

Academy of Light Solar Development

June 2025

Ecological Impact Assessment Addendum

BIODIVERSE
CONSULTING

ACADEMY OF LIGHT (SITE A)

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM

FOR: CUNDALL JOHNSTON & PARTNERS LLP

REF: BIOC24-342 | V1.0

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	Date:	13th June, 2025

DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	CHANGES	CONFIDENTIALITY	PREP	REV	AUTH
V1.0	13/6/25	Initial to client	N/A	CG	CC	CH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Biodiverse Consulting Ltd. was commissioned to undertake an ecological impact assessment addendum of land at the Academy of Light, Sunderland Rd, Sunderland SR6 7UW. An ecological assessment of the wider Academy of Light was conducted by Rocket Environmental Services[1] in early 2024. However, since the completion of the report a waterbody with ornithological interest has formed in the western part of the development Site (referred to as Site A). An updating ecological assessment has been requested for Site A to include additional assessment of the newly developed waterbody.

All assessment in relation to the wider development area (Site B) remains within the initial assessment[1].

The Site is proposed to be developed into a solar array with associated infrastructure and landscaping.

This report presents the key ecological constraints and opportunities in relation to the development, as summarised in the table below.

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACADEMY OF LIGHT (SITE A)	
Designated Sites	The Site may be hydrologically linked to coastal designated sites, avoidance and enhancement measures have been recommended with the aim of providing indirect positive impacts. Due to the proximity of several nationally designated sites, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)[2] has been undertaken in order to fully assess the likelihood of the development on these designated sites.
Invasive Non-Native Species	Japanese rose was recorded to the east of Site A. Mitigation measures are provided to prevent any further spreading of the species.
Bats	It is considered that in the absence of mitigation the development may impact bat species at a local level. On this basis, avoidance and/or mitigation measures have been provided.
Great Crested Newt	All eDNA Analysis results came back negative from waterbodies that were tested within 500m of the Site. No specific mitigation required, but a precautionary approach recommended.

[1] Rocket Environmental Services (2024) - 2023-004_South Tyneside EcIA_V2.1_Addendum Report
[2] Rocket Environmental Services (2024) – 2023_004_HRA_V2.0_CA

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACADEMY OF LIGHT (SITE A)	
Badger	No desk study records or identification of badger signs noted during the survey. Site has limited suitable sett building habitat within the hedgerows. Good practice avoidance and mitigation measures to address any potential harm to individuals during construction.
Birds	Detailed assessment of ornithological features provided within accompanying report[14]. However, the development of the temporary standing waterbody on Site is considered to be of parish value as a result of anecdotal evidence of breeding Avocet. For this reason, additional avoidance and mitigation measures have been provided.
Reptiles	No desk study records or presence of reptiles recorded on Site during other protected species surveys. No reptile specific mitigation measures are required.
Riparian Mammals	No suitable aquatic habitat for otter and watervole exists on Site, however, suitable habitat in the form of Cut Throat Dene runs immediately adjacent to the south of the Site. A single record of otter within 2km of the Site was identified during the desk study. Avoidance measure to address residual impacts to offsite watercourses have been recommended.
Priority Amphibians	Records of common toad were returned within 2km of the Site, with limited suitable habitat available within the Site boundary. Habitat on Site is considered unlikely to support a significant amphibian population, however, a precautionary approach has been recommended during construction.
Hedgehog and Brown Hare	Records of hedgehog and brown hare were reported within 2km of the Site. No individuals or field sign indicative of their presence was identified during any of the surveys. Habitats on Site are suitable for the species. Precautionary approach during construction recommended to avoid impacts to individuals.
Invasive Non-Native Species	Japanese rose identified off-site to the north-east is identified as a Schedule 9 species making it an offence to allow its spread in the wild. Mitigation measures have been provided to avoid further spreading.

CONTENTS

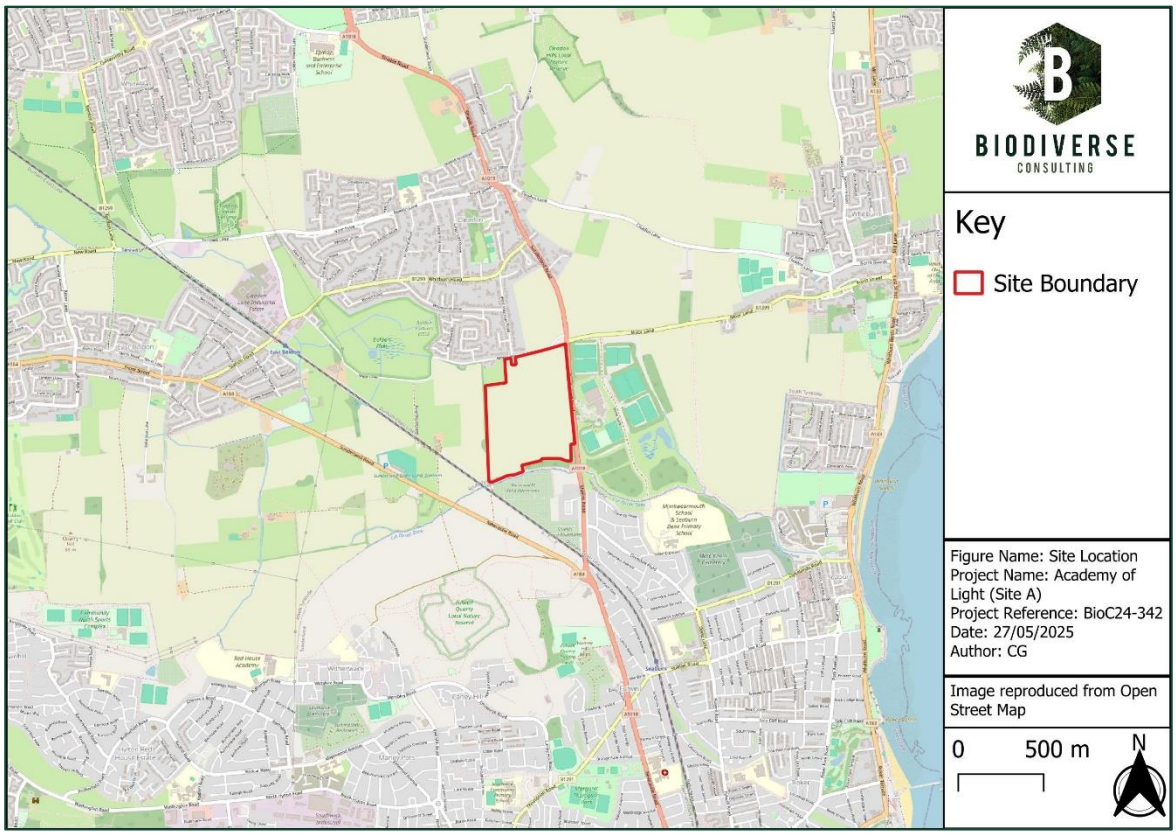
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4
CONTENTS 6
1 INTRODUCTION 7
1.1 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION 7
1.2 REPORT OBJECTIVES 7
1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS 8
2 METHODOLOGY 9
2.1 SURVEY AREA 9
2.2 DESK STUDY 9
2.3 FIELD SURVEY 10
2.4 ASSESSMENT 12
3 RESULTS 13
3.1 DESK STUDY 13
3.2 FIELD SURVEY 18
4 SITE ASSESSMENT 27
4.1 ASSESSMENT OF SURVEY FINDINGS 27
5 RECOMMENDATIONS 32
5.1 AVOIDANCE 32
5.2 MITIGATION 33
5.3 COMPENSATION/ENHANCEMENT 35
APPENDICES 36
APPENDIX A – UKHAB MAP 37
APPENDIX B – SPECIES LISTS FOR HABITATS 38
APPENDIX C – DESIGNATED SITES MAP (Site A & B) 39
APPENDIX D – PRIORITY HABITATS MAP (Site A & B) 40
APPENDIX E – LOCAL RECORDS SEARCH 41
APPENDIX F – POLICY AND LEGISLATION 48
APPENDIX G – VALUE OF ECOLOGICAL FEATURES 51

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

Site A is located at Academy of Light, Sunderland Rd, Sunderland SR6 7UW at an approximate central grid reference of NZ 38697 61066. The 30.91ha Site currently consists of an arable field with boundary hedgerows.

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION



1.2 REPORT OBJECTIVES

The aim of this report is to determine the potential ecological constraints and opportunities to development. The objectives of this report are to:

- Identify and describe ecological features/receptors that may be present on site or within an identified Zone of Influence (ZoI).
- Assess the potential for the development to impact the identified features.
- Outline potential mitigation, compensation or enhancement measures if required.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The wider site is proposed for the development of a solar array with associated infrastructure and landscaping based on SFS-COL-00-XX-D-L-1000-P09_Landscape Mitigation Plan (Figure 2). This report aims to address only the ecological impacts to the land referred to as Site A – shown as the western land parcel in the below Figure.

FIGURE 2: SFS-COL-00-XX-D-L-1000-P09_LANDSCAPE MITIGATION PLAN



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 SURVEY AREA

The survey area comprised the 'Site' (Figure 3) and, where access was available, an approximate 50m buffer.

FIGURE 3: SURVEY AREA



2.2 DESK STUDY

A desk study was undertaken to obtain pre-existing ecological information relevant to the assessment. The desk study included:

- An assessment of aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping.
- A search of the MAGIC website[3] for international designated sites within 10km that have potential to be impacted by the development, and designated sites and European Protected Species within 2km of the Site.

[3] Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (www.magic.gov.uk)

- A request to the Local Record Centre (LRC) in 2022 for records of non-statutory designated sites and protected and priority habitats and species within 2km.

2.3 FIELD SURVEY

Table 1 provides a summary of the field surveys undertaken by Biodiverse Consulting Ltd. Additional protected species surveys were conducted by Rocket Environmental Services and detailed within the EcIA[1]. Full details of each survey are provided in the subsequent sections. All surveys were undertaken by suitably experienced ecologists; full details are available on request.

TABLE 1: SURVEY SUMMARY

SURVEY TYPE	DATE	TEMPERATURE	CLOUD	PRECIPITATION	WIND
PEA/PRA	16/11/2022	8°C	70%	None	BF2/3
Updating walkover and waterbody check	06/03/2025	17°C	20%	None	BF2

2.3.1 Habitats/Protected Species

The Site was subject to a preliminary walkover, during which habitats were assessed in line with the 2018 UK Habitat Classification survey methodology (UKHab)[4]. During the preliminary survey the Site was checked for evidence of invasive, protected and priority species and habitats were assessed for their potential to support them.

An updating walkover was conducted in line with the most up to date UKHab methodology[5], and included an assessment of the newly formed waterbody.

2.3.2 Bats

A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by Biodiverse Consulting in 2022 following the most up to date Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (BCT) at the time[6]. All subsequent bat survey and assessment was conducted by Rocket Environmental Services and followed the BCT 3rd edition guidelines[7] rather than the 4th edition guidelines[8] as the assessment work was undertaken prior to the release of the 4th edition.

[4] UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2018). UK Habitat Classification User Manual V1.0
[5] Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023) The UK Habitats Classification User Manual Version 2. Available from: http://www.ukhab.org/
[6] Biodiverse Consulting (2022) Academy of Light, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
[7] Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition.). The Bat Conservation Trust, London
[8] Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

Interpretation of results and subsequent recommendations have been made in line with the most up to date Bat Mitigation Guidelines[9] at the time of production of this report.

2.3.2.1 Activity Surveys

The PEA determined the Site to have 'low' suitability to support foraging and commuting bats with two trees of 'moderate' suitability for roosting bats within Site B (details not included within this addendum). Therefore, in accordance with the BCT 3rd edition guidelines the following methodology was undertaken:

One activity survey per season; Spring (April to May), Summer (June to August) and Autumn (September to October). The surveys began at or just before sunset and finished at least two hours after, depending on species recorded.

The surveyor walked a transect route covering all habitat types onsite and was consistent for all surveys; however, the start point was varied to sample different areas at different times, thereby ensuring that spatio-thermal patterns of activity were not an artefact of the survey method. Point counts were undertaken at 10 locations, pausing for up to five minutes at each. The transect route and stopping points for Site A are show on Figures 5a – 5c in the original EcIA[1].

Information on surveyors equipment and meta-data can also be found within the original EcIA[1].

2.3.2.2 Remote Monitoring

Static remote monitors were placed at set locations for a minimum of five nights, once per season; Spring (May to June), Summer (July to August) and Autumn (September to October).

Detail on dates, weather conditions and number of survey nights can be found within the original EcIA[1] with remote monitor locations shown on Figures 5a – 5c.

2.3.3 Great Crested Newt (GCN)

2.3.3.1 Habitat Assessment

Ponds within 500m were assessed for their suitability for GCN using the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). Assessment was completed with reference to the guidance provided by Oldham *et al*. 2000[10].

An additional five ditches were identified within 500m of the wider development Site.

[99] Reason, P.F. and Wray (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.
[10] http://www.narrs.org.uk/documents/HSI%20guidance.pdf

2.3.3.2 Environmental DNA Analysis

All suitable waterbodies identified within the 500 m search buffer were subject to environmental DNA (eDNA) survey. Water samples were taken on 19th April 2023, in accordance with Natural England's approved method[11] by a GCN-licensed ecologist.

Twenty water samples were taken from each waterbody; the location of each sample was spaced as evenly as possible using the sterile kits provided by ADAS. The surveyor used sterile gloves to avoid contamination and samples were treated as per instructions provided by the supplier. The sample kit was stored at ambient temperature (in the refrigerator) and returned promptly to ADAS Scientifics for analysis.

The survey was undertaken in optimal weather conditions by a suitably experienced Ecologist who is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds a Natural England Licence for GCN[1].

2.4 ASSESSMENT

The value of specific ecological features is assigned using a geographic frame of reference in line with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (see Appendix G for more detail).

[11] Biggs J, Ewald N, Valentini A, Gaboriaud C, Griffiths RA, Foster J, Wilkinson J, Arnett A, Williams P and Dunn F (2014) *Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt. Appendix 5. Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt (Triturus cristatus) environmental DNA*. Freshwater Habitats Trust, Oxford.

3 RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 Designated Sites

A summary of statutory and non-statutory designated sites is provided in Table 2 and mapped in Appendix C.

The Site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) and triggers consultation with Natural England regarding the development and its potential impacts on designated sites.

TABLE 2: DESIGNATED SITES

DESIGNATION	SITE NAME	REASON FOR DESIGNATION	DISTANCE FROM SITE
Statutory Designated Sites			
Ramsar	Northumbria Coast	Qualifies under Ramsar criterion 6 as it supports internationally important wintering populations of Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper.	1.1km east
Special Protection Area (SPA)		Qualifies under Article 4.1 as it supports an important breeding population of Little Tern. It qualifies under Article 4.2 for supporting internationally important numbers of Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone.	
SPA (Marine Components)	Northumberland Marine	Qualifies under Article 4 for supporting the following significant bird populations: Sandwich Tern (breeding), Roseate Tern (breeding), Common tern (breeding), Arctic Tern (breeding), Little Tern (breeding), Guillemot (breeding) and Puffin (breeding) as well qualifying under Article 4.2 for supporting a large population of seabirds during the breeding season.	1.1km east

DESIGNATION	SITE NAME	REASON FOR DESIGNATION	DISTANCE FROM SITE
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Durham Coast	The site is designated under article 4(4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) for the following habitats: Annex 1 – Vegetated seas cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts.	1.1km east
SSSI	Boldon Pastures	Boldon Pastures comprises Unimproved Neutral Grassland formerly subject to ridge and furrow cultivation, with associated hedge banks and drainage channels.	0.4km north-west
SSSI	Fulwell & Carley Hill Quarries	The disused quarries at Fulwell and Carley Hill are of national geological importance showing the greatest variety and most spectacular development of dolomites and dedolomites in the Late Permian Concretionary Limestone Formation. Associated areas of semi-natural Magnesian Limestone grassland are fragments of an important vegetation type which was previously more widespread within the region.	0.8km south-west
SSSI	Durham Coast	The Durham Coast between South Shields and Hart Warren is of considerable biological, geological and physiographic interest. It contains most of the paramaritime Magnesian Limestone vegetation in Britain, as well as a species-rich dune system, and supports nationally important numbers of wintering shore birds and breeding Little Terns.	1.1km east
SSSI	Cleadon Hill	Cleadon Hill is of interest for its Magnesian Limestone grassland communities which are associated in the main with shallow soils, rock outcrops and old earthworks on the flanks of the hill.	1.4km north

DESIGNATION	SITE NAME	REASON FOR DESIGNATION	DISTANCE FROM SITE
LNR	Fullwell Quarry	The Fulwell Quarries are important because of the wildflower that grow there due to the Magnesium Limestone geology. Orchids and other flower are common as well as various butterflies.	0.5km south-west
LNR	Tilesheds	Used to be a clay tileworks. It is now a pond and wetland with a variety of animals and wildflower.	1.7km north-west
Non-Statutory Designated Sites			
LWS	Mere Knolls Cemetery	The cemetery's strategic location, close to the coast and its extensive avenues of large deciduous trees (mainly sycamore), together with the adjacent stream and surrounding scrub, make this a site of regional importance to migrant land birds. The area is used as a feeding/resting place for such species, forced to make landfall as a result of adverse weather in spring and autumn.	0.2km south-east
LWS	Boldon Flats	The site has more than 0.5 hectares of lowland meadow and pasture and a pond that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	0.3km north-west
LWS	Fullwell Meadows	The site, which is adjacent to Fulwell Quarry (part of a geological and botanical SSSI), contains areas of calcareous (presumably Magnesian Limestone) grassland, rank grassland and scrub.	0.5km south-west
LWS	Low House Copse	The site consists of broadleaf woodland as well as a pond that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	0.7km west

DESIGNATION	SITE NAME	REASON FOR DESIGNATION	DISTANCE FROM SITE
LWS	Undercliffe Pond	The site contains a pond, that is defined as priority habitat in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	0.8km north
LWS	Whitburn Bents	This small site is the only area of sand dunes in the district with natural vegetation it is chiefly known for its orchids.	1.1km east
LWS	Roker Cliffs – Parsons Rocks	This rocky shore is considered to be of great geological interest with its Magnesian Limestone cliffs and 'Cannonball Limestone'. The site is also of value to wading birds for feeding and roosting.	1.1km south-east
LWS	Whitburn Steel Rocks	The site forms an extension to the Trow Point to Lizard Point SSSI in the Borough of South Tyneside. The rocky shore is considered to be of geological interest, also being of particular note for its foreshore plant and animal communities which provide a feeding habitat and a roost site for wading birds at various states of the tide.	1.1km east
LWS	Whitburn Firing Range	The site is designated for its considerable ornithological importance, e.g., the presence of a nationally important golden plover flock. It is also regularly used by five other bird species of particular importance. Lapwing, skylark and starling.	1.2km north-east
LWS	Cleadon Hill Cliffs	The site consists of magnesium limestone grassland as well as scrub that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. It is important for	1.3km north

DESIGNATION	SITE NAME	REASON FOR DESIGNATION	DISTANCE FROM SITE
		breeding birds such as whitethroat, yellowhammer and linnet.	
LWS	Tilesheds Burn	The site consists of lowland meadows and pasture, lowland fen habitats and scrub that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	1.5km north-west
LWS	Cotman Gardens	The site consists of lowland meadows and pasture and scrub that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	1.6km north-west
LWS	Cleadon Quarry	The site consists of magnesium limestone grassland as well as scrub that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	1.9km north
LWS	Cleadon Pumping Station	The site consists of magnesium limestone grassland, broadleaved woodland and scrub that are defined as priority habitats in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan.	1.9km north

3.1.2 Priority Habitats

A search of the MAGIC website and LRC identified the following priority habitats within 2km; deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland fens, lowland meadows, maritime cliff and slope and traditional orchard. (Map in Appendix D).

There are no priority habitats identified on Site. The closest priority habitats are areas of deciduous woodland situated 20 m north of Site A and areas of lowland meadow and lowland fen located 0.4 km northwest and 0.8 km west-north-west of Site A, respectively.

3.1.3 Protected and Priority Species

A summary of the records of protected or otherwise notable species provided by the LRC is available in Appendix E. The full data search results are available on request. The search area was a 2km buffer from the Site.

3.1.4 European Protected Species Licencing

The MAGIC website identified two European Protected Species (EPS) licences within 2km of the Site, as summarised within Table 3.

TABLE 3: EUROPEAN PROTECTED SPECIES LICENCE RETURNS

REFERENCE	SPECIES	LICENCE DATE	TYPE	DISTANCE
EPSM2012-4608	Common pipistrelle	09/08/2012 – 31/03/2014	Destruction of a resting place	0.8km north
EPSM2009-1146	Common pipistrelle	02/09/2009 – 31/08/1011	Destruction of a resting place	2km north-west

Six positive GCN Class survey licence returns were also returned by the desk study, the closest of which was 1.7 km north of the Site.

3.1.5 Landscape Context

A review of aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping highlighted the general land use in the immediate surrounding area as a mixture of residential to the north and south, agricultural to the east and west, and some semi-natural habitats to the south of Site A. Whitburn Beach and the North Sea are situated 1.5km to the east of the Site. The Academy of Light training facility and A1018 runs along the east of the Site, separating it from Site B.

3.2 FIELD SURVEY

3.2.1 Habitats

The 30.91ha Site A comprised of an arable field. An unsealed footpath runs, adjacent to the western boundary. Native species-poor hedgerows are present along the western, northern and the eastern Site boundaries. A naturally formed waterbody exists to the north of the arable field. A map of the UKHab habitats is provided in Appendix A, and full species lists for the habitats in Appendix B.

IMAGE 1 – SITE A ARABLE FIELD



IMAGE 2 – SITE A NATIVE HEDGEROW (H1)



IMAGE 3 – SITE A WATERBODY



3.2.1.1 c1c– Cereal Crops

Site A primarily comprises a cereal crop field to a total area of 30.08ha made up of cereal crop with some species such as common nettle *Urtica dioca* and curled dock *Rumex crispus* present in the uncultivated margins (Image 1).

The habitat is of low ecological value.

3.2.1.2 r1f – Temporary Standing Water

A waterbody naturally formed by heavy rains within the area during the spring of 2024. The 0.74ha waterbody contains no aquatic vegetation and had no shading from adjacent habitats (Image 3). Since the updating walkover, the waterbody has dried out during the dry 2025 spring and for this reason is classified as Temporary Standing Water (r1f).

During the walkover, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* and Redshank *Tringa tetanus* were identified foraging within the habitat. Moreover, anecdotal evidence from local birders suggests that Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* attempted to breed within the waterbody during the 2024 breeding season however, none were identified on the walkover. Given the rarity of Avocet in the local area and their status as a Schedule 1-listed species on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)[12], a precautionary approach has been taken, and the habitat is considered to be of parish ecological value.

3.2.1.3 u1c – Artificial Unvegetated; Unsealed Surface

A 0.08ha unsealed footpath runs adjacent to the western boundary of the Site.

The habitat is considered to be of negligible ecological value.

3.2.1.4 Hedgerows

Five hedgerows are located around the northern, eastern and western boundaries of Site A to a combined length of 1.47km. Locations of hedgerows are shown in Figure 4 and descriptions in Table 4.

[12] Legislation.gov.uk - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, SCHEDULE 1. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/1 [accessed on 28/05/2025]

FIGURE 4: HEDGEROW LOCATIONS



TABLE 4: HEDGEROW INFORMATION

HEDGEROW:	INFORMATION	TREE SPECIES	SCRUB SPECIES:
Native hedgerow (H1)	Approximately 3m in height, 322m in length with no trees present.	N/A	Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
Native hedgerow (H2)	Approximately 3-5m in height, 308m in length. Large gaps with some semi-mature trees present.	Ash, field maple	Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
Native hedgerow (H3)	Approximately 3-5m in height, 36m in length with some semi-mature trees present.	Downy birch, field maple	Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*

HEDGEROW:	INFORMATION	TREE SPECIES	SCRUB SPECIES:
Native hedgerow (H4)	Approximately 3-5m in height in some regions, sparse in others. 253m in length with some young trees	Ash	Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
Native hedgerow with associated ditch (H5)	Approximately 3-5m in height, 558m in length associated with a dry ditch. Some young trees present.	Ash, field maple	Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*

3.2.2 Invasive Non-Native Species

No Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) were recorded onsite or within the surrounding habitats during the Preliminary Walkover Survey. However, the Schedule 9 INNS Japanese rose *Rosa rugosa*[13] was recorded in subsequent surveys outside of the Site A boundary within scrub to the north-east. The locations of which are shown on Figure 2, Appendix B in the Rocket Ecology EcIA[1].

[13] Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) [Online]. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/9.

3.2.3 Protected Species

Protected species are afforded a level of legal protection which means that their presence may pose a constraint to development. A summary of relevant legislation and associated species is provided in Appendix F.

The following sections describe the results of the field surveys and an appraisal of desk study data. Species not addressed below are considered extremely unlikely to be present and/or affected by the development and so are scoped out of further assessment.

3.2.3.1 Bats

The following section provides a summary of the bat surveys conducted on the Site A. Full details of the results of the bat surveys on both Site A and Site B can be found within the original EcIA[1].

3.2.3.1.1 Activity Surveys and Remote Monitoring

Species diversity recorded on the Site was low, restricted to common *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and Nathusius' pipistrelles *Pipistrellus nathusii* only, with over 98% of the activity recorded as common pipistrelle. Activity recorded during the transects surveys, which was low and sporadic with bat activity solely on the darker hedgerow and immature woodland areas.

Low levels of bat activity were recorded onsite, consisting of common and widespread species, where common pipistrelle dominated, and activity was concentrated around the hedgerow habitats.

3.2.3.2 GCN Triturus cristatus

No evidence of GCN was recorded on Site within the Preliminary Walkover Survey; however, six licence returns confirming GCN presence were found within 2 km of the Site and eight records of GCN were returned within the desk study.

On Site habitats provide limited opportunities for foraging, sheltering and resting, within the hedgerow, and associated dry ditch. The arable crop within Site A is largely unsuitable due to regular disturbance. The temporary water body within Site A is considered unsuitable for breeding GCN due to its lack of aquatic vegetation, temporary nature and presence of foraging bird species.

The Site offers connectivity to more suitable adjacent habitat, within the pocket of woodland to the south of Site A, and the grounds of the SAFC Academy of Light with four ponds (P1-4, Figure 5), grassland, scrub and woodland habitat.

3.2.3.2.1 eDNA Analysis

During the eDNA survey, P3, P4 and D5 were found to be dry, therefore, water samples were unable to be taken, and they did not undergo eDNA analysis.

Waterbodies P1-2 and D1-4 were subjected to eDNA analysis, and negative results were returned for each one. The negative result indicated that no GCN eDNA was detected in the samples and therefore GCN were considered to be absent from each of the waterbodies. The full results of the eDNA analysis for each waterbody can be found in Appendix D of the Rocket Ecology EcIA[1].

FIGURE 5: POND LOCATIONS



3.2.3.3 Badger

No records of badger *Meles meles* within the local area were returned within the desk study, additionally, no setts were identified on Site and no definitive badger signs were recorded by Biodiverse Consulting, or during the subsequent surveys by Rocket Ecology[1].

Habitats on Site A provided limited suitable foraging and commuting habitats, within the arable field and hedgerows with more suitable habitat present within the woodland pockets to the south of Site A and the grassland and scrub of the SAFC Academy of Light grounds.

3.2.3.4 Birds

Based on the desk study results, proximity to statutory designated Sites, including Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar, and habitats present on Site, recommendations for further wintering and breeding bird surveys were made.

These surveys have been undertaken[14], as well as passage surveys and the results and subsequent recommendations are provided within a separate report and not repeated herein.

However, as discussed in Section 3.2.1.2 a waterbody has formed with ornithological interest, with observations of Herring Gull and Redshank during the updating walkover and anecdotal evidence of Avocet breeding attempts in the 2024 breeding season. For this reason, additional assessment and recommendations have been provided within this report that seek to work alongside the recommendations made within the Falco Ecology report.

3.2.3.5 Reptiles

No recent records of reptiles were returned within the desk study, and no reptiles were identified during the Preliminary Walkover Survey or subsequent survey visits undertaken by Rocket Ecology[1].

The arable habitat present within Site A is subject to regular disturbance and therefore is considered unsuitable to support reptiles.

The hedgerows onsite provide commuting corridors and the riparian habitat of Cut Throat Dene, that is present to the south, is similarly suitable for the species group.

Therefore, although the presence of a reptile population onsite is considered unlikely, the presence of the occasional individual cannot be ruled out.

3.2.3.6 Riparian Mammals

One record of otter *Lutra lutra* was returned within 2 km of the Site from 2016. The waterbody on Site is considered unsuitable for otter and no other suitable habitats are present.

The riparian corridor of Cut Throat Dene runs approximately 9 m south of Site A at its closest point. However, Cut Throat Dene is narrow, offers limited food sources, agricultural run-off discharges into the stream which likely reduces the water quality.

No records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were returned by the desk study and no suitable habitat for this species exists on the Site. Cut Throat Dene to the south is heavily shaded and agricultural run-off discharges into the stream and therefore is unlikely to provide suitable habitat for water vole.

3.2.3.7 Priority Species

Records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and brown hare *Lepus europaeus* were returned within the desk study, and suitable habitat is present for these species within the hedgerows.

Five records of common toad *Bufo bufo* were returned within the desk study.

[14] Falco Ecology Ltd (May 2024), *Bird Survey Report – AoL Solar Development South Tyneside*

The temporary waterbody offers limited suitability on Site. Limited suitability terrestrial habitat for toad and other amphibians, such as common frog *Rana temporaria* is present within the hedgerows. Furthermore, the Site has connectivity to suitable aquatic habitat such as ponds P1-4 and ditches, D1-4.

A precautionary approach is recommended to safeguard priority species during construction.

4 SITE ASSESSMENT

4.1 ASSESSMENT OF SURVEY FINDINGS

The following section assesses the broad ecological features alongside avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures designed to address these impacts.

4.1.1 Habitats

The following habitats within Site A will be impacted through loss and disturbance during the construction and operational phase of the development:

- 30.08ha of Cereal Crop;
- 0.74ha of Temporary Standing Water;
- 1.47km of Native Hedgerow/Native Hedgerow with associated Ditch.

4.1.2 Designated Sites

The non-statutory designated sites will not be directly impacted by the Development due to the distance and lack of suitable connectivity and further assessment of the impact on these Sites is not considered necessary.

The Site is potentially linked hydrologically to Northumbria Coast Ramsar, Northumberland Marine SPA and Northumbria Coast SPA through Cut Throat Dene (offsite to the south), which discharges into the Sea approximately 1.6km east of the Site. In keeping with the precautionary approach, pollution prevention measures and a 10 m buffer from the bank tops, will be put in place. Once construction is complete, the development will result in a minor indirect positive impact on water quality through the change in land use and cessation of agricultural practices.

Due to the proximity of several national designated sites, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)[15] has been undertaken in order to fully assess the impacts of the proposed development on these designated sites.

The Site lies within Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for several statutory designated sites, and the Development type (solar schemes with a footprint greater than 0.5 ha) is listed as one which will require consultation with Natural England.

[15] Rocket Ecology Limited (May 2024), Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment – Academy of Light Solar Farm

4.1.3 Invasive Non-Native Species

Japanese rose, was recorded to the east of Site A. Japanese rose is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)[13], making it an offence to allow its spread in the wild.

Mitigation measures are provided in Section 5 to prevent any further spread of the species.

4.1.4 Bats

Species diversity was very low during the activity surveys and the remote monitoring, where the majority of recording were common pipistrelle. Common pipistrelle are fairly widespread throughout the UK, with a population estimate of 3,040,000[16]. Results and trends from the latest Field Survey (2020) show a significant increase, while the trend from the Roost Count shows a significant decline. The field survey results are considered to provide a more reliable measure of population change, therefore the population of common pipistrelle in Great Britain is considered to have increased since 1999[16].

A recent study[17] has shown that bat activity is significantly negatively impacted by solar PV panels. Common pipistrelles activity within the study was negatively impacted at both boundary habitats and open fields, and soprano pipistrelle activity was negatively impacted within open fields; not enough data was recorded for Nathusius' pipistrelle to determine significant effects. The negative impacts are thought to be due to the loss of foraging habitat and that panels may be causing some bats to alter their flight paths, potentially resulting in further fragmentation of the ecological landscape.

Overall, it is considered that in the absence of mitigation the development may impact bat species at a local level. On this basis, avoidance and/or mitigation measures have been provided in Section 5.

4.1.5 GCN

All waterbodies within 500m of the development were either dry when eDNA surveys were conducted or came back with negative results for GCN. Onsite habitats, including habitat under the boundary hedgerows provide limited suitability commuting, foraging and sheltering opportunities. No other waterbodies are located within a 500 m search buffer of the Site, in which GCN could migrate from. Furthermore, there is no suitable connectivity between the Site and ponds identified as having GCN presence within the desk study.

[16] National Bat Monitoring Programme Annual Report https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Our%20Work/NBMP/National-Bat-Monitoring-Programme-Annual- Report-2020.pdf?v=1621498216

[17] Tinsley, E., Froidevaux, J. S. P., Zsebok, S., Szabadi, K. L,. and Jones, G. (2023) Renewable energies and biodiversity: Impact of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic sites on bat activity. *Journal of Applied Ecol*. 60:1752–1762.

On this basis, no specific mitigation measures are required for GCN as it is considered highly unlikely that the Site supports them. Nevertheless, the risk of harm to potential GCN would be minimised by the precautionary approach detailed in Section 5.

In the unlikely event that GCN are found onsite, works in the area will cease immediately and the a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) will be contacted for further advice.

4.1.6 Badger

Despite no evidence of badger recorded, onsite habitats provide limited suitable commuting, foraging and sheltering opportunities. The Site is not subject to night-time disturbance or direct artificial lighting allowing badgers to commute through the Site safely and undisturbed. The grassland supports a variety of invertebrates, including earthworms, slugs, and small mammals, providing a good food source for badger.

The onsite habitats have limited suitability for sett creation, and badgers are likely to favour suitable habitats found within the wider landscape, such as larger areas of woodland.

No records of badger sightings or setts within 2 km of the Site were returned by the desk study. However, badgers are highly mobile creatures and will travel large distances to forage, find a mate and defend or explore new territories.

The clearance works, installation of solar panels and subsequent erection of boundary fencing could negatively impact badgers. On this basis, avoidance and/or mitigation measures are presented in Section 5.

4.1.7 Birds

Based on the desk study results, proximity to statutory designated Sites, including Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar, and habitats present on Site, avoidance and mitigation recommendations have been made within the Falco Ecology report[18].

However, since the formation of the temporary waterbody there have been confirmed observations of Herring Gull and Redshank foraging within the naturally formed habitat and anecdotal evidence of Avocet breeding attempts in the 2024 breeding season. Bird species may be impacted through the loss of suitable breeding and foraging habitat as a result of the development as well as disturbance during construction and maintenance. Avoidance and mitigation measures have been provided within Section 5 to address the impacts of the proposed development.

[18] Falco Ecology Ltd (May 2024), *Bird Survey Report – AoL Solar Development South Tyneside*

4.1.8 Reptiles

No records of reptiles were returned during the desk study and no reptiles recorded during the Preliminary Site Walkover or subsequent Site visits. Habitats present on Site have limited potential to support reptiles and with the more suitable boundary features being retained it is highly unlikely reptiles will be negatively impacted by the development. On this basis, no specific mitigation measures are required.

In the unlikely event a reptile is found onsite, works in the area will cease immediately and the ecologist will be contacted for further advice.

4.1.9 Riparian Mammals

No suitable aquatic habitat for riparian mammals exists within the Site itself. However, Cut Throat Dene and associated riparian habitat is adjacent to the southern boundary. This habitat will not be directly impacted by the development, with panels to be constructed with a buffer of 10 m from the boundary edge (a 5m gap from the edge of the hedgerow to the fence and a further 5m to the panels).

Although one record of otter was returned within the desk study, Cut Throat Dene is considered to be largely unsuitable for otter, with limited foraging opportunities, agricultural run-off, and limited connectivity to other suitable water bodies within the wider landscape.

Although the presence of riparian mammals is considered very unlikely, further survey to rule them out entirely has not been undertaken. In addition, riparian corridors can be beneficial to a wide range of additional species, including bats, reptiles, invertebrates and fish.

On this basis, avoidance and/or mitigation measures are provided in Section 5.

4.1.10 Priority Species

4.1.10.1 Amphibians

Records of common toad were returned within the desk study, and the temporary waterbody on Site provides some suitable habitat. Moreover, the Site offers connectivity to P1-4 within SAFC Academy of Light land which provide suitable breeding habitat for common toad and common frog.

More suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians is present within the SAFC Academy of Light grounds and the riparian habitat to the south of the Site. In addition, the more suitable boundary hedgerow habitat is to be retained, with areas to be cleared comprising unsuitable arable crop. Therefore, it is unlikely that large numbers of amphibians will be negatively impacted by the development.

Common toad is listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006[19] and therefore protected from the adverse effects of development. On this basis, a precautionary approach has been recommended in Section 5.

4.1.10.2 Other mammals

Although no hedgehog or brown hare were identified within the Site, suitable habitat still exists for these species.

The hedgerows and boundary features of the Site are to be retained and therefore the anticipated impact of the development on these species is low, however, vegetation clearance could negatively impact any individuals present on Site and fencing during operation could restrict movement of individuals through the Site.

On this basis precautionary mitigation measures are provided in Section 5.

[19] Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents (Accessed May 2025)

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following sections follow the mitigation hierarchy providing recommendations to address potential ecological effects and minimise the risk of legal offence at all stages of the development.

5.1 AVOIDANCE

The following measures should be incorporated into the design of the development, including the construction phase, to avoid and reduce impacts on wildlife:

- Boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained, with a 10m buffer of the development from the Site Boundary to retain commuting and foraging habitats for bats, badger, brown hare and hedgehog (a 5m gap from the edge of the hedgerow to the fence).
- All retained trees will require the installation of Root Protection Areas (RPA), where a buffer between the works and the trees is installed and adhered to during construction, to help avoid damage to the tree's rooting system. The RPA is the minimum area around a tree that holds enough roots and rooting volume to maintain the tree's viability and is approximately 15 m (subject to confirmation by arboriculturist).
- It is recommended that the identified stands of Japanese rose (Figure 2, Appendix B[1]) are removed to prevent its further spread. The plants and the entire root system will require removal to ensure that it doesn't return, and all arisings and excavated materials must be disposed of at a licenced landfill. Once the removal is complete, the planting of native shrub species should be undertaken in their place to prevent further invasion.
- To safeguard potential badgers, a pre-construction walkover is required before the commencement of works to check for new setts that could have arisen since the initial survey. If a sett is found during the walkover, no works shall commence until the necessary mitigation and/or licencing has been agreed by the ecologist.
- In the unlikely event that a badger or sett is found onsite after the pre-construction walkover, works in the area will cease immediately and the ecologist will be contacted for further advice.
- The temporary waterbody that naturally formed within Site A will be retained to ensure that the foraging and potential nesting species such as Avocet are not lost as a result of the development.
- To safeguard any potential riparian mammals and any other aquatic animals that may utilise Cut Throat Dene, a 10 m buffer of all works should be maintained from the bank top at all times, including material storage and vehicle movements.

5.2 MITIGATION

Mitigation is proposed to reduce the impacts on wildlife that cannot be avoided through design:

- A precautionary approach will be implemented to safeguard protected species during construction. A SQE will be appointed to oversee and help implement the following mitigation, which will include, but not be limited to:
    - Deliver a toolbox talk to discuss requirements for the protection of protected/priority species on-site and the measures to be followed.
    - Prior to vegetation clearance of habitats suitable to support protected/priority the ecologist will check for the presence. The ecologist will also advise on a suitable approach to clearance depending on numbers found and locations.
    - Cover excavations overnight to prevent animals falling into them. Inspect excavations daily for the presence of animals before recommencing work on them.
    - Any deep excavations that are to be left open overnight will include a means of escape for any animals that may fall in.
    - Temporary perimeter fencing should continue to allow badgers and other animals to use the onsite habitats for commuting and foraging, by leaving at least a 22 cm gap at the bottom.
    - The creation of large stockpiles of earth will be avoided as these may be attractive for badgers and other animals.
    - Store building materials above ground on pallets.
    - Should any new mammal burrows be identified, works in the area will stop and the ecologist contacted for advice.
    - Vegetation clearance of habitats suitable for amphibians to be undertaken when amphibians are most active (March to October) and able to move to safety.
    - Where the sward height is higher than 10 cm, a two-stage cut should be conducted to encourage any amphibians to disperse to surrounding suitable habitat, to the east of the Site. The first cut would reduce the vegetation sward height to around 10 cm, a second cut after 24 hours would reduce the sward height again, to as low as possible to ground level to make it less attractive to amphibians.
    - Once vegetation is reduced to ground level it will need to be maintained at this level until main works start, to avoid re-establishing the habitat.
    - Any cut vegetation will need to be removed from Site or carefully stored in an area of the Site that will not be subject to further disturbance.

  - Any common frogs, common toads or any other amphibians (excluding GCN) found by contractors during construction are to be moved safely to an area confirmed by the ecologist prior to work commencing.
  - To safeguard brown hare and hedgehogs, works should be carried out in a precautionary manner in relation to these species, with any individuals encountered during the works allowed to move off of their own accord. If this is not feasible for hedgehog, they should be carefully moved to a safe location by gloved hand, such as the offsite vegetation to the south.
- Construction works will be limited to the hours from dawn to one hour before sunset.
- No lighting is proposed during operation and the Site, if possible, should remain unlit, however, temporary lighting will be required during construction, and it will need to be designed in line with good practice[20]. An appropriate lighting strategy should minimise light spill and direct it away from higher value ecological habitats such as the hedgerows, immature woodland edge and the riparian corridor of Cut Throat Dene. To ensure the Site is able to provide continued undisturbed foraging and commuting habitats for bats, following these lighting prescriptions:
  - Motion-sensitive security lighting and avoidance of floodlighting;
  - Avoidance of lighting with ultra-violet (UV) components in areas where lighting is required for public safety purposes. UV light is particularly disruptive to bat behaviour;
  - Use of flat-glass protectors on luminaires to help reduce light spill above angles greater than 70° from the vertical plane; and Avoiding light spill on to surrounding habitats by using accessories such as shields, louvres, hoods and cowls.
- Any permanent perimeter fencing installed should contain mammal gates to allow the movement of commuting badgers and other mammals across the Site and allow access to potential foraging opportunities.
- There will be a 10m buffer retained between the waterbody and the development to minimise impacts on any bird species utilising the retained habitat.
- In an effort to mitigate for birds being displaced from the waterbody as a result of change of habitat in the surrounding area, no solar panels will be constructed to the north-west of the waterbody. Moreover, this retains a direct pathway between the waterbody and the Boldon Flats Nature Reserve located 0.3km to the north-west.

[20] Bat Conservation Trust and the Institution of Lighting Professionals (2023) Bats and artificial Lighting at Night [Online] Available at: https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilpguidance- note-update-released (Accessed May 2025).

- Scrub encroachment will be managed in the retained habitats around the waterbody to minimise potential increased predation risks on birds utilising the waterbody. Scrub will be monitored annually and cut back between (September – February) to avoid impacts on breeding birds.

5.3 COMPENSATION/ENHANCEMENT

Compensation is proposed to address the impacts on habitats which cannot be avoided or mitigated:

- There will be 5m gaps between each row of panels, providing opportunities to enhance the habitats present on Site by planting native species wildflower grasslands.
- Enhanced roosting provision for bats should include the installation of an integrated bat box on the retained trees at the Site boundaries, in accordance with good practice[21] or manufacturer's instructions.
- Gap up existing boundary habitats to support foraging and commuting and/or sheltering bats, badger, brown hare and hedgehog by planting native trees and shrubs.
- Creation of native wildflower grassland habitat to provide foraging opportunities, both within the 5m gaps between panel rows and the 10m boundary easement.
- Scalloped scrub and grassland edges should be implemented alongside the woodland pockets at the Site boundaries.
- Installation of brash/log piles to provide shelter and hibernation opportunities for GCN and hedgehog.
- The change of land use and cessation of agricultural practices will indirectly provide enhancement to Cut Throat Dene through a reduction in agricultural run-off which should improve water quality.

[21] Bat Conservation Trust Putting up your bat box [Online] Available at https://www.bats.org.uk/ourwork/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes/putting-up-your-box Accessed May 2025.

APPENDICES

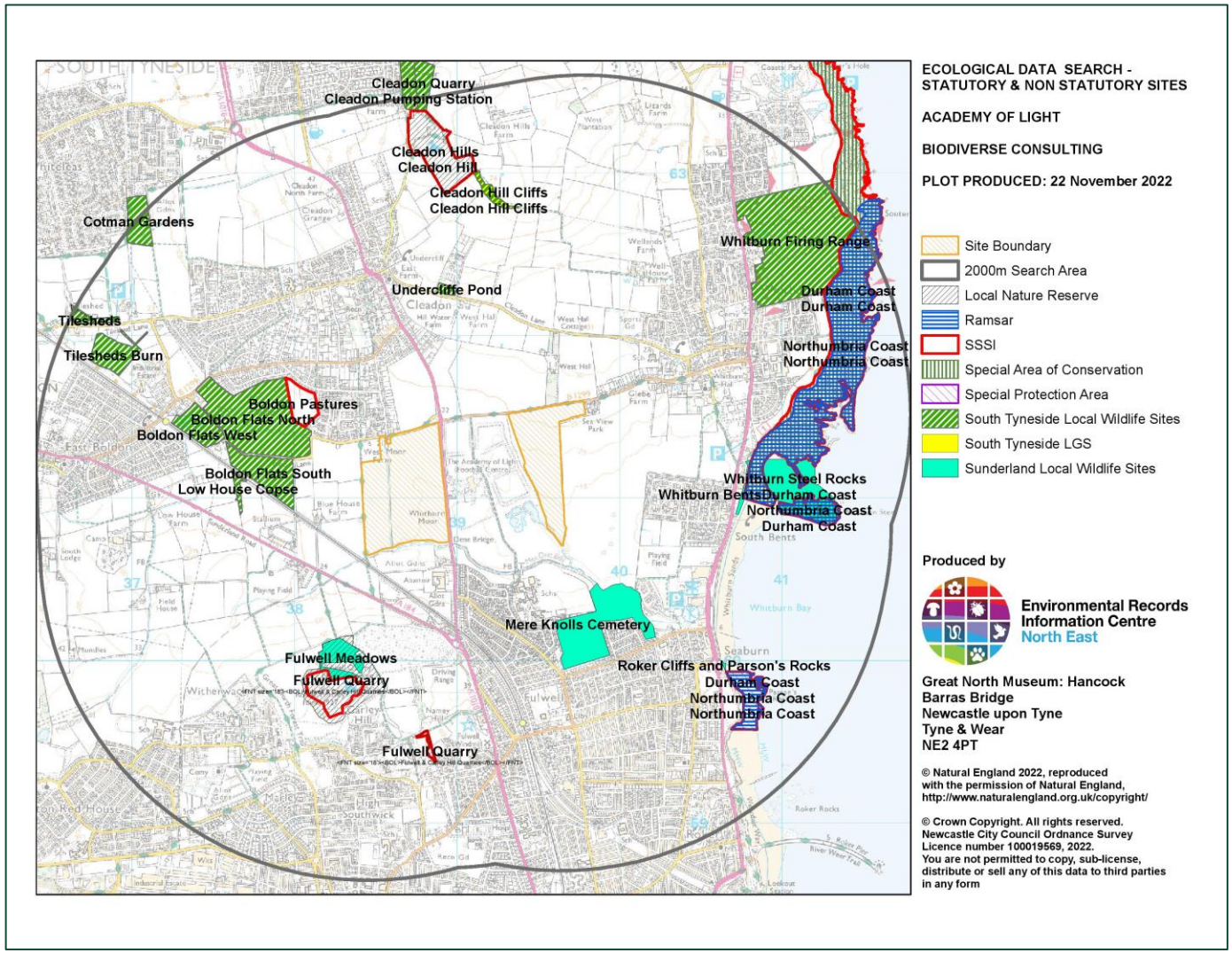
APPENDIX A – UKHAB MAP



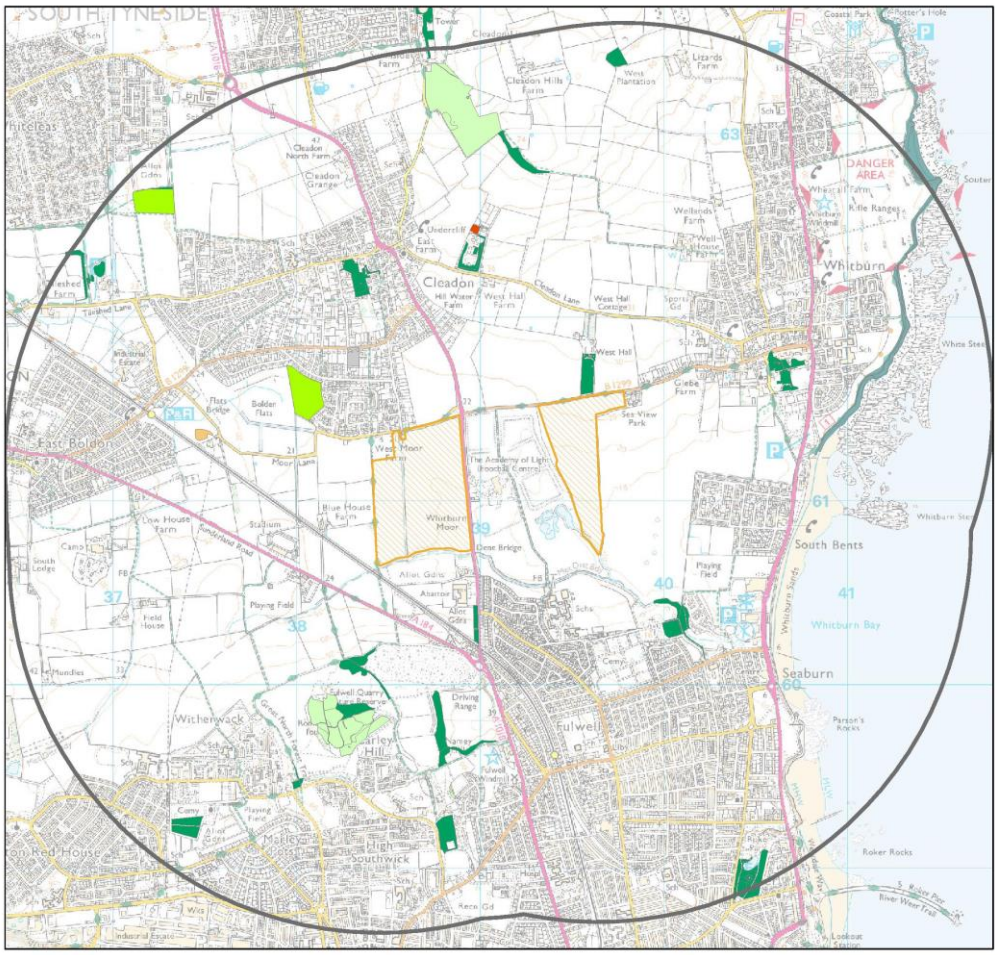
APPENDIX B – SPECIES LISTS FOR HABITATS

Habitat	Species present included:
Cereal Crops and uncultivated edges	Wheat *Triticum sp.,* common nettle *Urtica dioca*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, bush vetch *Vicia sepium*, dandelion *Taraxacum sp.,* white dead-nettle *Lamium album*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus,* galium *Galium aparine*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, heath groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*, cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata L.*, purple dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*, English ivy *Hedera helix*, clover *Trifolium sp.,* perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara*, rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, smooth meadow grass *Poa pratensis*, timothy grass *Phleum pratense*, creeping thistle *Circium arvense*.
Native Hedgerows	Hawthorn *Craaegus monogyna*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus laevigatus*, apple *Malus sp.,* blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, garden privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, field maple *Acer campestre*, gorse *Ulex sp.*

APPENDIX C – DESIGNATED SITES MAP (SITE A & B)



APPENDIX D – PRIORITY HABITATS MAP (SITE A & B)



ECOLOGICAL DATA SEARCH - PRIORITY HABITATS

ACADEMY OF LIGHT

BIODIVERSE CONSULTING

PLOT PRODUCED: 22 November 2022

- Site Boundary
- 2000m Search Area
- Deciduous woodland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland meadows
- Maritime cliff and slope
- No main habitat but additional habitats
- Traditional orchard

Produced by

Environmental Records Information Centre North East

Great North Museum: Hancock
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APPENDIX E – LOCAL RECORDS SEARCH

Species		Number of Records	Suitable Habitat on Site?	Level of Protection		
Common Name	**Scientific Name**			**HR 2017**	**WCA 1981**	**NERC /UK BAP**
Amphibian						
Common Frog	*Rana temporaria*	11	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Common Toad	*Bufo bufo*	5	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Great Crested Newt	*Triturus cristatus*	8	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Palmate Newt	*Lissotriton helveticus*	2	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Smooth Newt	*Lissotriton vulgaris*	14	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Bird						
Anser fabalis fabalis	*Anser fabalis fabalis*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Arctic Skua	*Stercorarius parasiticus*	1278	No	☐	☒	☐
Arctic Tern	*Sterna paradisaea*	1109	No	☐	☒	☐
Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	89	No	☐	☒	☐
Balearic Shearwater	*Puffinus mauretanicus*	135	No	☐	☒	☐
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba*	20	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Barnacle Goose	*Branta leucopsis*	131	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	636	No	☐	☒	☐
Bee-eater	*Merops apiaster*	32	No	☐	☒	☐
Bewick's Swan	*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*	24	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Black Guillemot	*Cepphus grylle*	18	No	☐	☒	☐
Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*	32	No	☐	☒	☐
Black Tern	*Chlidonias niger*	118	No	☐	☒	☐
Black-Backed Gull	*Larus fuscus intermedius*	12	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	494	Yes	☐	☒	☐
	Larus ridibundus	1023	No	☐	☒	☐
Black-necked Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*	4	No	☐	☒	☐
Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	259	No	☐	☒	☐
Black-throated Diver	*Gavia arctica*	260	No	☐	☒	☐
Blue-headed Wagtail	*Motacilla flava flava*	4	No	☐	☒	☐
Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*	6	No	☐	☒	☐
Brambling	*Fringilla montifringilla*	107	Yes	☐	☒	☐

Brent Goose	*Branta bernicla*	260	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	82	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Caspian Gull	*Larus argentatus cachinnans*	8	No	☐	☒	☐
Cetti's Warbler	*Cettia cetti*	10	No	☐	☒	☐
Common Guillemot	*Uria aalge*	982	No	☐	☒	☐
Common Gull	*Larus canus*	836	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Common Redpoll	*Acanthis flammea*	4	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Common Rosefinch	*Carpodacus erythrinus*	16	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	124	No	☐	☒	☐
Common Scoter	*Melanitta nigra*	2582	No	☐	☒	☐
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	1448	No	☐	☒	☐
Corn Bunting	*Emberiza calandra*	36		☐	☒	☐
Corncrake	*Crex crex*	2	No	☐	☒	☐
Crane	*Grus grus*	8	No	☐	☒	☐
Crossbill	*Loxia curvirostra*	36	No	☐	☒	☐
Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	54	No	☐	☒	☐
Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	1438		☐	☒	☐
Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	101	No	☐	☒	☐
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	*Branta bernicla bernicla*	89	No	☐	☒	☐
Dotterel	*Charadrius morinellus*	4	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*	979	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	373	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Eider	*Somateria mollissima*	2315	No	☐	☒	☐
European White-fronted Goose	*Anser albifrons albifrons*	39	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Fieldfare	*Turdus pilaris*	151	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Firecrest	*Regulus ignicapilla*	69	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Fulmar	*Fulmarus glacialis*	987	No	☐	☒	☐
Gadwall	*Anas strepera*	136	No	☐	☒	☐
Gannet	*Morus bassanus*	1781	No	☐	☒	☐
Garganey	*Anas querquedula*	28	No	☐	☒	☐
Glaucous Gull	*Larus hyperboreus*	133	No	☐	☒	☐
Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	2	No	☐	☒	☐
Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*	509	No	☐	☒	☐
Goshawk	*Accipiter gentilis*	4		☐	☒	☐
Grasshopper Warbler	*Locustella naevia*	142	No	☐	☒	☐

Great Black-backed Gull	*Larus marinus*	448	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Great Northern Diver	*Gavia immer*	474	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Great Skua	*Stercorarius skua*	919	No	☐	☒	☐
Great White Egret	*Ardea alba*	8	No	☐	☒	☐
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	84	No	☐	☒	☐
Greenfinch	*Carduelis chloris*	239	Yes	☐	☒	☐
	Chloris chloris	7	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Greenland White-fronted Goose	*Anser albifrons flavirostris*	4	No	☐	☒	☐
Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	178	No	☐	☒	☐
Grey Partridge	*Perdix perdix*	137	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	209	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	230	No	☐	☒	☐
Grey-headed Wagtail	*Motacilla flava thunbergi*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*	408	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Hawfinch	*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*	14	No	☐	☒	☐
Hen Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	14	No	☐	☒	☐
Herring Gull	*Larus argentatus*	961	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Hobby	*Falco subbuteo*	29	No	☐	☒	☐
Honey-buzzard	*Pernis apivorus*	11	No	☐	☒	☐
Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	2	Yes	☐	☒	☐
House Martin	*Delichon urbicum*	250	Yes	☐	☒	☐
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	323	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Iceland Gull	*Larus glaucoides*	186	No	☐	☒	☐
	Larus glaucoides glaucoides	7	No	☐	☒	☐
Indet. Diver	*Gavia*	2	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	257	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	40	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*	631	No	☐	☒	☐
Knot	*Calidris canutus*	526	No	☐	☒	☐
Lapland Bunting	*Calcarius lapponicus*	62	No	☐	☒	☐
Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	579	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Larus argentatus argentatus	*Larus argentatus argentatus*	27	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Leach's Storm-petrel	*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*	17	No	☐	☒	☐
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	327	Yes	☐	☒	☐

Lesser Redpoll	*Acanthis cabaret*	22	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos minor*	1	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Light-bellied Brent Goose	*Branta bernicla hrota*	26	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Limosa limosa islandica	*Limosa limosa islandica*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Linnet	*Carduelis cannabina*	171	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Little Gull	*Hydrocoloeus minutus*	195	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	88	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	153	No	☐	☒	☐
Long-tailed Duck	*Clangula hyemalis*	252	No	☐	☒	☐
Loxia	*Loxia*	7	No	☐	☒	☐
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	908	No	☐	☒	☐
Manx Shearwater	*Puffinus puffinus*	1607	No	☐	☒	☐
Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*	44	No	☐	☒	☐
Marsh Tit	*Poecile palustris*	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Marsh Warbler	*Acrocephalus palustris*	6	No	☐	☒	☐
Meadow Pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	318	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Mediterranean Gull	*Larus melanocephalus*	626	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*	118	No	☐	☒	☐
Mistle Thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*	83	No	☐	☒	☐
Montagu's Harrier	*Circus pygargus*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	284	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Nightingale	*Luscinia megarhynchos*	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	26	No	☐	☒	☐
Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	935	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Peregrine	*Falco peregrinus*	264	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Pied Flycatcher	*Ficedula hypoleuca*	101	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Pink-footed Goose	*Anser brachyrhynchus*	484	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Pintail	*Anas acuta*	264	No	☐	☒	☐
Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	122	No	☐	☒	☐
Puffin	*Fratercula arctica*	1075	No	☐	☒	☐
Purple Sandpiper	*Calidris maritima*	294	No	☐	☒	☐
Quail	*Coturnix coturnix*	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Razorbill	*Alca torda*	672	No	☐	☒	☐
Red Kite	*Milvus milvus*	5	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Red-backed Shrike	*Lanius collurio*	50	No	☐	☒	☐
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*	581	No	☐	☒	☐

Red-necked Grebe	*Podiceps grisegena*	156	No	☐	☒	☐
Red-necked Phalarope	*Phalaropus lobatus*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Redshank	*Tringa totanus*	1246	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Redstart	*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	123	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Red-throated Diver	*Gavia stellata*	2614	No	☐	☒	☐
Redwing	*Turdus iliacus*	221	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Reed Bunting	*Emberiza schoeniclus*	271	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Ring Ouzel	*Turdus torquatus*	68	No	☐	☒	☐
Ringed Plover	*Charadrius hiaticula*	674	No	☐	☒	☐
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	114		☐	☒	☐
Roseate Tern	*Sterna dougallii*	444	No	☐	☒	☐
Ruff	*Calidris pugnax*	53	No	☐	☒	☐
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	652		☐	☒	☐
Sandwich Tern	*Sterna sandvicensis*	1710	No	☐	☒	☐
Scaup	*Aythya marila*	200	No	☐	☒	☐
Sedge Warbler	*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*	94	No	☐	☒	☐
Shag	*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*	1507	No	☐	☒	☐
Shelduck	*Tadorna tadorna*	824	No	☐	☒	☐
Shore Lark	*Eremophila alpestris*	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*	117		☐	☒	☐
Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*	357	No	☐	☒	☐
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	235		☐	☒	☐
Slavonian Grebe	*Podiceps auritus*	30	No	☐	☒	☐
Smew	*Mergellus albellus*	2	No	☐	☒	☐
Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	270	No	☐	☒	☐
Snow Bunting	*Plectrophenax nivalis*	199	No	☐	☒	☐
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	184	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	502	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*	22	No	☐	☒	☐
Spotted Flycatcher	*Muscicapa striata*	104	No	☐	☒	☐
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*	44	No	☐	☒	☐
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	427	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Stock Dove	*Columba oenas*	53	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Storm Petrel	*Hydrobates pelagicus*	74	No	☐	☒	☐
Swift	*Apus apus*	430	No	☐	☒	☐
Taiga Bean Goose	*Anser fabalis*	2	No	☐	☒	☐
Tawny Owl	*Strix aluco*	28		☐	☒	☐
Teal	*Anas crecca*	1590	No	☐	☒	☐
Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	2	No	☐	☒	☐

Tree Pipit	*Anthus trivialis*	28	No	☐	☒	☐
Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*	206		☐	☒	☐
Tundra Ringed Plover	*Charadrius hiaticula tundrae*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*	864	No	☐	☒	☐
Turtle Dove	*Streptopelia turtur*	12	No	☐	☒	☐
Twite	*Carduelis flavirostris*	7	No	☐	☒	☐
Two-barred Crossbill	*Loxia leucoptera*	2	No	☐	☒	☐
Velvet Scoter	*Melanitta fusca*	578	No	☐	☒	☐
Water Pipit	*Anthus spinoletta*	16	No	☐	☒	☐
Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	424	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*	726	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Whinchat	*Saxicola rubetra*	130	Yes	☐	☒	☐
White-billed Diver	*Gavia adamsii*	12	No	☐	☒	☐
White-fronted Goose	*Anser albifrons*	3	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Whitethroat	*Curruca communis*	3	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	181	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	1243	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Willow Tit	*Poecile montana*	23	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	404	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	98	No	☐	☒	☐
Wood Warbler	*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Woodcock	*Scolopax rusticola*	161	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Woodlark	*Lullula arborea*	2	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*	436	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	299	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Wryneck	*Jynx torquilla*	19	No	☐	☒	☐
Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*	216	No	☐	☒	☐
	Motacilla flava flavissima	5	No	☐	☒	☐
Yellow-browed Warbler	*Phylloscopus inornatus*	195	No	☐	☒	☐
Yellowhammer	*Emberiza citrinella*	117		☐	☒	☐
Yellow-headed Wagtail	*Motacilla flava lutea*	1	No	☐	☒	☐
Yellow-legged Gull	*Larus michahellis*	28	No	☐	☒	☐
Insect - Butterfly						
Dingy Skipper	*Erynnis tages*	9	No	☐	☐	☒
Small Heath	*Coenonympha pamphilus*	9	No	☐	☐	☒
Wall	*Lasiommata megera*	41	No	☐	☐	☐
Reptile						

Adder	*Vipera berus*	1	Yes	☐	☒	☒
Common Lizard	*Zootoca vivipara*	1	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Grass Snake	*Natrix natrix*	1	Yes	☐	☒	☐
Slow-worm	*Anguis fragilis*	1	Yes	☐	☒	☒
Terrestrial Mammal						
Bat	*Chiroptera*	10	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Bats	*Vespertilionidae*	12	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Brown Hare	*Lepus europaeus*	8	Yes	☐	☐	☒
Common Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	32	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Eurasian Otter	*Lutra lutra*	1	Yes	☒	☒	☐
Eurasian Red Squirrel	*Sciurus vulgaris*	2	Yes	☐	☒	☒
European Water Vole	*Arvicola amphibius*	3	Yes	☐	☒	☒
Myotis Bat species	*Myotis*	1	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus nathusii*	2	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Noctule Bat	*Nyctalus noctula*	1	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	2	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Pipistrelle Bat species	*Pipistrellus*	3	Yes	☒	☒	☒
Soprano Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	1	Yes	☒	☒	☒

Key

HR 2017 – The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

WCA 1981 – The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Bird species listed relate solely to those included on Schedule 1)

NERC – The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

UK BAP – UK Biodiversity Action Plan

APPENDIX F – POLICY AND LEGISLATION

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[22], as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000[23] and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006[24,] is the main legislation that protects wildlife in Great Britain and is the mechanism for defining and protecting nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The legislation makes it offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or their eggs or nests (with certain exceptions) and disturb any bird species listed under Schedule 1 to the Act, or its dependent young while it is nesting;
- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed under Schedule 5 to the Act; intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection by any wild animal listed under Schedule 5 to the Act; intentionally or recklessly disturb certain Schedule 5 animal species while they occupy a place used for shelter or protection; and
- Pick or uproot any wild plant listed under Schedule 8 of the Act. Schedule 9, Part II of the Act also lists many species for which it is an offence to plant, or otherwise cause to grow, in the wild. Any material containing Japanese knotweed is also identified as controlled waste under the Environmental Protection Act 1990[25] and must be disposed of properly at licenced landfill according to the Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991[26].

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species a Regulations 2017[27] (the 'Habitat Regulations'), as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019[28,] establish the requirements for protecting sites that are internationally important for

[22] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69
[23] The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents
[24] Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents
[25] The Environmental Protection Act 1990. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/contents
[26] The Environmental Protection Act (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1991/2839/made
[27] The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made
[28] The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111179512/contents

threatened habitats and species – the National Site Network – and thus the requirement for a 'Habitat Regulations Assessment' of plans or developments with potential to affect them.

The Habitat Regulations also establish the strict protection of some species – European Protected Species – and make it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb certain wild animals, and to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal even if the animal is not present at the time.

Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The NERC Act 2006[24] places a duty on local planning authorities to have due regard for biodiversity and nature conservation during their operations, and thus ensures that biodiversity is a key consideration in the planning process. The Act also establishes a list of species and habitats of principal importance ('Priority' Species and Habitats) for the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021[29]

The Environment Act 2021 provides a framework for environmental protection in the UK. It is a wide-range piece of legislation affecting many aspects of the natural environment, including biodiversity. The act sets clear targets to halt the decline in wildlife populations through a legally binding target for species abundance by 2030 and a requirement to increase species populations by 10% by 2042. The Act also establishes mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain in new developments.

Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the 'Ramsar Convention'[30]) provides the only international mechanism for protecting internationally important wetlands; such sites are designated as Ramsar sites. It is government policy that Ramsar sites are afforded the same level of protection as sites in the National Site Network and so they are also subject to HRA.

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Badgers receive strict protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992[31], which prohibits the taking, injuring, selling, possessing or killing of badgers and makes it an offence to ill-treat any badger, damage, destroy, disturb or cause a dog to enter a badger sett.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

[29] The Environment Act 2021. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted
[30] The Ramsar Convention https://www.ramsar.org/
[31] Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997[32] establishes the legal protection of important countryside hedgerows, principally ancient and species-rich hedgerows. The Hedgerow Regulations also provide arrangements for planning authorities to protect important hedgerows in the countryside by controlling their removal through a system of notification.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024[33] sets out the Government's requirement for the planning system in England and in doing so establishes the framework within which local planning authorities can develop their own planning policies. The NPPF explicitly addresses the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including biodiversity, through paragraphs 187–201.

Government Circular ODPM 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (England only)

This Circular provides administrative guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England.

Part IV – *Conservation of Species protected by Law* states that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when considering a development proposal that may result in harm to the species or its habitat and that planning authorities must have regard to European Protected Species protected under the Habitat Regulations.

The presence or otherwise of European Protected Species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, must be established before the planning permission is determined, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.

Biodiversity Action Plans

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was developed to fulfil the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, to which the UK is a signatory. The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework'[34] succeeded the UKBAP and expired in 2019, but the UKBAP priority species and habitats are retained through the NERC Act 2006. Regional and local BAPs have also been developed for species/habitats of nature conservation importance at regional and local levels.

[32] The Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Available from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/contents/made
[33] National Policy Planning Framework 2024. Available from: National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[34] UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. Available from: https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/587024ff-864f-4d1d-a669-f38cb448abdc

APPENDIX G – VALUE OF ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

VALUE	EXAMPLES
International	• An internationally designated site or candidate site (SPA, pSPA, SAC, cSAC, pSAC, Ramsar site) or an area which meets the designation criteria for such sites. • Internationally significant and viable areas of a habitat type listed in Annexe 1 of the Habitats Directive, or smaller areas of such habitat, which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. • Any regularly occurring, globally threatened species. • A regularly occurring population of an internationally important species, which is threatened or rare in the UK, of uncertain conservation status • A regularly occurring, nationally significant population/number of any internationally important species.
National	• A nationally designated site (e.g. SSSI, NNR) or a discrete area which meets the published selection criteria for national designation (e.g. SSSI selection guidelines) irrespective of whether or not it has yet been notified. • A viable area of a UK BAP priority habitat, or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. • A regularly occurring significant number/population of a nationally important species e.g. listed on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). • A regularly occurring population of a nationally important species that is threatened or rare in the county or region. • A feature identified as being of critical importance in the UK BAP.
Regional / County	• Viable areas of key habitat identified in the Regional or County BAP or smaller areas of such a habitat, which are essential to maintain the viability of the larger whole. • Regional/county significant and viable areas of key habitat identified as being of regional value in the appropriate English Nature (now Natural England) Natural Area. • A regularly occurring significant population/number of any important species important at a regional/county level. • Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a species which is listed in a Regional/County Red Data Book or BAP on account of its regional rarity or localisation. • Sites of conservation importance that exceed the district selection criteria but that fall short of SSSI selection guidelines.
City/District/ Borough	• Areas of habitat identified in a District/City/Borough BAP or in the relevant Natural Area profile. • Sites that the designating authority has determined meet the published ecological selection criteria for designation, including Local Nature Reserves selected on District/City/Borough ecological criteria. • Sites/features that are scarce within the District/City/Borough or which appreciably enrich the District/City/Borough habitat resource.

VALUE	EXAMPLES
	• A diverse and/or ecologically valuable hedgerow network. • A population of a species that is listed in a District/City/Borough BAP because of its rarity in the locality or in the relevant Natural Area profile because of its regional rarity or localisation. • A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a District/City/Borough important species during key phases of its life cycle.
Parish	• A feature considered scarce within a Parish or which appreciably enriches the Parish resource.
Local	• Areas identified in a Local BAP or the relevant natural area profile. • Sites/features which area scarce in the locality or which are considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the local context, e.g. species-rich hedgerows. • Local Nature Reserves selected on Parish/Local ecological criteria. • Significant numbers/population of a locally important species e.g. one which is listed on the Local BAP. • Any species, populations or habitats of local importance.
Low	• Habitats of moderate to low diversity which support a range of locally and nationally common species, the loss of which can be easily mitigated.



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