



Newt Conservation Partnership

Planning, Design and Access Statement
Incorporating Bird Hazard Assessment and Agricultural Land
Classification

for Planning Application reference: PP-12767845

Land at Rowley Green Meadow, Stoke Park Farm

Proposed new pond complex of up to seven new clean water wildlife ponds at Stoke Park
Farm, Eastleigh

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January 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 This design and access statement relates to the proposed creation of a pond complex at Rowley Green Meadow at Stoke Park Farm in Eastleigh. We would like to create of a mosaic of seven clean water wildlife ponds with associated hedge and tree planting in Rowley Green Meadow to increase the biodiversity value of the site and provide suitable breeding habitat for great crested newt (GCN).

1.2 Figure 1 shows the proposed plan for the whole of Rowley Green Meadow, with the application site encompassing the new ponds, spoil disposal and access route for machinery shown in red – see also the Location, Site, and Landscape plans submitted with the application.

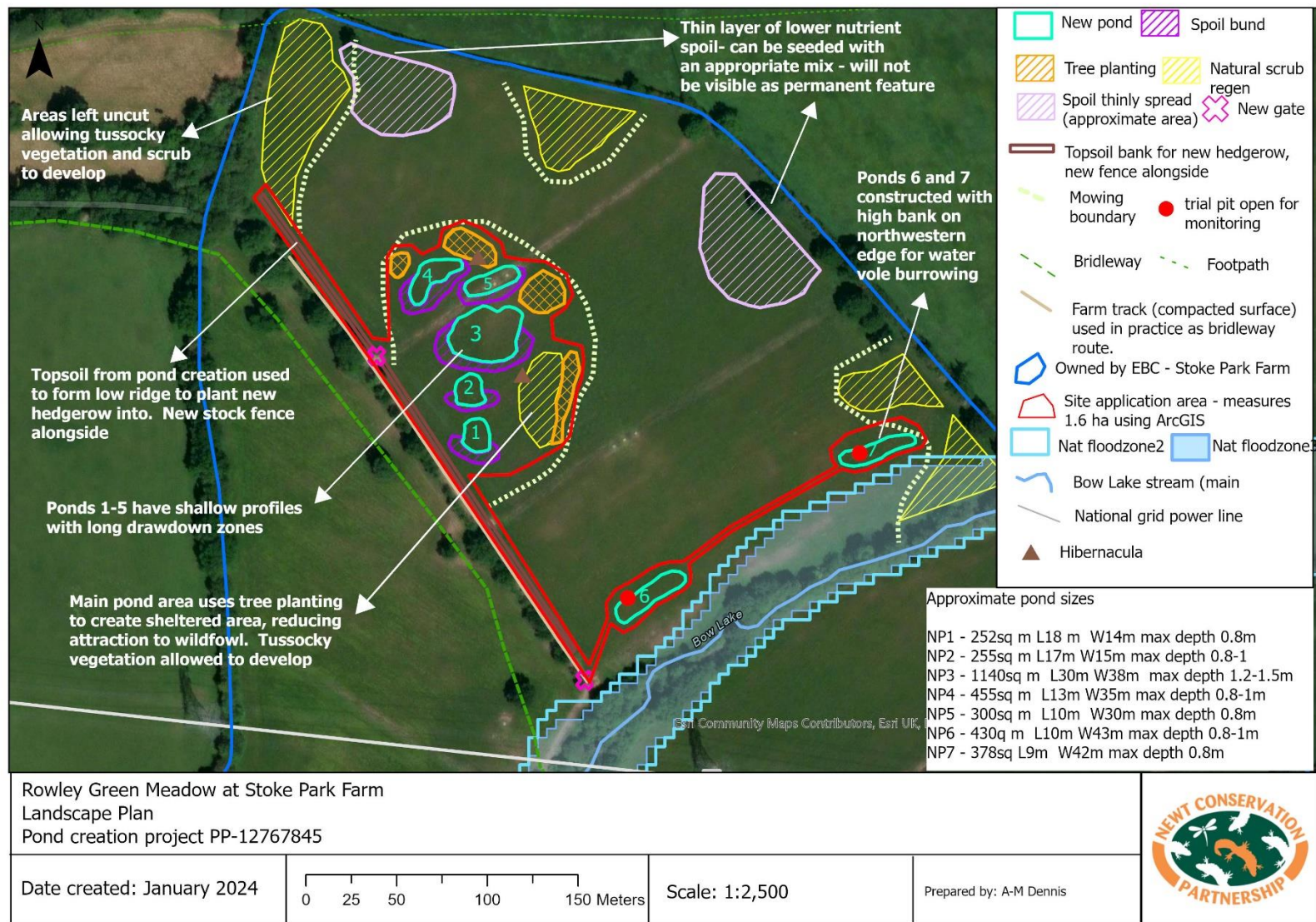


Figure 1: Landscape plan of proposed nature conservation project in Rowley Green Meadow

1.3 Stoke Park Farm is owned and managed by Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC). The site was acquired by EBC in 2022.

1.4 The ponds will provide breeding habitat for GCN on the site. This will support EBC's GCN Organisational Licence (WML-OR112) by providing 'Compensation land' which contributes to the landscape-scale conservation strategy for the species, as well as providing critical habitat for other freshwater species.

1.5 This statement outlines the principles and processes that have been undertaken to understand the context of the site and inform the design of the ponds. It is underpinned by a series of supporting documents that have also been submitted as part of this planning application (See section 2)

2. Supporting documents

Location Plan 1:5,000 scaled to A3

Site Plan 1:2,500 scaled to A4

Landscape Plan 1:2,500 scaled to A4

Pond Design diagrams (including cross sections)

Biodiversity Checklist

Ecological Appraisal

Heritage Statement

Flood Risk Assessment

Statement of Community Involvement

Noise and Lighting Assessment

P35 Stoke Park Farm - Preliminary Environmental Appraisal (Ecus 2023)

Land Management Review Stoke Park Farm HP727269 Management Plan (EBC)

Correspondence with National Grid

Site survey – topographical drawings

3. Background

3.1 GCN are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, are a Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework and Listed as a European Protected Species under Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive.

3.2 GCN Organisational Licence (WML-OR112) was granted by Natural England for a GCN District Licensing scheme developed by NatureSpace Partnership (NSP), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) and Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT). Both NGOs are the leading national organisations setting best practice for pond and amphibian conservation, and advise government on these issues.

3.3 Staff are seconded from the latter two organisations to the Newt Conservation Partnership (NCP). NCP is a community-benefit society whose sole purpose is creating, managing and monitoring high quality habitat for GCN (Compensation habitat), using funds from development. The Newt Conservation Partnership is working with landowners in over 60 Local Planning Authorities in England to deliver the creation and long-term management of clean water wildlife ponds and terrestrial habitat for GCN. The scheme aims to increase the number of high-quality, clean water ponds and landscape connectivity to create a strategic network of favourable habitats where newt populations can thrive.

3.4 Eastleigh Borough Council joined the Licence as part of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region on 1st August 2023.

3.5 Rowley Green Meadow at Stoke Park Farm has been identified as a potential Compensation site. This Compensation site will be secured for at least 25 years under legal agreement with the landowner which includes a management plan to maintain the habitat created in good condition for the long term.

4. Aims

4.1 The proposed work aims to increase the size and extent of the GCN population and associated wetland wildlife by:

- Providing long-term high-quality habitat for GCN, with management funded for the full agreement period to ensure suitable condition.
- Creating a clean water pond complex which will provide habitat for GCN and a range of wetland species.
- Improving connectivity between sites by adding stepping stones in the landscape.

4.2 The proposed work will also improve the range and quality of other habitats at the site. This will be achieved by:

- Planting a new 350 m hedgerow made up of mixed native species suitable for the site.
- Planting small copses of native trees suitable for the site.
- Increasing the amount of natural scrub regeneration through management.
- Creating hibernacula suitable for amphibians.
- Sowing a suitable wildflower mix in some areas of Rowley Green Meadow outside the application site – the seed mix will be determined in agreement with the EBC Ecology and Trees Manager taking into account the results of soil nutrient surveys.
- Managing part of the site as a hay meadow.

5. Site details

5.1 Location

5.1.1 Rowley Green Meadow is at the northeastern corner of Stoke Park Farm, which is owned by EBC. It lies within EBC and Bishopstoke Parish Council's administrative areas. Stoke Park Farm is approximately 1km east of Eastleigh and is on the northeastern border of Bishopstoke.

5.1.2 Stoke Park Farm was operated as a dairy farm prior to 2021. The whole site measures approximately 103.12ha. A Preliminary Environmental Appraisal (PEA) carried out for EBC by Ecus Ltd in January 2023 identified that it "primarily comprised arable land (pasture) with pockets of woodland, hedgerows, lines of trees and farm buildings including a residential property", and that it "is surrounded by woodland to the south, arable fields to the north and suburban areas to the east and west".

5.1.3 Rowley Green Meadow measures approximately 8 hectares and comprises former arable and intensively managed pasture. It is bordered by hedgerows to the north and east, the Bow Lake (stream) to the south, and a bridleway to the west.

5.1.4 The application site is within Rowley Green Meadow and measures 1.6 hectares.

5.1.5 The central grid reference for Rowley Green Meadow is SU 47839 20946. The grid reference for the farm buildings and hardstanding at Stoke Park Farm is SU 47933 20268. The central grid reference for the application site is SU 47776 20921.

5.1.6 Figure 2 shows the locations of Stoke Park Farm, Rowley Green Meadow, and the application site within Rowley Green Meadow.

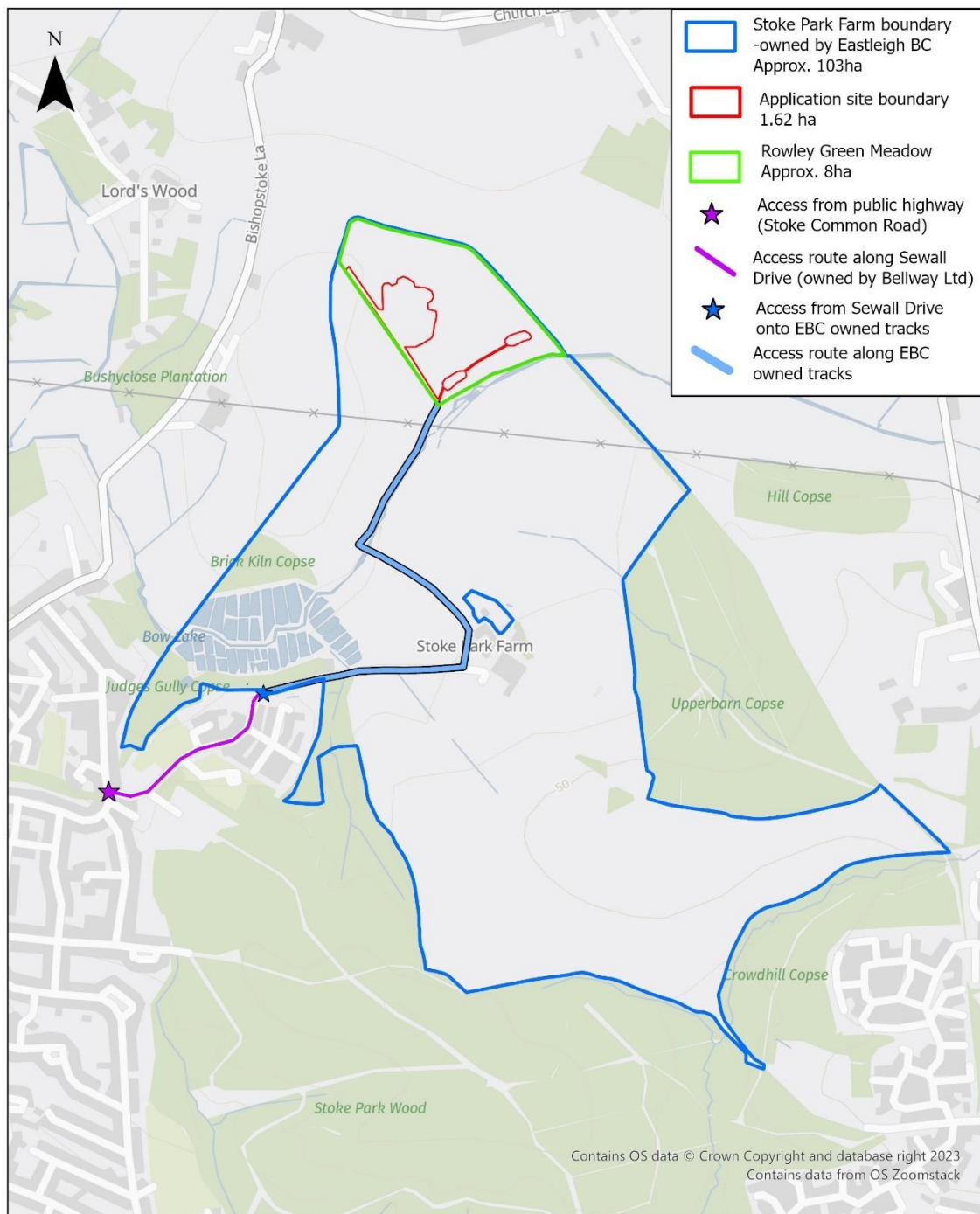


Figure 2 - location and access points

Date created: November 2023

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Scaled to A4

0 50 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Created by: Anna-Marie Dennis



Figure 2: Stoke Park Farm location and access points

5.2 Access points

5.2.1 Vehicular access to Stoke Park Farm is via a tarmac track from Sewall Drive, off Stoke Common Road. Stoke Common Road is part of the public highway. Sewall Drive is owned by Bellway Limited and managed by Trinity. EBC has a right of access for any purpose over Sewall Drive but the owner and managing agents will be informed.

5.2.2 The tarmac track finishes with an area of hardstanding suitable for parking vehicles and storing equipment, near to the old farm buildings.

5.2.3 Access from this area to the application site is on hardstanding tracks previously used to access all parts of the farm.

5.2.4 There are two main access points into Rowley Green Meadow from the bridleway/farm track to the west. Each access point includes a small area of hardstanding just inside the meadow. A wire fence with wooden posts (which is in a poor state of repair) runs alongside the track/bridleway, with detachable spring sections at the access points.

6.2.4 Figure 2 shows the access to the application site from the public highway.

5.3 Topography

5.3.1 Rowley Green Meadow generally slopes from the northern boundary down to the Bow Lake (stream) on the southern boundary, with a low lying area in the western section. A topographical survey of Rowley Green Meadow was undertaken in October 2023 – see Figure 3. Ponds have been proposed in the lower lying areas of the field to maximise their surface-water catchment.

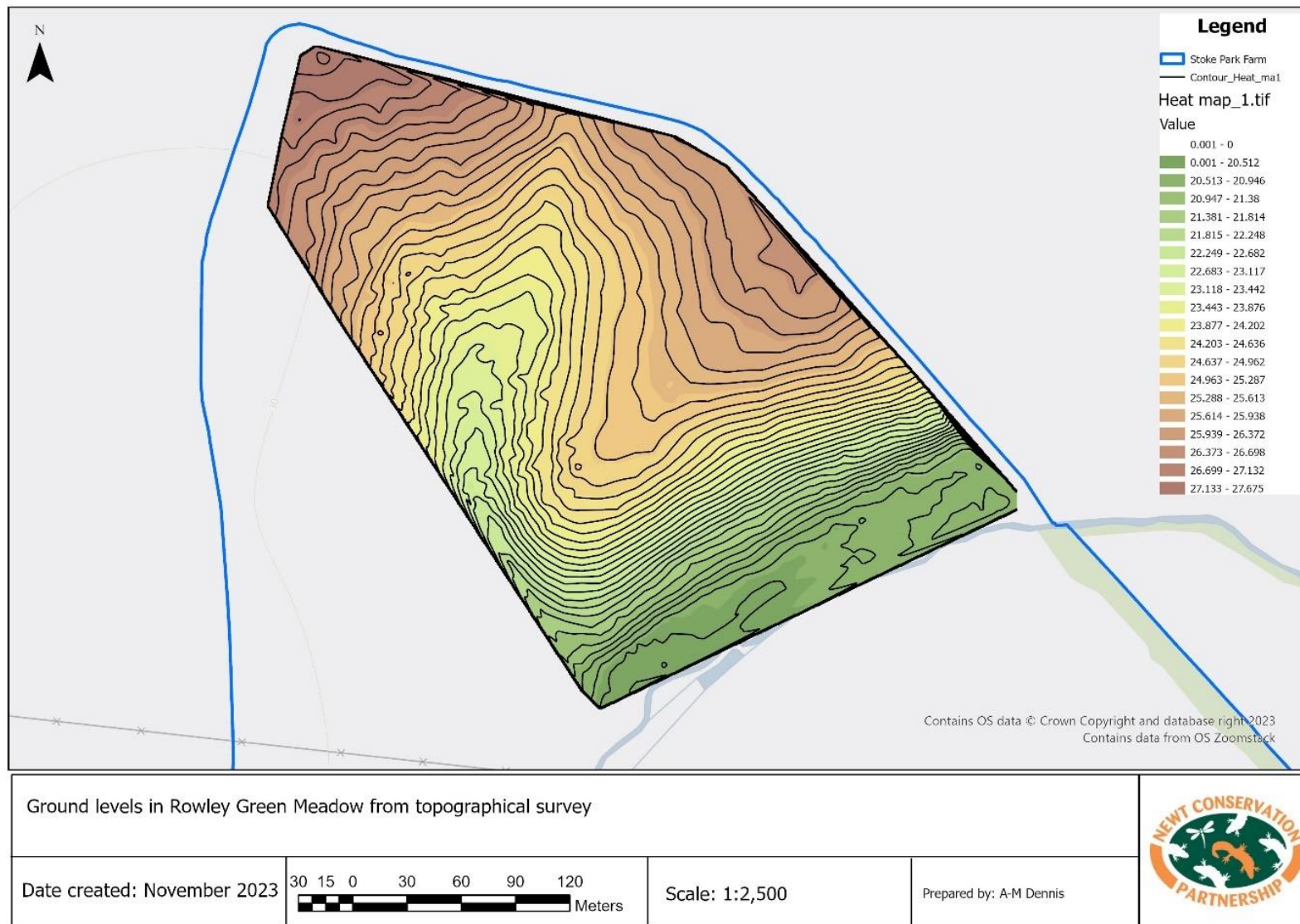


Figure3: Ground levels and contours from the Rowley Green Meadow topographical survey

5.4 Geology, substrate, soils and agricultural land classification

5.4.1 The British Geological Society GeolIndex Onshore viewer indicates London Clay Formation throughout Rowley Green Meadow, with some Alluvium at the southeastern boundary by Bow Lake.

5.4.2 The 'Soilscape' data held on the DEFRA MAGIC mapping application shows that Rowley Green Meadow is classified as having 'Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils' with 'impeded drainage'. The characteristic semi-natural habitats of this soil type are lowland seasonally wet pastures and woodlands.

5.4.3 Test pits were dug in September 2023 and found impermeable clays in the proposed areas for ponds 1-5, and clay with gravels in the areas of ponds 6 and 7 (see figure 1 for locations). The test pits at 6 and 7 have been kept open to monitor the water levels.

5.4.4 Rowley Green Meadow, along with much of the rest of the farm, had field drains (plastic perforated pipe set in gravel in a grid pattern) installed in the 1970's. Unfortunately, the drainage maps have been not located, however ariel photos have revealed the location of some of the drains. They appear to drain to a main drain along the south-western boundary of Rowley Green Meadow which then enters the Bow Lake at approximately SU 47839 20751. Drains will be removed and blocked in the immediate area of the ponds to ensure that they do not interfere with the ponds' function. Neighbouring land is higher than Rowley Green Meadow so will not be affected by any changes.

5.4.5 Figure 4 shows some of the test pits within the application site.





Figure 4: Test pits in Rowley Green Meadow (see Figure 1 for locations).

5.4.6 The DEFRA MAGIC mapping application shows that Rowley Green Meadow is classified as Grade 4 agricultural land. It does not therefore constitute ‘best and most versatile agricultural land’ as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.5 Services

5.5.1 Underground and overground services within Rowley Green Meadow have been checked using LineSearch and Dig Dat. No underground or overground services have been located within the application area.

5.5.2 There is a National Grid electricity transmission line running approximately east to west to the south of the application area. The nearest point of the application area is approximately 50 m from the route of the power lines, and the nearest point of excavation is over 90 m from the nearest pylon. Figure 5 shows the location of the power line and pylon tower in relation to the application site and access route.

5.5.3 National Grid have been contacted about the proposed plans. They have provided CAD profile drawings of the line and advised that work can proceed with caution utilising the safe clearances shown on the profile drawing and in accordance with their guidance documents¹. The drawings and correspondence have been submitted as supporting documents.

¹ National Grid Technical Guidance note 287 Third-party guidance for working near National Grid Electricity Transmission equipment [Working near electricity equipment.pdf \(nationalgrid.com\)](https://www.nationalgrid.com/working-near-electricity-equipment.pdf)

5.5.4 Specific risk assessments would be required if work were to take place near the power line (measured at 10m on the ground from the line, taking into account movement) however the application site is not affected.

5.5.5 The access route on the farm tracks will pass below the power line. The appointed contractor will carry out a risk assessment for large machinery accessing the site prior to work commencing, using the guidance documents and profile drawings.

5.5.6 There are cattle drinking troughs within Rowley Green Meadow. EBC will ensure that the troughs are removed, and the water supply has been disconnected before any excavation starts.

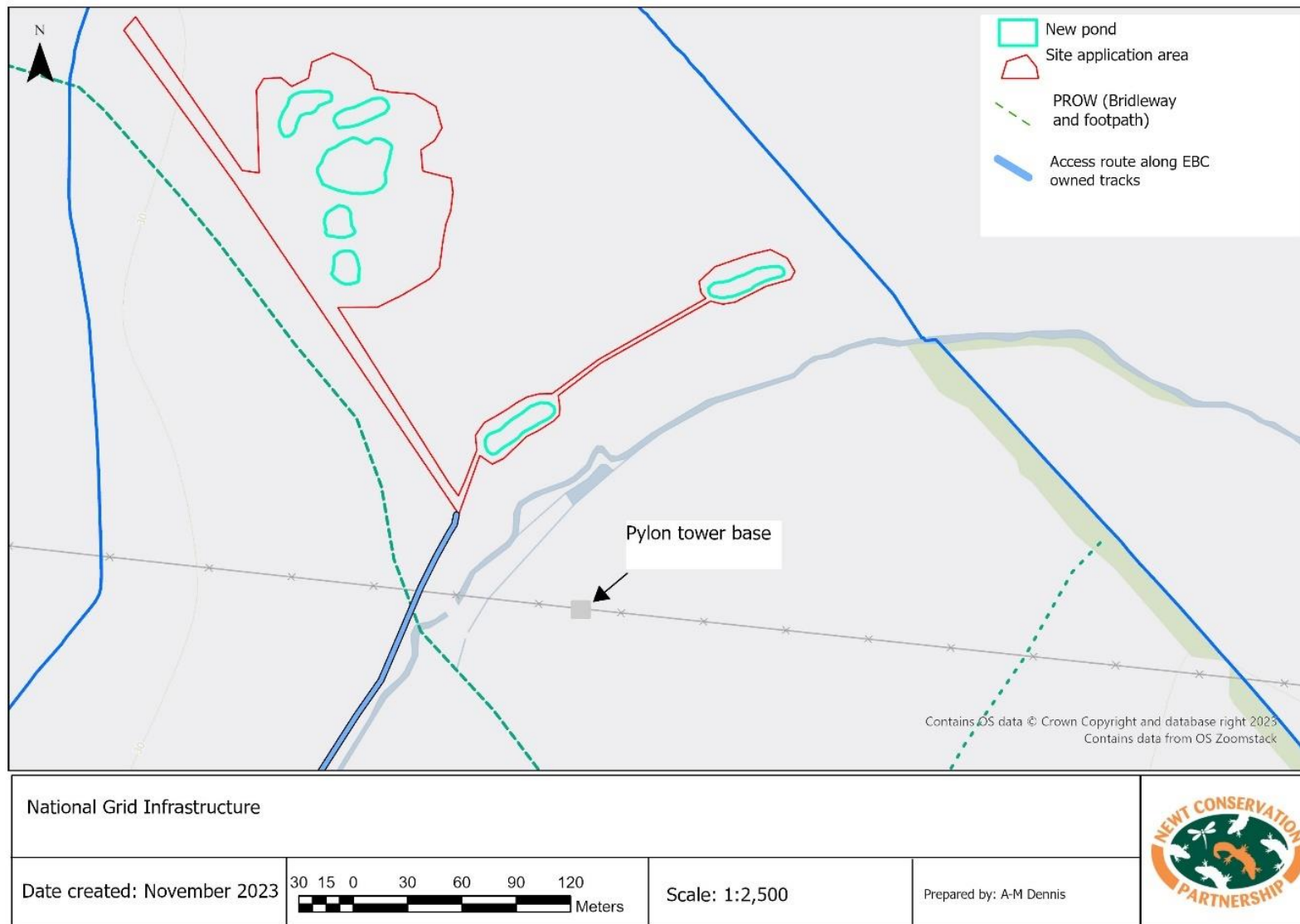


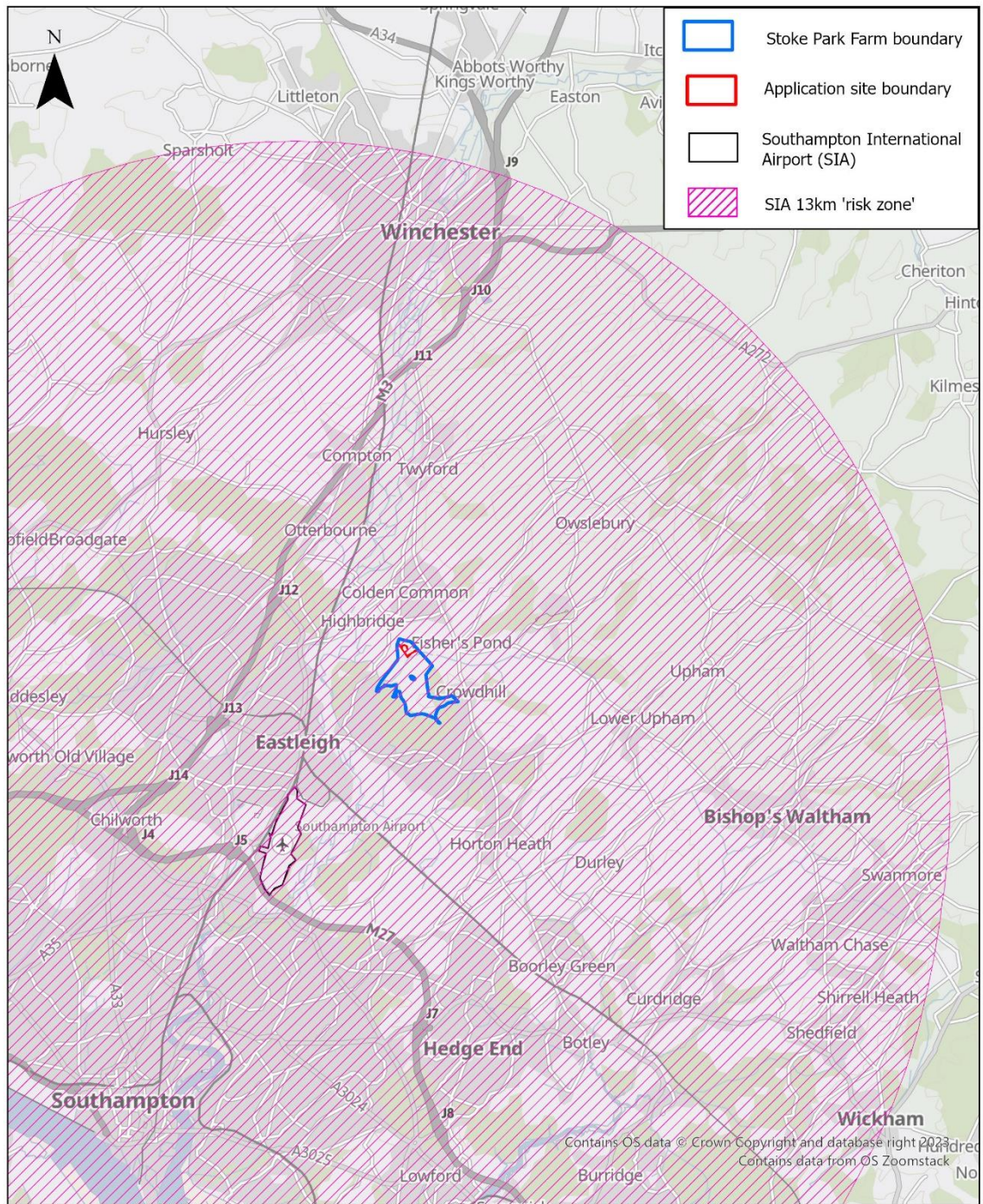
Figure 5: National Grid powerline in relation to application site and access

5.6 Aviation Risk Zone

5.6.1 Rowley Green Meadow is within the 13 km Risk Zone of Southampton International Airport. Figure 6 shows the application site in relation to the risk zone around the airport.

5.6.2 Projects that include water features or landscaping which have the potential to increase the risk of bird strike must be forwarded to the Southampton International Airport Ltd (SIAL) Safeguarding Officer for assessment. Draft plans have been submitted to SIAL for review, and they have indicated that they will not object to the application (emails appended to this document).

5.6.3 The risk of bird strike has been taken into account in the design of the scheme and this is fully discussed in section 7.11.



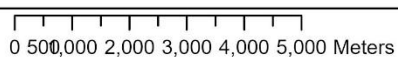
Application site in relation to SIA Risk Zone		
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Figure 6: SIAL risk zone in relation to application site

5.7 Statutory nature conservation designations and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

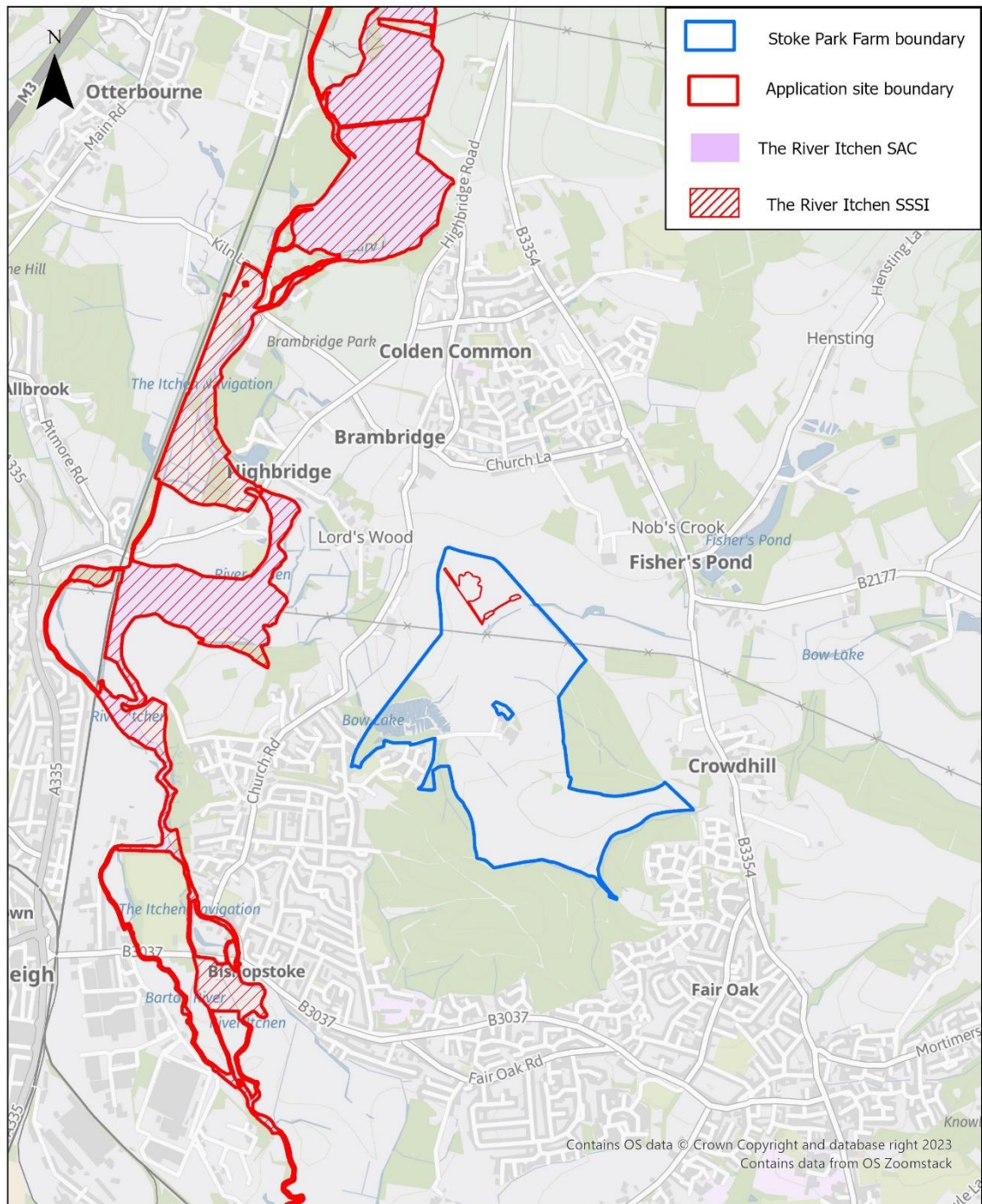
5.7.1 The location of designated sites was checked using Defra's MAGIC mapping application. MAGIC shows that the application site is within the Impact Risk Zone for The River Itchen SSSI and The River Itchen SAC. Both sites are approximately 740m to the east at the closest point to the application site. This application is expected to have no impact on the SSSI or SAC due to the lack of impact pathways – a shadow HRA has been submitted as part of the planning application.

5.7.2 Searches using MAGIC show that Rowley Green Meadow itself has no statutory nature conservation designations.

5.7.3 Searches carried out by Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) for the PEA in April 2023 found that the application site is not locally designated as a SINC.

5.7.4 The same searches found that six SINC's are within or border Stoke Park Farm. The project is expected to have no negative impact on these SINC's.

5.7.5 Figure 7 shows the location of the designated sites in relation to the application site. Full detail and discussion is contained in the Ecological Assessment submitted as part of the planning application. The PEA (Ecus 2023) has been submitted as a supporting document as part of the planning application.



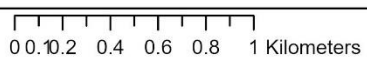
Application site in relation to designated conservation sites		
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Figure 7: Statutory nature conservation designations in relation to application site

5.8 Priority habitats

5.8.1 Priority habitats were checked using Defra's MAGIC mapping application. There are no priority habitats mapped in the site application area or in Rowley Green Meadow.

5.8.2 There is a small area of Priority Broadleaved Woodland within Stoke Park Farm. The project will have no negative impact on the woodland.

5.8.3 Full detail and discussion is contained in the Ecological Assessment submitted as part of the planning application.

5.9 Protected species

5.9.1 Searches through HBIC carried out for the PEA in April 2023 found no records of protected species in the site application area, Rowley Green Meadow or Stoke Park Farm. There is a possibility of the site or nearby areas being used by otters, badgers, hedgehogs and nesting birds.

5.9.2 Water vole may be present within 500m of the application area. Two of the ponds have been designed to provide suitable breeding habitat for this species.

5.9.3 Full detail and discussion is contained in the Ecological Assessment submitted as part of the planning application.

5.10 Archaeology and historic environment

5.10.1 We have checked Hampshire County Council's online Historical Environment Record and contacted the County Archaeologist. Due to the location and nearby finds of prehistoric flint tools, we will appoint a contractor to carry out a 'watching brief' on the pond construction.

5.10.2 A separate Heritage statement has been submitted as part of the application.

5.11 Flood zones

5.11.1 Flood Zones were checked using GIS layers held by the agent and the online 'Flood Map for planning' service. The flood zones are shown in Figure 8.

5.11.2 The south-eastern boundary of Rowley Green Meadow is formed by a stream (named Bow Lake) which is classified as a main river and is a tributary of the River Itchen. The pond creation work is approximately 25m away at the nearest point from Bow Lake. A portion of Rowley Green Meadow along the stream is modelled as flood zone 3 with a smaller area of flood zone 2.

5.11.3 The application area is in Flood Zone 1 meaning it has a low probability of flooding. No ponds will be excavated, or spoil spread within flood zones 2 or 3, and the proposed works will not impact the floodplain.

5.11.4 Although the application site is within Zone 1, it is over 1 hectare which triggers the requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment, which has been submitted as part of the planning application.

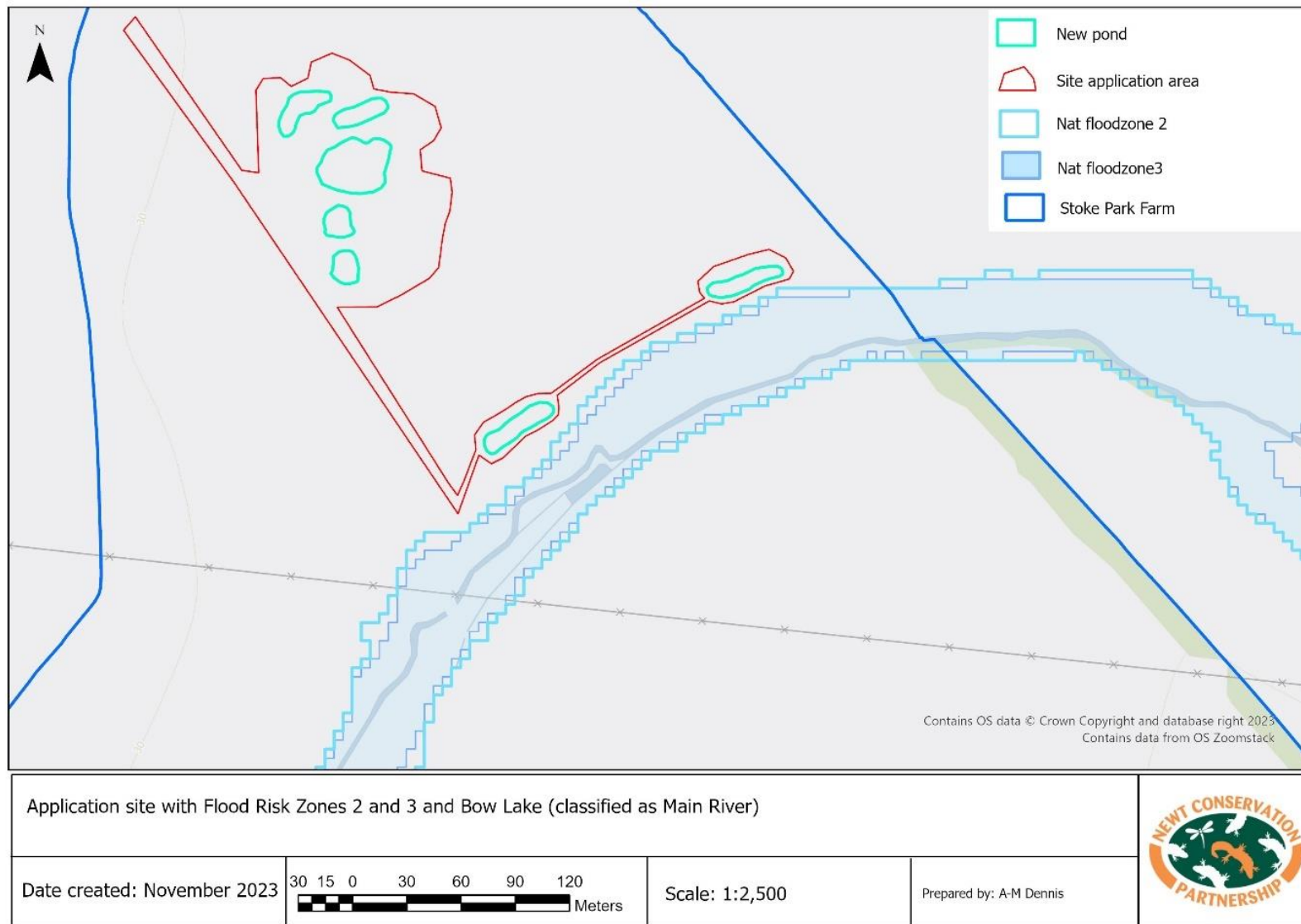


Figure 8: Flood zones in relation to application site

5.12 Public Rights of Way (PROW)

5.12.1 A bridleway runs parallel to Rowley Green Meadow. The farm track, which is slightly to the east of the mapped PROW is in routine use as the route. The design takes into account views from the bridleway, see section 7 Design.

5.12.2 A footpath runs to the north of the application site. It is currently screened by hedging and vegetation and will not be affected.

5.12.3 The footpath, bridleway and farm track routes are shown in Figure 1.

5.13 Opportunities

5.13.1 The site currently comprises improved grassland and has low biodiversity. The project will increase the biodiversity of the site by providing new wetland, scrub and woodland habitats. The nearby existing wetland and woodland areas will provide a source of species to colonise the new habitats.

6. Context

6.1 Stoke Park Farm

6.1.1 EBC's overall vision for Stoke Park Farm is to restore and enhance habitats, increase community access to nature, provide education opportunities and provide income streams.

6.1.2 Stoke Park Farm has been taken out of agriculture as part of a Nutrient Neutrality agreement between Natural England and EBC.

6.1.3 Around the site as a whole, there are plans for new SANGS, investigation of the potential for BNG credits and investigation of other education and community access opportunities. This project would complement other proposals within the site and contribute to the overall vision supported by secured funding for habitat creation and long term management.

6.2 District Licensing - Compensation habitat

6.2.1 If planning permission for this project is granted, EBC will be required to sign a 25-year legal agreement with NCP for the Rowley Green Meadow Compensation land.

6.2.2 NCP will pay all of the capital costs of the pond creation, planting, fencing and seeding – providing habitat creation at no cost to EBC.

6.2.3 Under the terms of the legal agreement, NCP will also make an agreed annual payment to EBC for 25 years to cover the cost of managing the new ponds and the surrounding land.

6.2.4 NCP will monitor the new ponds and terrestrial habitat created and restored to ensure they reach the agreed standard and report the results to EBC and Natural England as part of the licence conditions.

6.2.5 NCP will provide ongoing management advice following annual monitoring.

6.3 Community benefits

6.3.1 Whilst Rowley Green Meadow itself will not be accessible to the public (to protect the ponds and surrounding habitat from regular disturbance), the scheme has been designed to allow members of the public views across the ponds and wider site. Low points will be maintained in the hedge (or at gateways) to create viewing points. In time, the site should be very aesthetically pleasing and provide excellent wildlife watching opportunities.

6.3.2 EBC will provide a small interpretation board at viewing points, explaining the conservation scheme.

6.3.3 There will be opportunity for volunteers to get involved with planting, hibernacula creation, hedgerow maintenance, scrub management and wildlife surveying.

6.3.4 The site can be used by EBC for organised education activities - with appropriate licencing in place as required.

6.4 Local Area Forum

6.4.1 An outline proposal to the Bishopstoke and Fair Oak Local Area Forum on 12th July 2023 was well received and councillors were happy for the proposal to be finalised and submitted to planning.

6.5 Hampshire Carp Fisheries

6.5.1 The NCP Project Officer had a useful informal site visit with the owners of Hampshire Carp Fishery to talk about the potential pond scheme and the existing freshwater wildlife on the fishery site. The wilder areas on the fishery site will be a source of wetland invertebrates and plants, which will colonise the new ponds naturally through direct movement in the case of flying invertebrates, and transfer of eggs, larva and seeds by birds and other wildlife.

6.6 Policy context

6.6.1 Habitat creation and enhancement at the application site fits well with the following EBC policies:

- EBC Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2032
- EBC Health and Wellbeing Corporate Strategy (2018)
- EBC Climate Change and Environmental Emergency Strategy
- EBC Tree Strategy 2022-2030

6.6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that “*development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported*”. This application is clearly demonstrated to be a biodiversity enhancement scheme.

7. Design

7.1 Overall Context

7.1.1 The application site lies within the South Hampshire Lowlands National Character Area and the Itchen Valley Character Area of the Hampshire County Council Integrated Character Assessments.

7.1.2 The area of the application site is described in the character assessment as pasture and arable fields with typically small copses. The proposed ponds and associated planting would retain this character and would not threaten any of the key qualities of the character area.

7.2 The project design- overview

7.2.1 The proposed design is for a main complex of five small ponds of varied sizes, depths and characters and two additional ponds in the southern part of the site that will provide habitat for both GCN and water vole, along with a range of other freshwater species.

7.2.2 A new hedgerow running along the western boundary of Rowley Green Meadow will provide terrestrial habitat for GCN and other wildlife, connectivity between existing and new habitats, and shelter.

7.2.3 Planting small groups of native trees will improve terrestrial habitat structure for GCN and other wildlife. Scrub and tussocky vegetation will be allowed to develop between the ponds and the planted areas to provide additional terrestrial habitat for GCN and other wildlife.

7.2.4 Hibernacula will be created at several locations, to provide bespoke amphibian hibernation sites.

7.2.5 Outside of the planning application site, the rest of Rowley Green Meadow will also be included in the Compensation land under Management Agreement between NCP and EBC. The grassland will be managed with an annual hay cut with some areas allowed regenerate naturally and develop scrub.

7.2.6 The proposed design is shown in Figure 1, and in the Landscape Plan submitted with the planning application.

7.3 Site selection

7.3.1 The site is being proposed as Compensation land under the District Licence held by EBC (District Level Licensing for Works Affecting Great Crested Newts: Organisational Licence WML-OR112). Compensation land sites are screened and selected by NCP to ensure that they will contribute to the GCN District Licensing scheme Conservation Strategy. Rowley Green Meadow is a suitable site because:

- It is within the modelled Strategic Opportunity Area.
- It is within 1 km of a GCN record, and with other GCN records in the nearby landscape.
- There is some existing suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN and opportunity to create and manage more.
- Public access can be managed, meaning that the risk of deliberate fish introduction and disturbance of ponds by dogs is reduced.
- There is space to create a complex of ponds and terrestrial habitat.

- The geology and substrate are suitable for pond creation.
- There are no current nutrient inputs into the immediate catchment, and water collected in test pits is showing low levels of nutrients, so clean water ponds can be created.
- It is in Flood Zone 1, with negligible risk of pollution or fish introduction.
- It currently has low biological diversity and clean water wildlife ponds will increase biodiversity.

7.4 Pond complex

7.4.1 The pond complex has been designed and will be created following best practice as described in the Million Ponds Project Toolkit (<http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/million-ponds/pond-creation-toolkit>) and specifically referring to Factsheet 4 at <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/pond-design.pdf>, the species dossier for Water voles at [Layout 2 \(b-cdn.net\)](https://freshwaterhabitats.b-cdn.net/app/uploads/2022/11/BIRDSTRIKE.pdf) and the factsheet on avoiding raising the risk of birdstrike at <https://freshwaterhabitats.b-cdn.net/app/uploads/2022/11/BIRDSTRIKE.pdf>.

7.4.2 Best Practice principles from the Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook [Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook \(froglife.org\)](http://froglife.org) and the Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook [Habitat Management Handbooks | Amphibian and Reptile Conservation \(arc-trust.org\)](http://arc-trust.org) are also followed.

7.4.3 The pond complex is designed to provide a range of conditions within the ponds, to maximise habitat diversity and benefit a wide range of species. Detailed designs and profiles have been submitted with the application. The key principles are as follows:

- Size – There will be range of pond surface areas, from 250 m² to just over 1000 m² (at maximum water level).
- Water source - The ponds will be fed by surface water and rainwater and are designed to retain water throughout the GCN breeding season (April-September).
- Profile – the ponds are designed with shallow slopes and long drawdown zones to provide the extensive shallows that are so important for many freshwater plants and animals. The two ponds nearest the Bow Lake stream are designed with one steep bank above the water's edge to allow water vole to create burrows. They are designed to be suitable for both GCN and water vole.
- Depth – The ponds will have varying depths; the deepest will be 1.5 m at the deepest point with the smaller ponds being no deeper than 0.8 m. In exceptionally dry years, the smaller ponds may dry which can be favourable for GCN in the long term because aquatic predators are reduced.
- Substrate – The clay substrate will hold water without the need for any liner. The base of the ponds will be rough and undulating creating a varying microtopography, important for the development of diverse wetland plant and invertebrate communities.
- Vegetation - will be left to establish naturally. No additional planting will take place. Generally, ponds colonise with plants very quickly. Planting will be considered 2-4 years after creation if needed, depending on monitoring results.

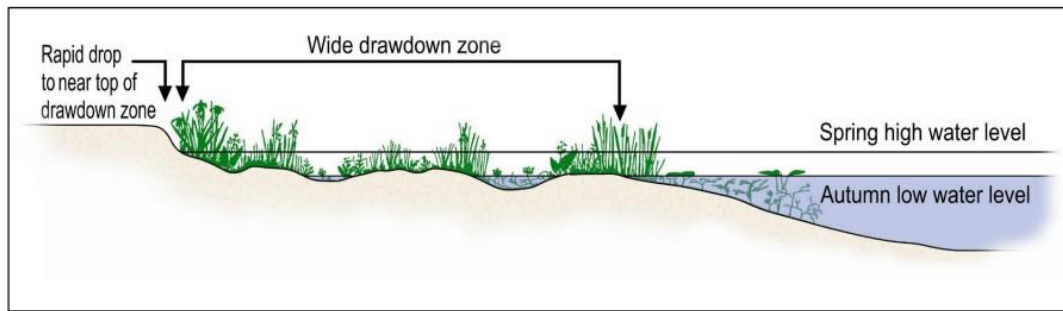


Figure 9: Illustration of ideal wildlife pond profiles from Freshwater Habitats Trust's Pond creation toolkit



B: Year One



C: Year Two





Figure 10: Photo series showing creation and development of new NCP GCN ponds over 5 years at another site in England.

7.5 Hedgerow

7.5.1 In time, the new hedge will provide excellent habitat for a wide range of invertebrates, birds, mammals and amphibians, as well as providing a useful link between existing wooded habitats and new scrub areas.

7.5.2 The 350 m hedge will be comprised of native species, with no one species making up more than 70% of the total. Species may include Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Field rose *Rosa arvensis*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Field maple *Acer campestre*, depending on availability at time of ordering.

7.5.3 It will be planted by a professional contractor into prepared ground as a staggered double row 40 cm apart with a minimum of 6 plants per metre. The plants will be 2-year-old transplants at least 450- 600 mm high with spiral tree guards.

7.5.4 There is no sign of rabbit grazing pressure in the site, but roe deer are present. Browsing damage will be monitored at annual visits and protection can be reviewed.

7.5.5 There are two existing trees (Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*) on the proposed hedge line which will be retained as standards. At least two additional standard trees will be planted along the hedgerow. These will be Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* at least 2 m tall and will be fitted with a stake and rubber tie, tree guards may also be required.

7.5.6 The hedge and standards will be planted by a professional contractor after the ponds have been constructed. This will be in the period 1 November to 31st March, to give the plants the best chance to establish.

7.5.7 The tree and hedge order will be agreed and approved by the EBC Ecology and Trees Manager before appointing a contractor.

7.5.8 Newt Conservation Partnership will arrange for replacement of failed hedge plants (where more than 10% have failed or gaps will be apparent) and standards for one year after initial planting, after which responsibility will revert to EBC. The Management Plan agreed between EBC and NCP will specify management actions for the first five years, after which it will be reviewed and updated with mutual consent.

7.6 Copses

7.6.1 The orange areas marked on the plan in Figure 1 will be planted with a suitable mix of native tree and shrub species by a professional contractor.

7.6.2 The planting will follow the advice for creating small scale native woodland from the Woodland Trust [Woodland Creation Guide \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk).

7.6.3 The new copses will in time provide excellent habitat for a wide range of invertebrates, birds, mammals and amphibians.

7.6.4 Tree species will be agreed and approved by the EBC Ecology and Trees Manager before ordering and appointing a contractor. Species may include Willow *Salix* species and Aspen *Populus tremula* as well as Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field maple and Crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. We will consult Hampshire Forest Partnership about the potential for sourcing Black poplar *Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia*.

7.6.5 NCP will arrange for replacement of failed trees (where more than 10% have failed) for one year after initial planting, after which responsibility will revert to EBC. The Management Plan agreed between EBC and NCP will specify management actions for the first five years, after which it will be reviewed and updated with mutual consent.

7.7 Scrub

7.7.1 The orange areas marked on the plan in Figure 1 will be left unmown for the first few years to allow scrub and tussocky vegetation to develop naturally. These will be marked with posts to ensure contractors can identify correct zones.

7.7.2 This will provide valuable habitat for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and small mammals. It will provide transition between existing and new hedges and woodland, and grassland.

7.7.3 The Management Plan agreed between EBC and NCP will specify management actions for the first five years, after which it will be reviewed and updated with mutual consent.

7.8 Hibernacula

7.8.1 A number of large hibernacula will be constructed around the site. This could be an excellent opportunity to involve volunteers, and can take place at any time during or after the pond construction.

7.8.2 Whilst there is limited research on the benefits of hibernacula for amphibians, particularly on sites with existing high quality habitat, they may be useful to amphibians occupying the site in the early

years of the project whilst the scrub, copses and new hedge are developing. They will also provide a deadwood resource for invertebrates.

7.8.3 They will be constructed following the guidelines in the Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook [Habitat Management Handbooks | Amphibian and Reptile Conservation \(arc-trust.org\)](https://arc-trust.org/publications/habitat-management-handbooks/).

The key points are:

- Approximately 4 m by 2 m, and 1 m deep.
- Close to a breeding site (within 250 m maximum) – in this case to potential breeding sites.
- In an area unlikely to flood.
- Within habitat likely to be used by amphibians, and in an area with minimal disturbance.

7.9 Grassland

Grassland in Rowley Green Meadow is mostly outside the site application area. An appropriate mowing regime will be agreed between EBC and NCP in the Management Plan. This is likely to consist of an annual cut (with all arisings removed, or piled) after wildflowers have seeded (generally mid-June/early July).

7.10 Safety of completed project

7.10.1 There is no public access to RGM.

7.10.2 NCP will arrange for a professional contractor to erect post and wire stock fencing to Hampshire Countryside Service design standards [designstandards-fencing.pdf \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://hants.gov.uk/media/1000000/designstandards-fencing.pdf) along the access track to the west of the field boundary, which is used as a bridleway. The fence will be erected before completion of the ponds.

7.10.3 There will be gates to allow machinery access, with padlocks and signage to be supplied and erected by EBC.

7.10.3 All of the ponds are relatively shallow and have gentle slopes.

7.10.4 EBC will supply and fit signs to the gates to inform the public that there is no access and to interpret the site and what can be seen.

7.11 Southampton Airport Risk Zone – Bird Hazard Assessment

7.11.1 The application site lies approximately 3.5 km from Southampton Airport and is within the 13 km risk zone within which SIAL monitor bird activity.

7.11.2 By law, the creation of waterbodies should not significantly increase the risk of birdstrike in an area above the background level.

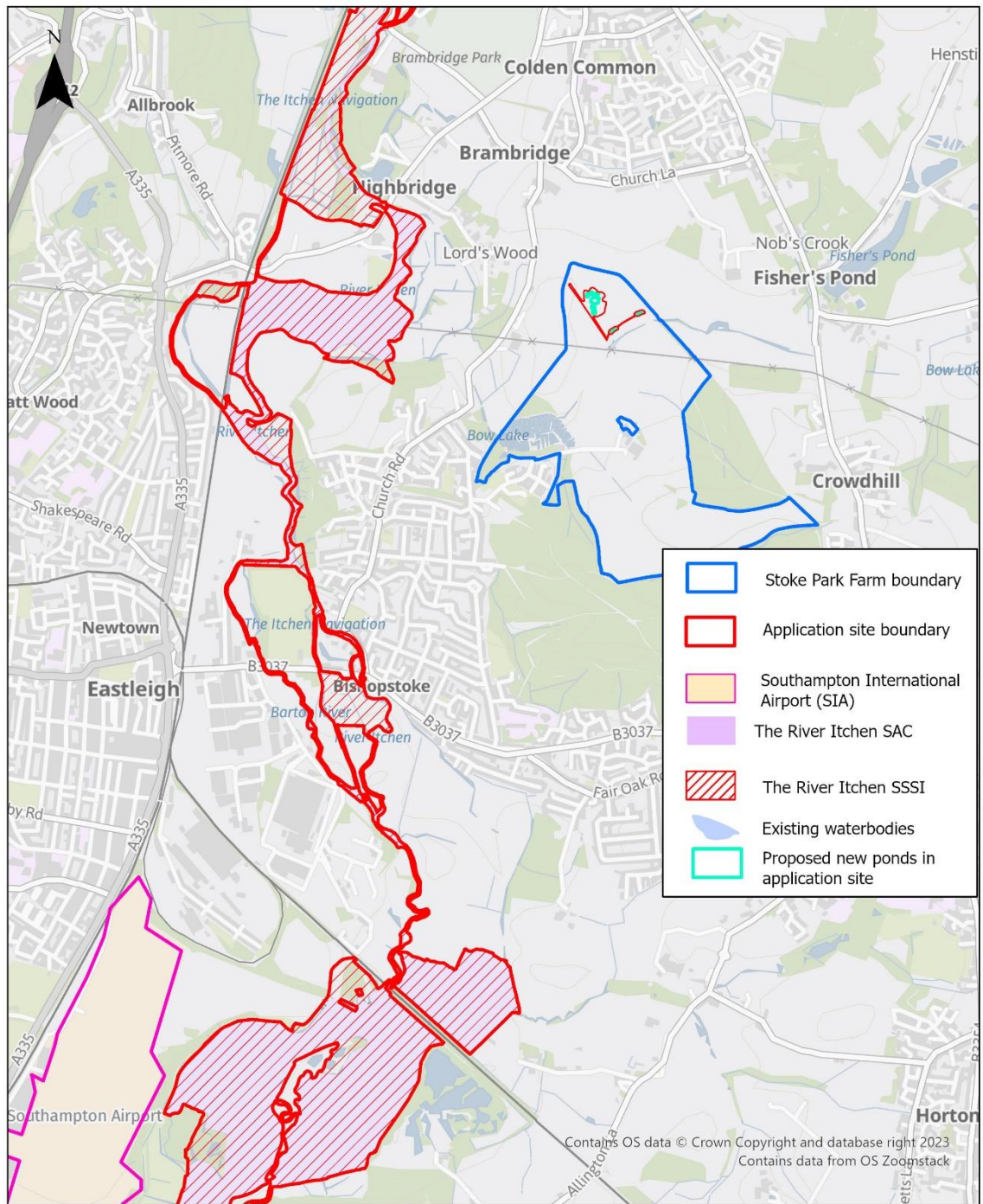
7.11.3 Proposed developments, including wetlands or nature reserves, that may increase the risk of bird strike to aircraft must be assessed by the SIAL Safeguarding Officer. SIAL have indicated that they will not object to this application on the grounds of increased birdstrike risk, on the basis of draft plans supplied by NCP and reviewed by SIALs consultants.

7.11.4 The pond complex has been designed to avoid raising the risk of birdstrike, using the principles from the Million Ponds Project Advice Factsheet: <https://freshwaterhabitats.b-cdn.net/app/uploads/2022/11/BIRDSTRIKE.pdf>

7.11.5 The key principles are:

- There are existing ponds and waterbodies within the nearby landscape that are much more attractive to birdstrike risk species, and the new ponds are highly unlikely to significantly increase the risk of birdstrike above the background level. Figure 11 shows the application site ponds in the context of other waterbodies within the area.
- We have proposed a complex of small, shallow waterbodies (the largest one is approx. 1140 m² at maximum water level) which are unlikely to attract large birds such as geese, or flocking birds such as gulls.
- Our ponds will be kept free of fish, so may be less likely to attract heron.
- Our ponds are designed to develop thick marginal vegetation, which will be less attractive to swans and geese whilst also reducing suitability for large numbers of waders.
- Many birdstrike risk species prefer wide views across open landscapes so that they can see potential predators. We have carefully located the ponds near to an existing woodland strip (P6 and P7) and a line of scattered trees (P1-5). We also propose planting a new hedgerow and small groups of trees around ponds 1-5, which will further reduce their appeal.

7.11.6 See Figure 1 for the proposed layout and Figure 11 for an overview of the existing waterbodies on the same area of the 13 km risk zone.



Application site and existing waterbodies in relation to SAIL		
Date created: November 2023	Scale: 1:24,000 Scaled to A4	
0 120 240 480 720 960 1,200 Meters	Created by: Anna-Marie Dennis	

Figure 11: Existing waterbodies in region of proposed new ponds

7.12 Spoil disposal

7.12.1 Carrying out a topographical survey has allowed us to accurately plan the pond locations and show where bunds will be necessary to ensure that the ponds can retain water properly.

7.12.2 Excavating the ponds will produce approximately 1,797 m³ of topsoil and underburden (spoil).

7.12.3 Approximately 120 m³ of topsoil will be used to create a low bank for the hedgerow that will be planted along the western boundary, alongside the track.

7.12.4 A small amount of topsoil and turf will be used to help create amphibian hibernacula around the site.

7.12.5 Approximately 600 m³ will be used to create the bunds around the ponds, with any topsoil used layered beneath the spoil layer.

7.12.6 The remaining 1,077 m³ will be spread thinly (20-30cm maximum) on the areas indicated on the plan. The maximum area covered at a depth of 20 cm will be 5,385 m² which is the approximate area indicated on Figure 1. They may be seeded with a suitable wildflower mix, which would be agreed with the EBC Ecology and Trees Manager. These areas have not been included in the site plan because they will quickly break down and will not form any permanent feature.

7.12.7 No bunds will be formed, nor any spoil spread in the floodplain (Risk zones 2 or 3), or within 100 m of a main river.

7.12.8 Figure 12 shows an example of spoil breaking down at another NCP pond creation site in Hampshire.



Figure 12: Spoil disposal at a pond creation site in Hampshire in 2023.

7.13 Biodiversity and protected species

7.13.1 The proposal is a conservation project designed to increase biodiversity. A small area of improved grassland will be lost. Seven clean water wildlife ponds, copses and a hedgerow will be created, with the land then being managed for 25 years to develop wetland and marginal vegetation, tussocky grassland and scrub, with additional scrub, grassland and wildflower areas outside the application site. Full details are in the Ecological Assessment submitted as part of the planning application.

7.14 Historic landscape and Archaeology

7.14.1 A Heritage Statement has been submitted as part of the planning application.

8. Long term management and monitoring

8.1 NCP will be responsible for ensuring that the ponds retain water as planned and will arrange for remedial works (such a reprofiling or deepening) if required after completion of pond creation.

8.2 The Landowner (EBC) and NCP will sign a 25-year Landowner Agreement and Management Plan outlining key management activities to maintain the ponds and the terrestrial habitat in Rowley Green Meadow in high quality condition into the future.

8.3 Key points of the Management Plan will be:

- Annual cut of open areas with all arisings removed or piled, after all wildflowers have seeded (generally mid-June / early July).
- Scrub and vegetation management around ponds when necessary.
- Not introducing fish.
- Not introducing plants.
- Reporting and controlling invasive non-native species.
- Avoiding fertiliser and pesticide application to the pond catchment.
- Weeding around newly planted hedge and trees, as necessary.
- Trimming of new hedge as it becomes established.
- NCP will monitor the ponds and surrounding habitat under agreement annually and any changes to the Management Plan will be by mutual agreement.

8.4 Ponds will be monitored by NCP staff for 25 years. This will include annual environmental DNA surveys for GCN and Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) surveys for the first five years, with subsequent surveys agreed on a rolling programme for up to 25 years. The ponds are expected to reach a HSI score of at least 0.7 within 5 years.

8.5 The results of annual monitoring will be used to inform changes to the Management Plan, which are made by mutual agreement between NCP and the landowner (EBC). Great crested newt conservation and other biodiversity will remain the aim of site management for the 25 year period.

9. Construction Principles

9.1 The ponds will be created using a 5 to 12-tonne excavator and a dumper operated by experienced contractors. Depending on the contractor appointed, a bulldozer may also be used. The

work will be supervised by a member of NCP staff and there will be close communication with EBCs Ecology and Trees Manager and any Site Manager at Stoke Park Farm throughout.

9.2 Contractors, NCP and the landowner (EBC) will discuss and agree the Risk Assessments and Method Statements for the project.

9.3 All parties will meet their duties and responsibilities under the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015.

9.4 It is proposed that once planning permission is consented, fencing and pond creation work will start as soon as ground conditions are suitable, and the contractor is available. If pond creation is to take place in the bird breeding season (March-September) additional surveys will be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure that the work will not disturb any nesting birds. If ground nesting birds are found to be using the site, work will be delayed until after the breeding season is completed.

9.5 Best practice principles will be followed throughout to minimise risk of harm to protected species and other wildlife including birds and reptiles – see also the Ecological Appraisal submitted as part of the planning application.

9.6 Standard pollution prevention methods and silt traps will be used to ensure that pollutants or sediment from the construction phase do not enter the Bow Lake either through surface runoff or through the existing drain system.

9.7 Contractors will be briefed with a 'Toolbox Talk' prior to starting the work about what to do if any Protected Species or other wildlife is found during the works. The pond construction and spoil use areas will be searched by hand by NCP staff directly before work starts and any reptiles or amphibians found will be moved to a safe area nearby.

9.8 Checks for underground services have been completed and have found no overhead or underground services in the application site. The appointed contractor will be required to check each excavation area using a handheld CAT scanner. Risk assessments and the toolbox talk will alert all staff to the presence of an overhead power line crossing the access route.

9.9 There are currently cattle troughs in Rowley Green Meadow. The cattle troughs will be removed by EBC before work starts, and EBC will also ensure that the water supply has been disconnected.

9.10 Planting will be carried out by a specialist contractor at an appropriate time (between 1st November and 31st March). This is likely to be in the season after pond construction, as plants will have to be ordered once planning permission has been granted.

10. Access and Transport

10.1 Access to the site for machinery is:

- From Stoke Common Road (public highway).
- Along Sewall Drive (owned by Bellway and managed by Trinity. EBC have right of access across the land for any purpose).
- Along existing farm tracks within land owned by EBC.

10.2 See also Figure 2.

10.3 Parts of the access route within Stoke Park Farm cross a Public Right of Way (Bridleway). In practice, the farm track running along the western boundary of Rowley Green Meadow is used as the bridleway route, though the mapped route is slightly to the west.

10.4 Where the access route shares the bridleway site signage will be used to inform members of the public, and the contractor will be vigilant, using a banksman as needed.

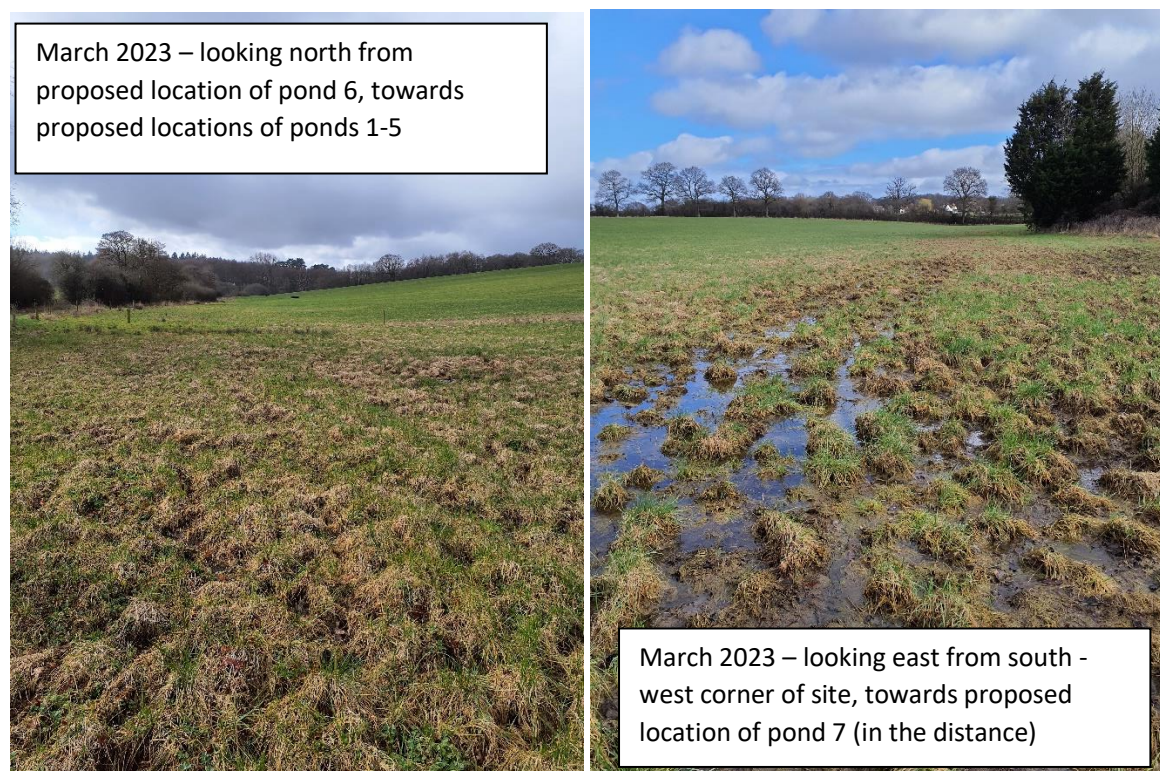
10.5 Potential damage will be reduced by minimising the number of times the access route is used, storing machinery on site during the period of works whenever possible.

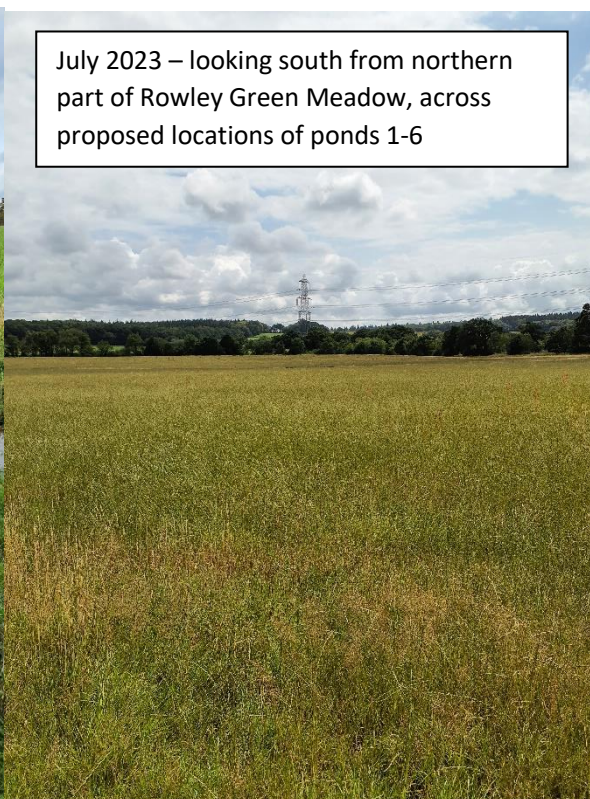
10.6 Any damage to the bridleway will be made good on completion of the works.

10.7 The new ponds will be visible from the bridleway that runs adjacent to Rowley Green Meadow. Gateways or maintained low points in the new hedgerow will ensure that views across the site are retained.

10.8 The ponds are unlikely to be visible from the footpath running to the north due to the existing hedge and the site topography.

11. Photos of application site





12. Data sources and references

District Level Licensing for Works Affecting Great Crested Newts: Organisational Licence WML-OR112 (version 7)

Department for Communities and Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). DCLG. Can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

P35 Stoke Park Farm -Preliminary Environmental Appraisal 2023

British Geological Survey website [Geology of Britain viewer | British Geological Survey \(BGS\)](#)

Soilscapes website [Soilscapes soil types viewer - National Soil Resources Institute. Cranfield University \(landis.org.uk\)](#)

Underground services checks [Home - LinesearchbeforeUdig \(lsbud.co.uk\)](#) and [Welcome to digdat](#)

National Grid Technical Guidance note 287 Third-party guidance for working near National Grid Electricity Transmission equipment [Working near electricity equipment.pdf \(nationalgrid.com\)](#)

[Aerodrome Safeguarding | Southampton Airport](#)

Magic Map. [Magic Map Application \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

Historic Environment [Search and request Historic Environment Record data | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

HBIC website [Microsoft Word - Mapping the Hampshire Ecological Network Updated March 2020 \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Landscape character [Hampshire landscape | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

FHT website [Home page - Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) - links to all pond creation factsheets in the Pond Creation Toolkit

<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/flood-zone>

Williams P., Biggs J., Whitfield M., Thorne A., Bryant S., Fox G., and Nicolet P. (2018). The Pond Book: A guide to the management and creation of ponds. 3rd Edition, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Oxford.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook, Froglife, Halesworth.

Baker, J., Beebee, T., Buckley, J., Gent, T. and Orchard, D. (2011). Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

[Woodland Creation Guide \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)

Hampshire Countryside Service Countryside Design Standards – Fencing [designstandards-fencing.pdf \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)