# Update Ecological Assessment

# Phase 2-3, Chipping Lane, Longridge 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021



Tyler Grange

TG Report No. 11319\_R12\_JD\_CW

Report No:	Date	Revision	Author	Checked
11319_R12	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2021		Joseph Dance BSc (Hons) MCIEEM	Nick Bell BA (Hons) QCIEEM

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## Contents:

Summary	
Section 1: Introduction and Background	1
Section 2: Methodology and Results	4
Section 3: Conclusion and Recommendations	11
References	

## **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Site Proposals Appendix 2: Photographs

## Plans:

11319/P77\_JD - Habitat Features Plan



Phases 2-3, Chipping Lane, Longridge Update Ecological Report

# Summary

- S.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd. on behalf of Barratt North West Ltd. in relation to Phases 2-3 of consented residential development off Chipping Lane in Longridge (OS Grid Reference SD 60377 37942), hereinafter referred to as the site.
- S.2. The site benefits from an existing outline consent for residential development (3/2014/0764). Phase 1 of the development is under construction following Reserved Matters (RM) approval. Phases 2 and 3 also benefit from a lapsed outline consent but formal construction work is yet to commence on these phases. This report has been prepared to accompany the submission of a new application for residential development within Phases 2 and 3, following internal layout alterations and house types compared to the previous proposals put forward. The site boundary and scale of development is materially the same as the previous application for 2 and 3.
- S.3. Previous assessments of the site completed by Tyler Grange concluded:
  - No impacts on statutory/non-statutory nature conservation sites;
  - Widespread presence of species-poor pasture, which requires no specific mitigation, and boundary hedgerows with trees;
  - Likely absence of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) within the site;
  - Likely absence of roosting bats within the site, with only low levels of general bat activity recorded from common and widespread species;
  - Likely absence of badger setts within the site;
- S.4. Update surveys completed by Tyler Grange in 2021 comprised an extended phase one habitat survey, badger inspection, preliminary roost assessment of trees and updated inspections of ponds within and around the site in relation to great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.
- S.5. The results of these surveys are detailed within this report and confirm the continued likely absence of these species within the site. Recommendations are made to continue to safeguard certain species within the site. A bird/bat box enhancement strategy has also been prepared and this is summarised in a separate document produced by Tyler Grange.
- S.6. Overall, the site remains unchanged in its biodiversity value (either intrinsically or to protected/notable fauna) since previous surveys and the recommendations for mitigation and enhancements are still considered valid and appropriate. There remain no overriding ecological constraints which would preclude the principle of development within the site.



# Section 1: Introduction and Background

## Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd. on behalf of Barratt North West Ltd. in relation to Phases 2-3 of consented residential development off Chipping Lane in Longridge (OS Grid Reference SD 60377 37942), hereinafter referred to as the site.
- 1.2. The site benefits from an existing outline consent for residential development (3/2014/0764). Phase 1 of the development is under construction following Reserved Matters (RM) approval. Phases 2 and 3 also benefit from a lapsed outline consent but formal construction work is yet to commence on these phases. This report has been prepared to accompany the submission of a new application for residential development within Phases 2 and 3, following internal layout alterations and house types since the previous submission. The site boundary and scale of development is materially the same as the previous application for Phases 2 and 3.
- 1.3. The amended proposals are shown in **Appendix 1**.

## Background

- 1.4. Tyler Grange Group Ltd. have previously undertaken an extensive suite of ecological surveys within Phase 2/3 and the wider site to accompany the original planning application and subsequent Reserved Matters applications. In relation to ecological survey work (excluding condition discharge work relating to bat and bird box plans), these are summarised as:
  - 2001\_R08b\_Ecological Assessment\_JM\_SMC\_19.03.2015 initial ecological assessment report produced to accompany the original outline application;
  - *11319\_R02\_LT\_HB* badger survey report of Phase 1 as condition discharge following outline consent;
  - *11319\_R03\_LT\_JP* bat inspection survey report of trees within Phase 1 as condition discharge following outline consent;
  - *11319\_R05\_LRD\_JW* GCN survey report of ponds within and around Phase 2/3 site as an update to the results recorded in the initial assessment report produced to accompany the outline permission;
  - *11319\_R06a\_LRD\_MM* badger survey report of Phase 2/3 as condition discharge following outline consent;
  - *11319\_R09a\_LRD\_MM* bat survey report of Phase 2/3 to update preliminary roost assessments of trees subject to removal and to update results regarding general bat activity across the site;
- 1.5. The current report must, therefore, be read in conjunction with the previous reports for the site to understand the site context and baseline ecological information. Where necessary, this report



Phases 2-3, Chipping Lane, Longridge Update Ecological Report

Page 1

makes reference to previous results relating to both Phase 2/3 and Phase 1 for wider context as well.

- 1.6. The results of the previous surveys/assessments within the site confirmed the following:
  - Statutory/non-statutory nature conservation designations no impacts expected;
  - Habitats largely removed following construction activity, currently comprising bare ground and active construction site;
  - GCN and other amphibians confirmed as likely absent in ponds within and around the site, no impacts expected;
  - Badgers no setts recorded within or adjacent to the site and no impacts expected;
  - Bats likely absence of roosting bats in trees within site and generally low levels of activity by common and widespread species;
  - Birds requirement for nesting bird checks of any suitable nesting habitat to be affected and production/implementation of enhancement plan (detailed in report *13319\_R07c*);
  - Reptiles no impacts expected;
  - Otter/water vole no impacts expected;

## Approach

- 1.7. The current approach in 2021 is to submit a new application with minor tweaks to the internal layout of the developed site, which does not fundamentally change impacts to ecological receptors.
- 1.8. Given the relative recency of the survey work completed within the site and robust nature of the data, it was considered that the only 'update' surveys required for 2021 were:
  - Update walkover of site to confirm type and distribution of habitats present and if they are changed since 2019;
  - Update badger survey of site to confirm status of badgers within site;
  - Update preliminary roost assessment of trees; and
  - Update inspection of ponds within and around site;
- 1.9. An update desk study in terms of requesting ecological data was not considered appropriate in this instance given the recency of the desk study previously completed and the fact that the proposals remain unchanged since previously assessed. Development activity is also underway on site and much of the site has been cleared to facilitate future development.



## Ecological receptors not assessed (2021)

1.10. This section of the report details the findings of the previous assessment for the site and provides justification for not undertaking an updated assessment as part of the current report in 2021.

#### Statutory and Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

1.11. All nature conservation sites within 2km and further distant (in relation to European sites) are considered to be sufficiently distant to avoid any adverse impacts as a result of the proposed works. This is still considered valid for the resubmission and no further recommendations are made.

#### Reptiles

1.12. As noted in the previous assessment of the site and wider site, the site continues to contain no habitat with the potential to support any species of reptile. Nor is it connected to any adjacent habitat of suitability for this species group given the urban/agricultural context of the surrounding land. No impacts on this species group are expected as a result of the proposed development and they will not be discussed further in this report.

#### Water Vole/Otter

1.13. As noted in the assessments completed for the original application, the site contains no habitat with the potential to support these species. Nor is it connected to any adjacent habitat of suitability for these species. No impacts on these species are expected as a result of the proposed development and they will not be discussed further in this report.



# Section 2: Methodology and Results

- 2.1 The following update surveys were undertaken on land within the red line boundary of the site on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2021 by experienced ecological consultant Sophie Kirk, who is an experienced ecological consultant and holds a Natural England licence to survey for great crested newt.
  - Phase I habitat survey;
  - Update badger survey;
  - Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of trees for bat roost potential; and
  - Update inspections of ponds around the site
- 2.2 The weather conditions were adequate for such surveys 20°C, partially cloudy and a moderate breeze.

## **Quality Control**

2.3 The contents of this report have been prepared by ecologists at Tyler Grange Group Limited, all of whom are members or are working toward membership of CIEEM and abide by the Institute's Code of Professional Conduct.

## Phase I Habitat Survey Methodology

- 2.4 An initial Phase I habitat survey was undertaken on all land within the site boundary in November 2013 by Tyler Grange and subsequently updated in September 2021 by Sophie Kirk. Multiple repeat visits of the site were undertaken between 2018 and 2019 during protected species surveys by Tyler Grange.
- 2.5 The Phase I habitat survey methodology was based on guidance set out in the 'Handbook for Phase I habitat survey' (JNCC, 2010). This entailed recording the main plant species and classifying and mapping broad habitat types present. Note was taken of the more conspicuous fauna, and any evidence of, or potential for the presence of protected/notable flora and fauna.
- 2.6 A basic inventory of the habitats and a representative species list was produced. Where access allowed, adjacent habitats were also considered, to assess the site within the wider landscape and to provide information with which to assess possible impacts within the context of the site boundary.

## Phase I Habitat Survey Results

- 2.7 The updated habitat survey found that the site supports the following habitats:
  - Bare ground (cleared areas relating to construction activity);
  - Ditches;



- Hedgerows;
- Ponds;
- Poor semi-improved grassland (remaining agricultural grassland); and
- Scattered broadleaf trees
- 2.8 All the features are shown on Plan **11319\_P77** appended to this report. The following section provides a description of each and compares against the previous habitat results obtained. Representative photographs are provided in **Appendix 2**.

#### Bare ground

2.9 This habitat type was widespread across the Phase 2/3 site and comprised areas of former agricultural grassland which had been cleared in relation to construction activity associated with Phase 1 and forthcoming construction activity in Phases 2 and 3. It was considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**.

#### Ditches

2.10 Ditches associated with Hedgerows H1 and H2 (see previous report for descriptions and reference) are no longer present due to construction activity. The remaining ditches associated with remaining hedgerows are heavily shaded and remain as per the descriptions provided in the original ecological assessment report. This habitat is considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**.

#### Hedgerows

2.11 **Table 1** below summarises the hedgerows within the site and compares against the previous descriptions in the previous ecological impact assessment report. All remaining hedgerows are considered to be of **local ecological importance** and classify as UK Priority Habitats.



Hedgerow Reference	Description	2021 update
H1	Comprised hawthorn Crataegus monogyna, blackthorn Prunus spinosa, dog rose Rosa canina and elder Sambucus nigra. Not classified as Important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.	No longer present - cleared as part of Phase 1 works
H2	Comprised hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel Corylus avellana, holly Ilex aquifolium, crab apple Malus sylvestris and elder. Borderline Important.	No longer present - cleared as part of Phase 1 works
H3	Comprised hawthorn, beech Fagus sylvatica, ash Fraxinus excelsior, blackthorn, hazel, holly and alder Alnus glutinosa. Considered Important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.	Unchanged
H9	Comprised alder, hawthorn, ash, holly, blackthorn and elder. Considered Important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.	No longer present - cleared as part of Phase 1 works
H10	Comprised hazel, hawthorn, ash, holly and blackthorn. Borderline Important.	Unchanged but now has gaps for drainage/road construction
H11	Comprised hawthorn, ash, holly and hazel. Not Important.	Unchanged
H13	Comprised hawthorn, ash, holly, pedunculate oak Queruc robur and blackthorn. Not Important.	Unchanged
H15	Comprised hawthorn. Not Important.	Unchanged

#### Table 1: Hedgerow descriptions

#### Ponds

2.12 Only one pond is present within the site and is identified as Pond P3 on the accompanying habitat features plan. A full description of this pond is provided in the existing reports for the site and are considered unchanged since previous assessment. This habitat is considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**. Other ponds lie outside of the site boundary and are discussed in the great crested newt results/assessment section of this report.

#### Poor semi-improved grassland

2.13 A small area of this habitat remained within the proposed development site, with the most western fields (proposed to be retained in agriculture) noted to be unchanged since previous assessments. Overall, this habitat is considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**.

#### Scattered broadleaf trees

2.14 The trees within the site were noted to be as per the findings of the original habitat survey and subsequent assessments. A dead ash tree near H15 towards the south of the site was no longer present. Although individual trees were considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**, they do provide valuable habitat for roosting bats and nesting birds, which is further discussed in the relevant sections of this report.



## Badger Survey Methodology

- 2.15 The site has previously been surveyed for badger multiple times in relation to the initial outline consent application and subsequent RM applications for Phase 2/3. Incidental evidence of badger was also recorded during other protected species surveys (i.e. GCN/bats) where necessary. An update badger survey was undertaken during the update habitat survey in 2021 by Sophie Kirk, who is appropriately experienced in conducting such surveys.
- 2.16 The site and accessible adjacent habitats within 30m were surveyed for signs indicating use by badgers. Typical badger field signs include:
  - Setts;
  - Tracks that were confirmed as badger pathways;
  - Latrines and dung pits;
  - Hairs;
  - Prints;
  - Scratches on trees and
  - Feeding signs (e.g. snuffle holes, dug out wasp nests and feeding remains).
- 2.17 Any sett found was examined and assigned to one of four categories of importance to the badger clan, as defined by Harris et al.1989 and used in various National Badger Surveys (Wilson et al. 1997 and Cresswell et al. 1990). The number of holes comprising each sett was recorded and setts classified as disused, partially used, or well-used. Sett descriptions and categories of use are set out in **Table 2** and **Table 3**.

#### Table 2: Classification of Badger Setts

Type of Badger Sett	Description
Main	These usually have a large number of holes with large spoil heaps, and the setts generally look well used. There will be well-used paths to and from the sett and between sett entrances. Although normally the breeding sett is in continuous use, it is possible to find a main sett that has become disused due to excessive digging or some other reason; it should be recorded as a disused main sett.
Annex	These are often close to a main sett, usually less than 150m away, and are usually connected to the main sett by one or more obvious well-worn paths. They usually have several holes but may not be in use all the time even if the main sett is very active.
Subsidiary	These often only have a few holes. They are usually at least 50m from a main sett, and do not have an obvious path connecting with another sett. They are not continuously active.
Outlier	These usually have only one or two holes, often have little spoil outside the hole, with no obvious path connecting with another sett and are only used sporadically. When not in use by badgers, they are often taken over by foxes or even rabbits. However, they can still be recognised as badger setts by the shape of the tunnel (not the actual entrance hole), which is usually at least 250mm in diameter, and is rounded or a flattened oval shape. Fox and rabbit tunnels are smaller and often taller than broad.



Classification of Use	Description	
Well-used	Clear of debris and vegetation, obviously in regular use.	
Partially used	Not in regular use, with leaves or twigs in entrance or moss and other plants growing around the entrance.	
Disused	Partially or completely blocked entrances, unable to be used without a consider- able amount of clearance.	

#### Table 3: Indicators of use of badger setts

## **Badger Survey Limitations**

2.18 The survey was limited to land within the red line boundary with views where possible to land within 30m. This is not considered to have altered the assessments or conclusions made in this report.

### **Badger Survey Results**

2.19 No evidence of badger was recorded within the site during the survey.

## **Bat Survey Methodology**

- 2.20 The most recent preliminary roost assessment of trees within the site was undertaken in September 2018 by Laura Dennis (senior ecologist). An updated assessment of the buildings and trees was undertaken by Sophie Kirk during the update habitat survey on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2021.
- 2.21 The location of trees within the site is illustrated on drawing **11319/P77** appended to this report. In summary, all of the trees within and along the boundaries of the site were previously assessed as providing negligible bat roost potential and were not considered for further survey work.
- 2.22 The trees within the site were re-assessed in 2021 in accordance with the guidelines outlined below in **Table 4**.

BCT Tree Category	Description	
High Potential	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suit- able for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time.	
Moderate potential	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	
Low potential	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.	
Negligible potential	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats	

 Table 4: Classification of bat roost potential, modified from Hundt (2016)



## **Bat Survey Results**

- 2.23 All of the trees within the site were still considered to provide negligible bat roost potential and were in similar condition as previously assessed.
- 2.24 Given the ongoing development activity within and around of the site, the site is currently considered to temporarily be of lower ecological importance to bats than previously assessed. Overall, however, given the minor changes to the development layout no additional impacts on roosting bats are anticipated and no further mitigation/enhancements beyond those already incorporated into the masterplan are recommended.
- 2.25 There still remains the need for a sensitive lighting design to ensure sensitive boundary dispersal futures through the site remain suitable for bats.

## **Great Crested Newt and other Amphibians**

2.26 All ponds within and around the site were previously subject to eDNA sampling surveys in 2018, full details of which are presented in report *11319\_R05\_GCN Survey Report\_LRD\_JW\_151018*. The location of ponds surveyed are presented in the drawing appended to this report, along with results of Habitat Suitability Index assessments. **Table 5** below summarises the previous work and **Appendix 2** provides photographs of each.

I ddie 5: Previous GUN survey results			
Pond reference	HSI score	2018 eDNA results	2021 Update
Pond P1	Average	Negative	Unchanged
Pond P2	Average	N/A - dry	Unchanged, area reduced
Pond P3	Poor	N/A - dry	Small ephemeral pool heavily shaded by trees. Previous HSI score still accurate.
Pond P4	Below Average	N/A - dry	Dry

Table 5: Previous GCN survey results

- 2.27 Updated eDNA or other population size assessment surveys have not been completed as part of the new application in September 2021. Although Ponds 1-3 contained water at the time of the update survey in 2021 due to recent rainfall, they are very small in area and are likely to be dry in the amphibian breeding season.
- 2.28 These ponds are also not suitably connected to others in the surrounding landscape so the likelihood of GCN dispersing to these ponds is considered to be exceptionally low. In addition, the proposed development area of the site (excluding the fields to be retained in agriculture and undeveloped) contains very little terrestrial habitat with the potential to support GCN, primarily comprising an active construction site or cleared ground. For this reason, the likelihood of GCN being present within the site is considered to be exceptionally low.
- 2.29 Recommendations are made in Section 3 of this report, however, to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place in the unlikely event GCN or other amphibians are encountered as part of the proposed development.



## Birds

- 2.30 Assessments on bird populations were made as part of the original ecological impact assessment and mitigation/enhancement measures proposed. A separate bird and bat box strategy has been prepared to provide enhancements for nesting birds and this is presented in document *11319\_R07c* produced by Tyler Grange.
- 2.31 Due to the ongoing development activity and site clearance, the site currently offers very little habitat with the potential to support nesting birds, largely restricted to the areas of hedgerow and trees.
- 2.32 Two boxes targeting kestrel/barn owl were also noted to be present on boundary trees within the site, which were not present during the previous surveys completed within the site. The location of these boxes is illustrated on the habitat features plan appended to this report. No obvious evidence of barn owl occupancy was recorded during the walkover survey in 2021. Both would be retained in the developed site and it is apparent these trees have been protected with heras fencing to prevent incidental damage during construction activity.
- 2.33 Given that these boxes are apparently new and have been installed subsequent to construction/site clearance works commencing, the likelihood of occupancy given nearby levels of disturbance is very low. Once operational, however, these boxes would provide enhancements for nesting birds.



# **Section 3: Conclusion and Recommendations**

## Habitats

3.1. The majority of the site has been cleared, with only a small pocket of grassland remaining within the development site itself. All remaining hedgerows/trees/ponds are as recorded in the previous assessments and surveys within the site. The amended proposals would not incur any additional habitat loss beyond that previously assessed.

## **Badgers**

- 3.2. No evidence of badgers was recorded in the site. Badgers are a mobile species and can readily excavate setts in a short period of time, so it is recommended that prior to commencement of development an updated badger survey is completed to assess the presence of badgers and offer mitigation accordingly.
- 3.3. Regardless of the results of any update surveys, badgers and small mammals are likely to disperse and forage throughout the site. To this end, sensitive working practices must be employed during site clearance works and construction activities to protect badgers as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 3.4. This detail should be included within a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and include, but not be restricted to:
  - Sealing or ramping any excavations left overnight, or providing mammal ramps at regular intervals;
  - Capping any pipework left open overnight;
  - Storage of construction materials/site arisings off the ground or in skips;
  - Compressing any stockpiles to reduce the likelihood of badgers excavating setts within

#### Bats

- 3.5. The update preliminary roost assessment surveys confirmed the results of the previous surveys. All remaining trees were assessed as providing negligible bat roost potential and would remain in the developed site anyway. There are no recommendations for further surveys or mitigation to this regard.
- 3.6. Enhancements with regards to roosting bats are proposed in document *11319\_R07c* and comprise the installation of six new bat boxes integrated within proposed buildings within the site.



## **Great Crested Newt and other Amphibians**

3.7. Although the likelihood of GCN and other amphibian presence within the site is considered to be exceptionally low, recommendations are made to safeguard this species group during site clearance/construction activities. This detail should be included within a CEMP secured as part of a planning condition, which will detail how works in proximity to Pond 3 (which will be retained) will proceed to protect amphibians, along with best-practice construction methods (i.e. storage of skips in materials).

## General

- 3.8. Overall, the site and its value to protected/notable habitats and fauna remains unchanged since the previous assessments and the continued likely absence of certain species, as detailed throughout the report, is confirmed.
- 3.9. Given the minor changes in the revised proposals, which do not incur any additional impacts on species or habitats, it is considered that there is no need for any additional mitigation beyond that implemented as part of the previous proposals.



## References

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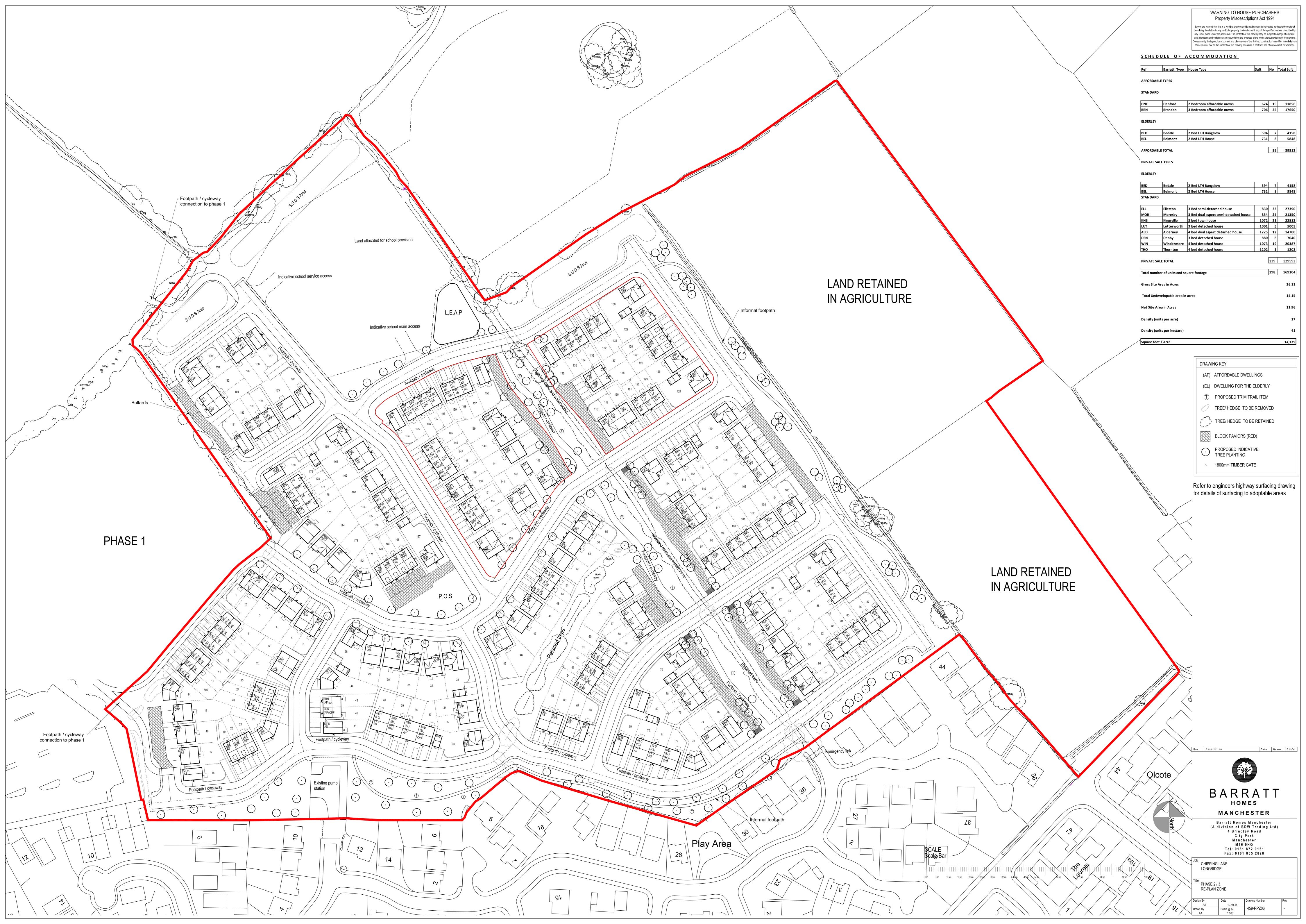


Phases 2-3, Chipping Lane, Longridge Update Ecological Report

# **Appendix 1: Site Proposals**



Phases 2-3, Chipping Lane, Longridge Update Ecological Report



# **Appendix 2: Site Photographs**



Photograph 1 - Bare ground/construction activity across much of site



Photograph 2 - Continuation of bare/cleared ground



Photograph 3 - Construction activity within site





Photograph 4 – Poor semi-improved grassland in retained part of site



Photograph 5 - Ash tree with barn owl/kestrel box within Hedgerow H10



Photograph 6 – Pond 3 within site





Photograph 7 - Pond 2 (off-site)



Photograph 8 – Pond 1 (off-site)



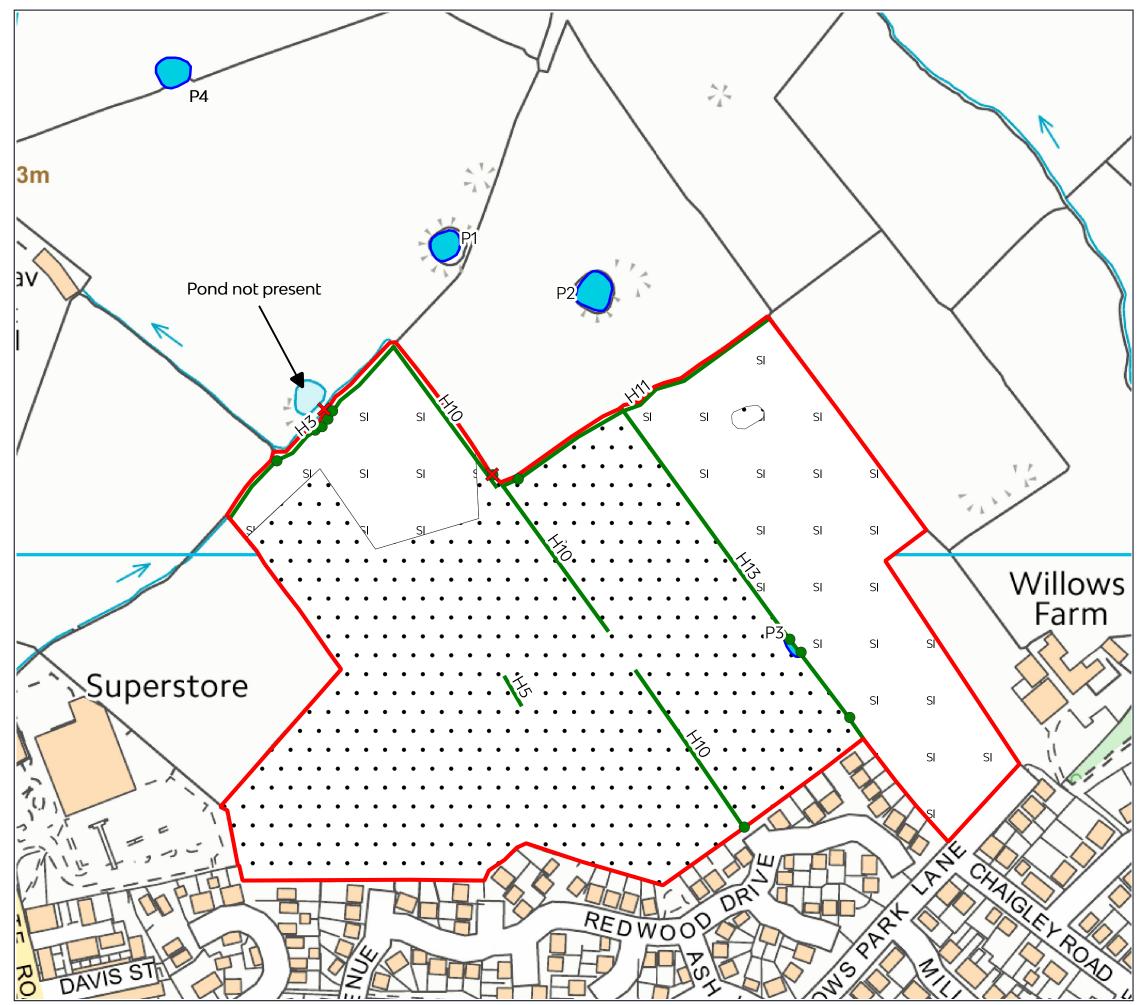
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## Plans:

11319/P77\_JD - Habitat Features Plan



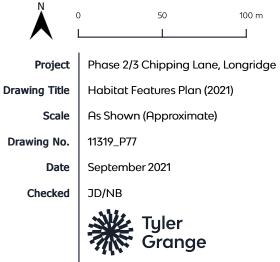
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- Pond
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- 🗙 Owl Box



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