are considered to be unlikely to access the site due to the network of boundary fences between the properties.

6.47. No evidence of mammal activity, such as mammal trails, digging, or scat, was identified on site. No evidence of badger setts, or evidence of badgers, digging, snuffle holes, hairs, or latrines, were identified on site.

Potential Impacts

6.48. If terrestrial mammals are able to access the site during the proposed works, they may be injured due to the construction activity.

6.49. Mice may be present living within the wall, and have potential to be crushed as a result of the works.

6.50. The the temporary impacts to the modified grassland will result in a small, temporary loss of foraging opportunities for terrestrial mammals on site. However, due to the low value of these habitats, and the presence of further areas of suitable habitat for these species

nearby, it is not considered that this loss will have a significant impact on local populations of terrestrial mammals.

Recommendations

6.51. General mitigation measures are considered sufficient to protect terrestrial mammals during construction works within the application area. It is considered that the methods outlined under the amphibian and reptile section (above) will be sufficient to protect terrestrial mammals should they be present on site.

6.52. In particular, any excavations should be covered or protected overnight to prevent entrapment. Ramps should also be placed in any excavations to provide a way out if any animals do become entrapped. All excavations or holes must be checked for wildlife before filling takes place.

6.53. In the event a hedgehog or badger is discovered on-site during the construction phase then all works must stop and:

- Primarily, the individual should be allowed to disperse naturally, with works being halted until they are outside the development area.
- Alternatively, if the individual appears injured or is not moving, a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted.

6.54. Given the above mitigation strategies, it is considered likely that there will be no residual impacts on terrestrial mammals.

Breeding Birds

Status on Site

6.55. The habitats on site offer suitable foraging opportunities for a variety of birds. The retaining wall itself is host to bird boxes, that provide potential nesting sites for breeding birds.

6.56. It is considered likely that the residential gardens support an assemblage of common garden and woodland birds.

6.57. No features suitable to support barn own roosts, or suitable hunting habitat for barn owls, were identified during the site visit.

6.58. It is not considered that the site contains suitable habitat to support ground nesting birds.

Potential Impacts

6.59. The temporary impacts to the modified grassland will result in a small, temporary loss of foraging opportunities for local foraging habitats for birds.

6.60. In the absence of mitigation, if nesting birds are on site during the proposed works to the retaining wall, the works may have the potential to injure/kill individual nesting/breeding birds.

Recommendations

6.61. Where works to the retaining wall is required, this should occur outside of the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).

6.62. If any works are required during the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive), a pre-works check by a suitability qualified ecologist will be conducted no more than 24 hours before the works to ensure that no active nests are present. If active nests are recorded, a suitable buffer will be retained around these until all chicks have fledged (to be confirmed by a suitably qualified ecologist)

6.63. Given the above avoidance strategies, it is considered likely that there will be no residual impacts on birds.

Invertebrates

Status on Site

6.64. The site provides some limited foraging, commuting, and resting habitats for a variety of invertebrate species, and it is considered that the site supports an assemblage of common invertebrates.

6.65. Stag beetle may be present on the retaining wall.

Potential Impacts

6.66. The temporary impacts to the modified grassland will result in a small, temporary loss of suitable foraging, commuting, and resting opportunities for invertebrate species. However, due to the low value of these habitats, and the high quality of the habitats being retained within the wider landscape, it is considered unlikely that the loss of these habitats would have a significant negative impact on local invertebrate populations.

Recommendations

6.67. The ecologist present to conduct the ecological supervision will also conduct a pre-commencement check for stag beetle as part of their works on site.

6.68. To provide a wide variety of nectar and pollen sources for invertebrates on site, the incorporation of native fruiting and flowering species should be considered within any landscape proposals.

6.69. It is not possible to confidently assure the protection of invertebrates due to the nature and scale of the construction activities involved. The process of installing a new wall in front of the existing criblock structure and subsequently pouring cement into the void between them will inevitably disturb the immediate habitat. These species often occupy small crevices, voids, and ground-level refuges within and around such structures, making them particularly vulnerable to entrapment, displacement, or mortality during works. As the void will be filled with cement, any organisms present within inaccessible sections cannot be safely relocated or excluded with certainty. Furthermore, the limited visibility into the structure and the potential for individuals to re-enter the area during construction further

reduce the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Consequently, while reasonable precautions can be implemented to minimise harm, a complete guarantee of protection for these groups cannot be provided.

6.70. Given the above recommendations, it is considered likely that there will be low residual impacts on invertebrates.

7. ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. National planning policy states that all developments should seek to enhance onsite biodiversity whether impacts on protected species are recorded or not. Incorporating enhancement features into new or renovated buildings should be carefully considered. These features can be simple and inexpensive, please see below for specific recommendations.

7.2. However, due to the nature of the project being within 19 private residential gardens, it is unlikely that enhancement recommendations will be maintained. The following suggestions would be best discussed with the residents of the properties.

Birds

7.3. As some of the properties already have bird feeders and nest boxes fixed to the wall, it is recommended that these are replaced once the new retaining wall is constructed. It is recommended that wall-mounted bird boxes suitable for species such as sparrows or swifts should be installed.

Amphibians and Reptiles

7.4. Gaps in the fences at ground level, measuring approximately 15cm x 15cm will vastly improve the connectivity of the gardens for these species, as well as for hedgehogs.

Invertebrates

7.5. A dedicated insect box, such as the Woodstone Insect Block, should be installed on a the south-facing wall.

7.6. At least two bee bricks, such as the Green & Blue Bee Brick, can be integrated on the south-facing wall.

7.7. If neither of these can be mounted on the flat of the wall, they can be mounted on the top instead.

Wildlife Beneficial Landscaping Scheme

7.8. Any future landscape planting should seek to enhance biodiversity, improve connectivity to the surrounding habitats and provide food and shelter for a wide range of wildlife. All amenity planting and formally landscaped areas should be designed using a variety of plant species beneficial for wildlife. These do not necessarily have to be native but should be chosen for their ability to provide nectar or fruit and should be non-invasive species. There are a number of specialist seed mixes available specific to certain soil types, growing conditions and designed to benefit different groups of species such as bees or butterflies and moths.

7.9. All habitats should be managed in a suitable way to encourage a wide variety of insects and other wildlife to use the site.

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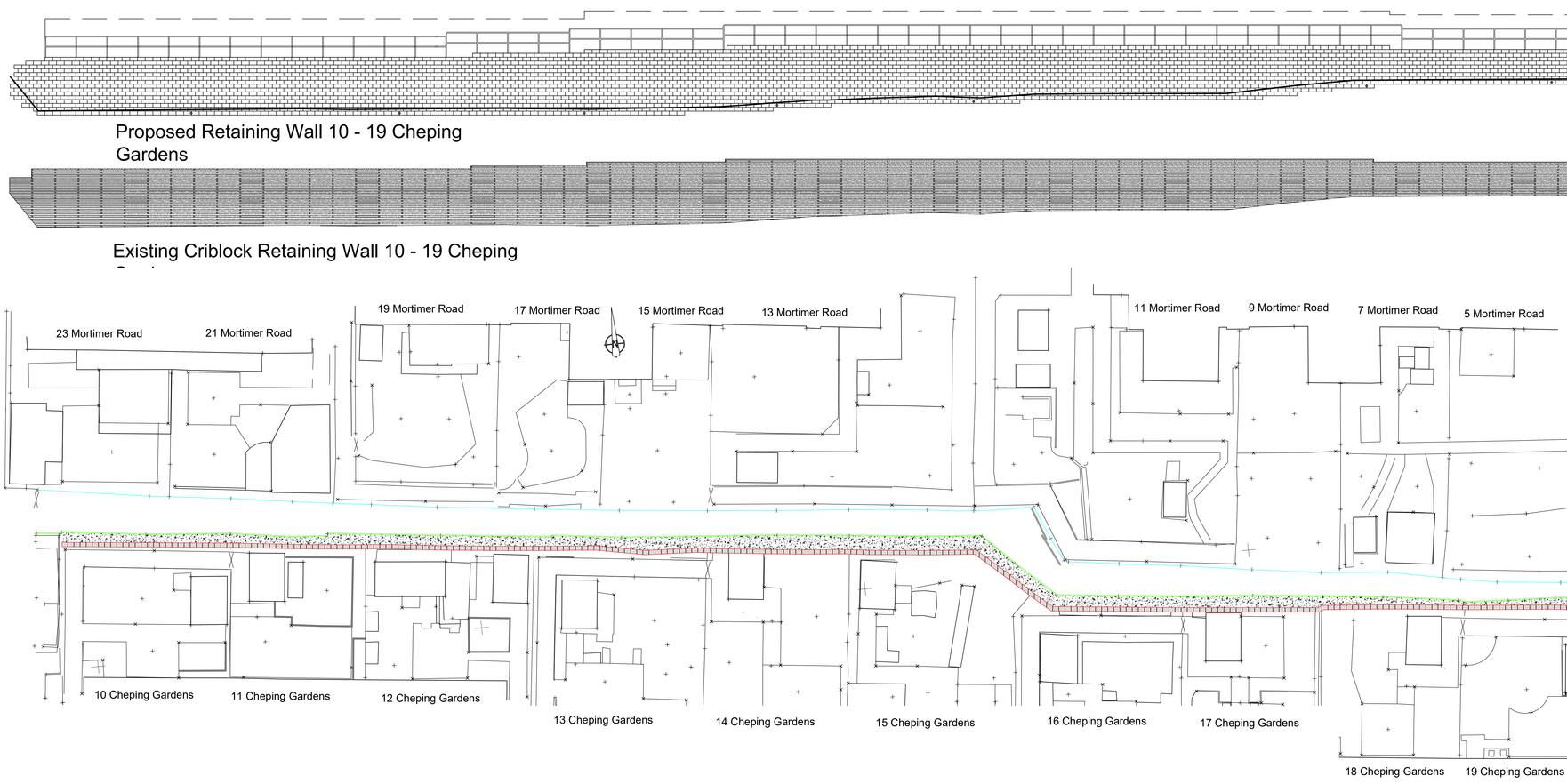
APPENDICES

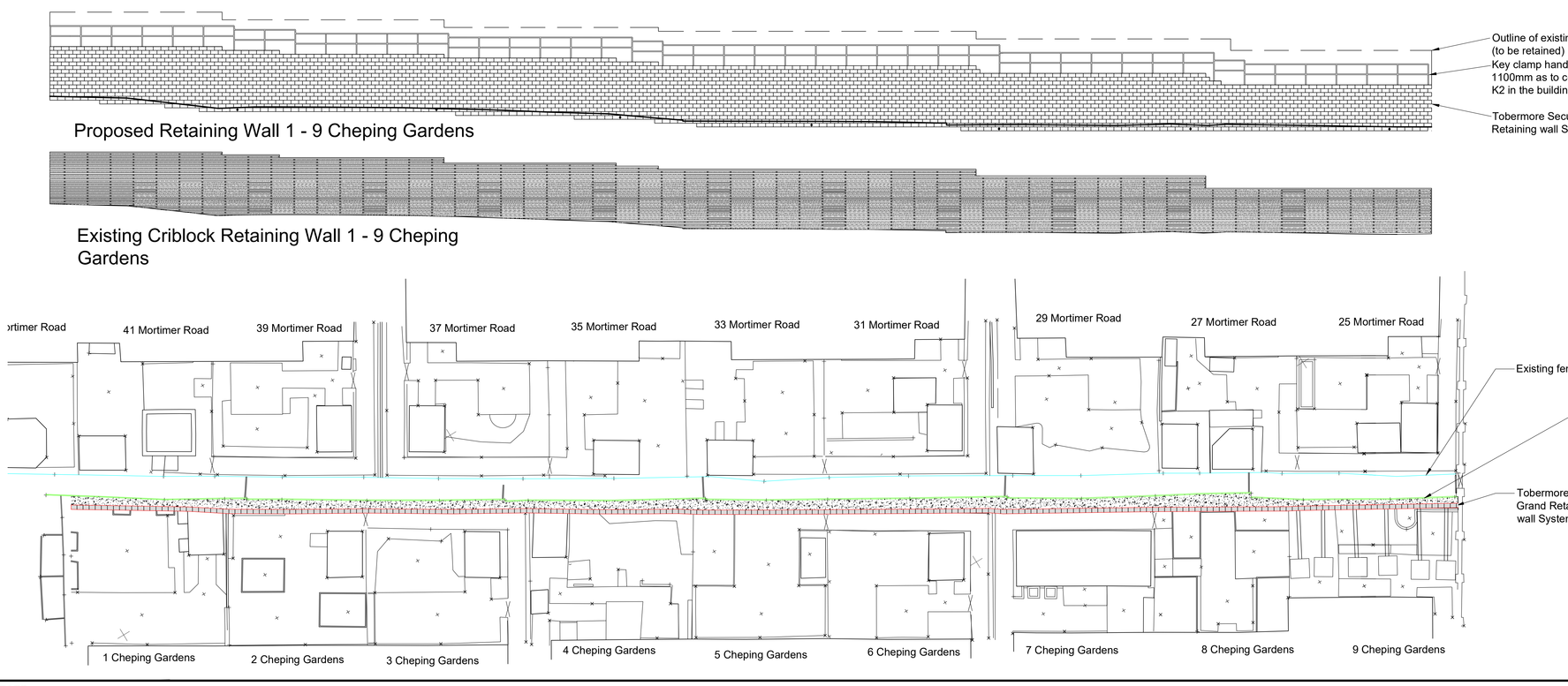
APPENDIX 1 - BREEDING BIRD DATA RETURNED FROM HBIC

Table 1: Notable bird records within 2km of the site

Species	Number of records
Avocet	1
Bar-tailed Godwit	1
Barn Owl	5
Black redstart	1
Black-tailed Godwit	5
Bullfinch	16
Common Tern	1
Cuckoo	4
Curlew	9
Fieldfare	7
Firecrest	16
Golden plover	1
Grasshopper warbler	1
Greenfinch	11
Hawfinch	1
Herring gull	13
Honet buzzard	1
House Martin	6
House sparrow	13
Kingfisher	13
Lapwing	6
Lesser redpoll	4
Linnet	7
Little egret	9
Little ringed plover	1
Marsh harrier	1
Mediterranean gull	3
Merlin	1
Mistle thrush	12
Osprey	7
Peregrine falcon	3

Red kite	19
Reed bunting	3
Ring ouzel	1
Sandwich tern	1
Scaup	1
Skylark	13
Spotted flycatcher	2
Starling	13
Swift	4
Tree pipit	1
Whimbrel	5
Whinchat	1
White stork	6
Wood warbler	1
Woodcock	2
Yellowhammer	2





Cheping Gardens

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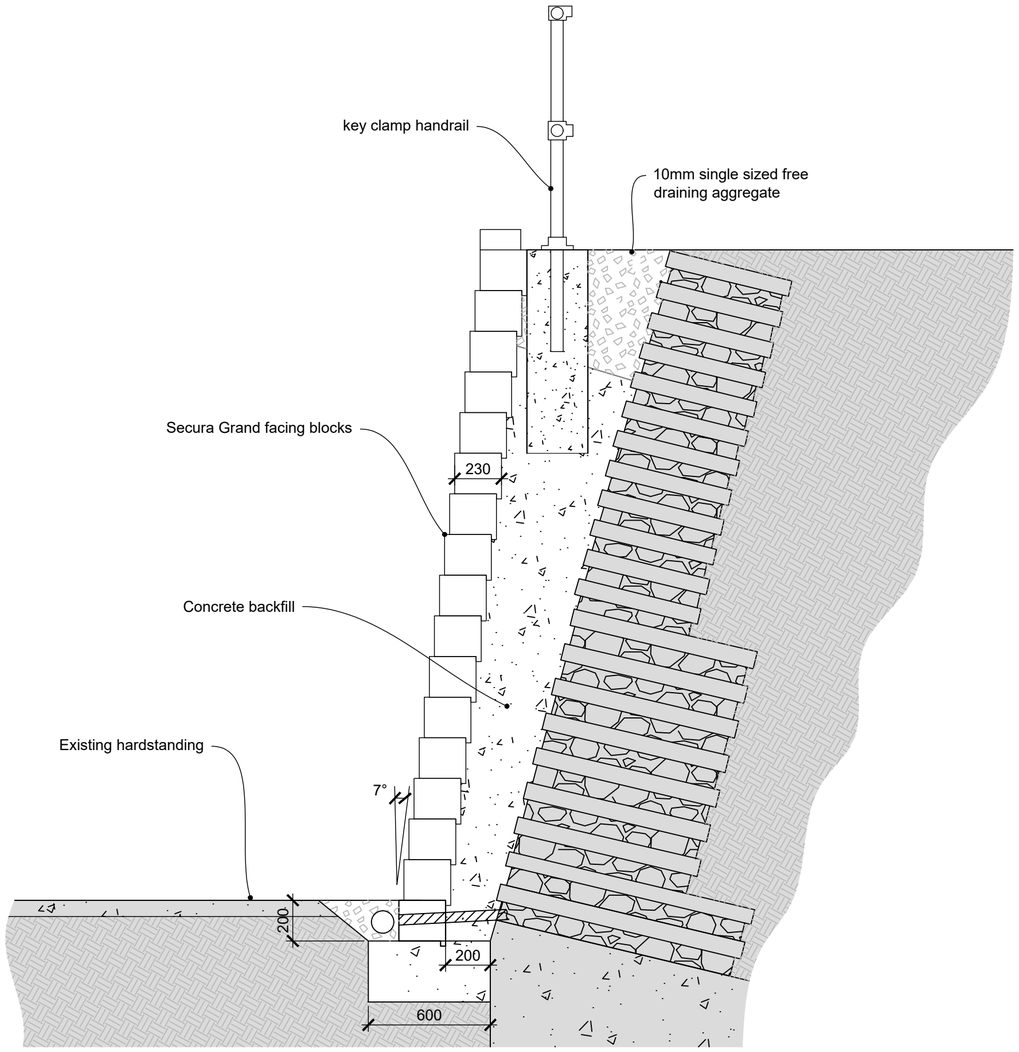
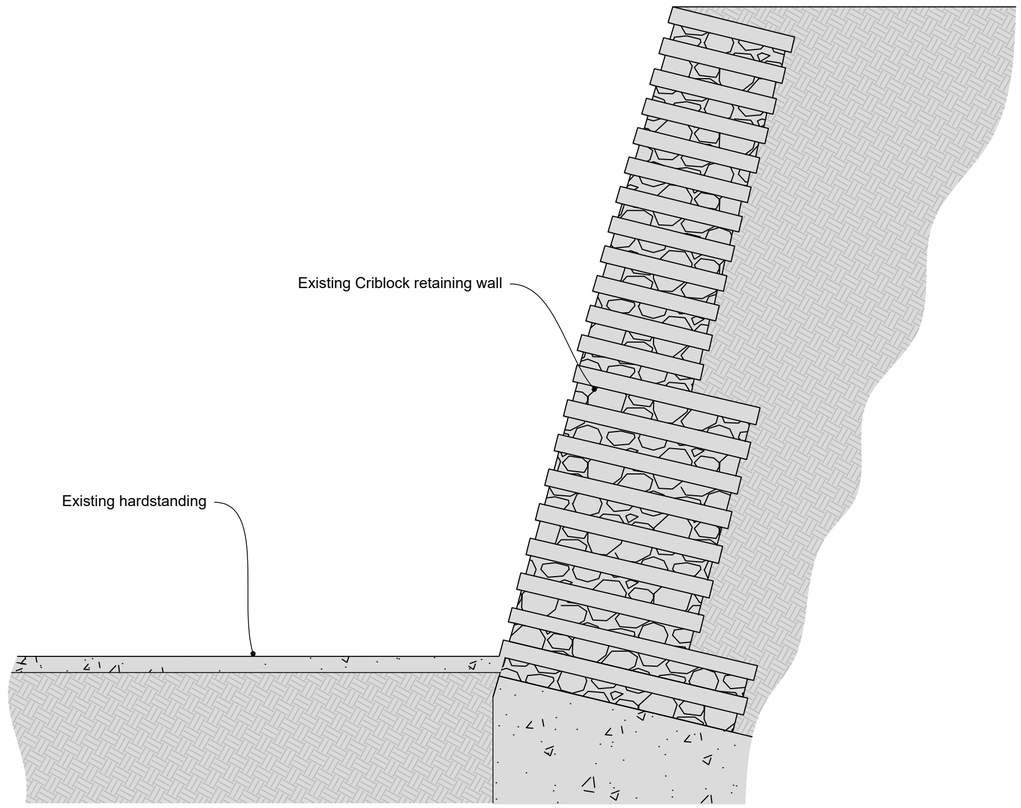
10 0 10 20 50 100mm Natural Scale



Proposed Retaining Wall

Scale 1:20



Existing Retaining Wall

Scale 1:20

Rev.	Details	Date	Rev. by	Chkd by
.	.	.	.	.

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CLIENT
VIVID Homes

PROJECT TITLE AND ADDRESS
Cheping Gardens
Botley
Southampton
SO30 2FW

DRAWING TITLE
Existing & Proposed Sections

RICS The mark of property professionalism worldwide
cabe chartered association of building engineers
partner LABC

SCALE - 1:20
0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1.0 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2.0 [m]

Cheping Gardens

Reason for issue
- [ ] Sketch Proposal
- [ ] Planning Application
- [ ] Building Regulations
- [ ] Tender
- [ ] Construction

SCALE	DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY	DATE
1:20@A2	JLH	JWF	Jan'2026

PROJECT NUMBER	DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION
25027	03	.

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