Everything Retreat, Pendle View, Primrose Lane, Mellor BB2 7EQ

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT
(Including a Licensed Bat Survey)

September 2025

ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd Reference: 2025-286

ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd
Building N2
Chorley Business and Technology Centre
East Terrace
Euxton Lane
Euxton
Chorley
PR7 6TE

Tel: 01772 750502

mail@erap.co.uk
www.erap.co.uk

CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Document Control

Survey Type:	**Surveyors**[1]	**Survey Date(s)**
Ecological appraisal survey and Daytime Bat Walkover Survey	Brian Robinson	22nd August 2024
Reporting	**Personnel**	**Date**
Author	Brian Robinson B.Sc. (Hons) MCIEEM Senior Ecologist	19th September 2025
Signature(s)	[redacted]	
Checked	Rebecca Bayley B.Sc. (Hons) Graduate Ecologist	23rd September 2025
Revised and issued	Brian Robinson B.Sc. (Hons) MCIEEM	25th September 2025
Report issued to	Zara Moon Architects	
Version Number	1	

[1] *Licence reference numbers*

Bats

Brian Robinson Natural England Class Survey Licence (bats, Level 2) Registration Number 2015-13161-CLS-CLS

Great crested newt

Brian Robinson Natural England Class Survey Licence (Level 1) Registration Number 2017-30960-CLS-CLS

SUMMARY

Introduction and Scope

i. This ecological survey and assessment presents the ecological, biodiversity and nature conservation status of land at Everything Retreat, Pendle View, Primrose Lane, Mellor BB2 7EQ. The assessment was requested in connection with proposals to demolish Building 2 and extend Building 1 into its footprint, and construct an outdoor pool at the southern end of the site.

ii. This report presents the results of a desktop study, data search, extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and a licensed bat survey carried out in August 2024. The scope of survey undertaken is appropriate to identify potential ecological constraints, the remit of mitigation required and opportunities for biodiversity associated with the development proposals.

iii. The site comprises buildings and hardstanding, an area of amenity grassland scrub and individual trees.

Results of Survey and Assessment

iv. The proposals will have no adverse direct or indirect effect on statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation.

v. Only common and widespread plant species were found. None of the habitats present are representative of semi-natural habitat. The NVC communities present are typical of the geographical area and conditions present. No Priority Habitat or irreplicable habitat is present. In terms of each habitat's importance in a geographical context, the area of scrub is of 'site' value only, and the modified grassland, hardstanding and buildings are not considered to hold any importance on a geographical scale.

vi. Indian Balsam is present within proximity to the site, and Rhododendron and Montbretia are present within the wider Everything Retreat area. All are invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). It is considered that the proposals present an opportunity for the control of Indian Balsam within the site as part of the proposed development. Further guidance is presented at **Section 5.3**.

vii. The presence of roosting bats is reasonably discounted at the site. Habitats within and adjacent to the site are suitable for foraging and commuting bats. Recommendations relating to the retention of features suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats, and to ensure an unsuitable lighting regime does not impact these habitats, are presented at **Section 5.2**.

viii. Impacts to great crested newt are considered to be reasonably unlikely. As best practice however it is recommended that the proposals are completed in a suitable manner to minimise impacts to great crested newt (and other wildlife, including hedgehog and common toad) during the construction phase of the proposed development. Measures to protect wildlife during the construction phase of the development are presented at **Section 5.2**.

ix. The proposals present an opportunity to enhance habitats for nesting birds and roosting bats via the installation of bird and bat boxes on retained mature trees in the Everything Retreat site. The proposals also present an opportunity to enhance habitats for hedgehog via the installation of a hedgehog shelter within the site. Recommendations for ecological enhancements are presented at **Section 5.3**.

x. No other protected species have been detected.

xi. The recommendations in **Section 5.0** outline all the mandatory measures and additional actions to be applied to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and best practice.

xii. The proposals will secure an opportunity to implement beneficial measures such as habitat creation that will safeguard habitats for wildlife such as birds and bats, with the aim of providing a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.

Conclusion

xiii. It is concluded that the proposals are feasible and acceptable in accordance with ecological considerations and relevant planning policy. Development at the site will provide an opportunity to secure ecological enhancement for wildlife associated with the local area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

1.1.1 ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd was commissioned by Zara Moon Architects to carry out an ecological assessment of land at Everything Retreat, Pendle View, Primrose Lane, Mellor BB2 7EQ (hereafter referred to as 'Everything Retreat', with the area at which the development is proposed referred to as the 'site'). The Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference at the centre of the site is SD 66339 31288. An aerial image of Everything Retreat and the site and its surrounding habitats is appended at **Figure 1** (source image: ESRI World Imagery).

1.1.2 The assessment was requested in connection with a planning application to demolish Building 2 and extend Building 1 into its footprint, and construct an outdoor pool at the southern end of the site.

1.2 Scope of Works

1.2.1 The scope of ecological works undertaken in August 2024 comprised:

a. A desktop study and data search for known ecological information at the site and the local area;

b. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and assessment, and assessment of the habitats present at the site using the UK Habitats Classification;

c. Assessment of the ecological value of the habitats within the site with the use of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) and the Ratcliffe criteria, as presented in *A Nature Conservation Review* (Ratcliffe, 1977);

d. Survey and assessment of all habitats for relevant statutorily protected species[1] and other wildlife including badger (*Meles meles*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), bird species and reptiles;

e. A daytime bat walkover survey for bats, which has comprised a licensed preliminary roost assessment of the buildings, a ground level tree assessment and an assessment of the suitability of the habitats within the site and the surrounding area for foraging and commuting bats;

f. The identification of any potential ecological constraints on the proposals and the specification of the scope of mitigation and ecological enhancement required in accordance with wildlife legislation, planning policy guidance and other relevant guidance; and

g. The identification of any further surveys or precautionary actions that may be required to inform the progression of the site through the planning process or prior to the commencement of any construction activities.

[1] In accordance with Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact on the Planning System (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005) developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development. In this instance (for example) there are no water bodies or water courses within or adjacent to the site; there has been no requirement to consider, water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) or otter (*Lutra lutra*) as part of this assessment.

2.0 METHOD OF SURVEY

2.1 Desktop Study and Data Search

2.1.1 The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

a. MAGiC Maps: A web-based interactive map which brings together geographic information on key environmental schemes and designations, including details of statutory nature conservation sites;

b. Ancient Tree Inventory (Woodland Trust, 2025): An online database of ancient and veteran trees;

c. Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS);

d. Lancashire Environment Record Network (LERN); and

e. Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

2.2 Vegetation and Habitats

2.2.1 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site was carried out by Brian Robinson on 22nd August 2025. The weather was dry and overcast with a light air (Beaufort scale 1) and an air temperature of 18°C.

2.2.2 A habitat and vegetation map was produced for the site and the immediate surrounding area and is appended at **Figure 2**. The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) with minor adjustments to illustrate and examine the habitats with greater precision.

2.2.3 On site habitat mapping was assisted via use of GPS technology and QField on-site mapping software, using *ESRI World Imagery* and *Everything Retreat: Existing and Proposed Site Plan Rev. B* (Zara Moon Architects, 2024) as base plans.

2.2.4 The plant species within the site boundary were determined with estimates of the distribution, ground cover, abundance and constancy of individual species. The estimation of abundance was based on the DAFOR system, where D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional and R = Rare, this being a widely used and accepted system employed by ecological surveyors. The terms L = Locally and V = Very were additionally used to describe the plant species distributions with greater precision.

2.2.5 Stands of vegetation and habitats were described and evaluated using the National Vegetation Classification (NVC). The NVC provides a systematic and comprehensive analysis of British vegetation and is a reliable framework for nature conservation and land-use planning.

2.2.6 Habitats within the site were assessed in accordance with *The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (UKHab Ltd, 2023). The UK Habitat Classification, or 'UKHab' has been designed to function at two scales of minimum mappable unit (MMU): fine scale (25m^2 or 5 metres length) and large scale (400m^2 or 20 metres length). It has been considered for the purposes of this survey that the fine scale of 25m^2 or 5 metres length MMU is appropriate.

2.2.7 Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. Plant nomenclature follows *New Flora of the British Isles 3rd Edition* (Stace, 2010).

2.2.8 Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

2.3 Animal Life

Badger

2.3.1 The survey area for badger covered the site (as annotated on **Figures 1** and **2**) and extended to accessible land within a radius of 50 metres from the site boundary. Private gardens / land were excluded from the survey. The survey was conducted in accordance with guidance presented within *Badgers and Development* (Natural England, 2007) and Badgers*: advice for making planning decisions* (Natural England, 2022).

2.3.2 The following signs of badger activity were searched for:

a. Sett entrances, e.g. entrances that are normally 25 to 35cm in diameter and shaped like a 'D' on its side;

b. Large spoil heaps outside sett entrances;

c. Bedding outside sett entrances;

d. Badger footprints;

e. Badger paths;

f. Latrines;

g. Badger hairs on fences or bushes;

h. Scratching posts; and

i. Signs of digging for food.

2.3.3 Habitats within and surrounding the site were assessed in terms of their suitability for use by foraging and sheltering badger in accordance with their known habitat preferences as detailed in current guidance and *Badger* (Roper, 2010).

Bat Species

Daytime Bat Walkover Survey

Survey Personnel

2.3.4 The site was assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats by Brian Robinson, Natural England Class Survey Licence WML CL18 (Bat Survey Level 2), Registration Number 2015-13161-CLS-CLS. The surveyor's qualifications and experience meet the criteria as defined in the *Technical Guidance Series Competencies for Species Survey: Bats* (CIEEM, 2013).

Preliminary Roost Assessment of the Buildings

2.3.5 The surveys were carried out in accordance with standard methodology including the *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (Mitchell-Jones, 2004), the *Bat Workers' Manual 3rd Edition* (Mitchell-Jones & Mcleish, 2004) and *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)* (Collins, J. (ed), 2023).

2.3.6 An inspection of the external surfaces, walls and roofs of the buildings was carried out to find potential bat roosting habitat or accesses into internal areas where roosts may be present. Searches for evidence of bat presence in the form of droppings, urine stains, feeding signs, grease marks and other evidence were also carried out.

2.3.7 The internal survey involved an examination of the accessible internal areas (including roof voids) to search for roosting bats or evidence of past use of the buildings by bats such as droppings and prey remains.

2.3.8 A list of equipment used is detailed in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Survey Equipment Used During Daytime Bat Survey

Ladders
LED Lenser P14 torch
Olympus Tough TG-6 camera
8x20 binoculars
Ridgid Micro Inspection Camera Borescope CA-100

2.3.9 The suitability of each building has been assessed in accordance with Table 4.1 of *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)* (Collins, J. (ed), 2023), taking into account any presence of gaps suitable for access by bats, features suitable for use by roosting bats within the building (including crevice dwelling species and species which can roost in the open in roof voids), and the suitability of the surrounding habitats for use by foraging and commuting bats. The suitability of each building has been informed by the following categories as presented in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2: Suitability Categories for Roosting Habitats in Buildings

Suitability	Description
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices / suitable shelter at all ground / underground levels).
Negligible[a]	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions[b] and / or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats[c]).
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions[b] and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions[b] and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool / stable hibernation site.
[a]Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute). [b]For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.	

Suitability	Description
[c]Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten *et al*., 2016 and Jansen *et al*., 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.	

Ground Level Tree Assessment

2.3.10 A preliminary assessment of the trees within the site was conducted to assess their suitability for use by roosting bats, and to inform whether further surveys or precautionary measures were required.

2.3.11 Trees were assessed from the ground using binoculars and a high-powered torch. Each tree was searched for the presence of the following features:

Woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed platey bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached Ivy (Hedera helix) with stem diameters in excess of 50mm and bat, bird or dormouse (Muscardinus avellanarius) boxes.

2.3.12 Terms used to describe any features present follow (where possible) those outlined and described in *Bat Tree Habitat Key, 2nd Edition* (Andrews, H (ed), 2013) and *Bat Roosts in Trees: A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-care and Ecology Professionals* (BTHK, 2018).

2.3.13 Trees have been assessed and described using the categories presented at Tables 4.2 and 6.2 of *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn),* (Collins, J. (ed), 2023), as presented in **Table 2.3**.

Table 2.3: Definition of Terms and Suitability Categories Used in Tree Survey for Roosting Bats

Terms and Suitability Categories	Description
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
None	Either no PRFs in the tree(s) or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further Assessment Required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Habitat Assessment for Commuting / Foraging Bats

2.3.14 Habitats within and adjacent to the site were assessed for their value and suitability for commuting and foraging bats in accordance with Table 4.1 of *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)* (Collins, J. (ed), 2023). Reference has been made to the categories, descriptions and examples presented in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Consideration of Suitability of Foraging and Commuting Habitat for Bats

Suitability	Potential Flight Paths and Foraging Habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade / protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible [a]	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
[a] Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).	

Bird Species

2.3.15 Bird species observed and heard during the survey were recorded.

2.3.16 Habitats throughout the site and in the immediate surrounding area were assessed for their value to roosting, feeding and nesting birds, as indicated by the amount of shelter, feeding value, woody vegetation structure and species diversity of tree and shrub species in the site.

Great Crested Newt

Desktop Search for Ponds

2.3.17 In accordance with *Great crested newts: advice for making planning decisions* (Natural England, 2022) all ponds within an unobstructed 500 metres of a site should be considered for their suitability to support breeding great crested newts. The potential of the proposed development to impact upon any great crested newt population(s) whose breeding ponds are within 500 metres must be considered.

2.3.18 The search of unobstructed habitats in the wider area up to a distance of 500 metres from the site boundary revealed the presence of two ponds as detailed in **Table 2.5**.

Table 2.5: Ponds within 500 Metres of the Site

Pond Reference	OS Grid Reference	Distance from Site Boundary (refer to Figure 1)
1	SD 40926 29448	16 metres to the south and within Everything Retreat
2	SD 41000 29616	22 metres to the south and within Everything Retreat

Consideration of Requirement for Further Survey

2.3.19 The requirement for further survey at each pond was then assessed using the following criteria:

a. Presence of dispersal barriers to great crested newt movements between ponds and the site, as detected during the walkover survey;

b. Distance of ponds from the site, and the potential influence of the proposed development of the site on any populations of great crested newt (if present at ponds), using the Natural England rapid risk assessment tool; and

c. Presence of other ponds which may form metapopulations and / or alter the influence of the site on ponds at greater distances.

Presence of Dispersal Barriers

2.3.20 There are no significant dispersal barriers between the two ponds and the site.

Consideration of Distance of Ponds from Site and Relative Size of Site

2.3.21 The Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment tool from *GCN Method Statement WML-A14-2 (Version April 2020)* (Natural England, 2020) has been completed to inform the requirement for further surveys, and is presented in **Table 2.6**.

2.3.22 The tool has been completed based on the distances of the ponds from the site, and the size of the development site (comprising 0.09 hectares, or 'ha'). The rapid risk assessment tool assumes that great crested newt are present.

Table 2.6: Rapid Risk Assessment Result

Component	Likely Effect	Notional Offence Probability Score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

2.3.23 An assessment of the suitability of both ponds as breeding habitat for great crested newt, and of the terrestrial habitats for foraging and sheltering great crested newt, has been completed to inform the assessment of potential impacts as a consequence of development.

Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

2.3.24 All ponds were assessed using the *Habitat Suitability Index (HSI)* (Oldham, et al., 2000) by Brian Robinson. The ponds were examined with reference to the ten HSI scoring criteria, which are: SI1: Geographical location; SI2: Pond area; SI3: Pond drying; SI4: Water quality (as indicated by the diversity of aquatic plants and invertebrates); SI5: Shade; SI6: Waterfowl; SI7: Fish; SI8: Abundance of other ponds within a one kilometre radius; SI9: Quality of terrestrial habitat; and SI10: Macrophyte cover (i.e. aquatic and emergent plants). The survey was conducted in accordance with *ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index. Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom* (ARG UK, 2010).

2.3.25 The assessment followed guidance in relation to interpreting HSI scores, following the categorical scale shown in **Table 2.7**.

Table 2.7: Pond Habitat Suitability Index Categories

HSI Score	Pond Suitability for Great Crested Newt
<0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

Assessment of Terrestrial Habitat

2.3.26 An assessment of the terrestrial habitat within the site for great crested newts was conducted, as informed by the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2001) and the Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook (Langton, et al., 2001).

2.3.27 Habitats present within the site were assessed for their value to support foraging, sheltering and hibernating great crested newt. Favourable habitats can comprise rough grassland, scrubland, woodland and sites with underground crevices or cracks, such as mammal holes, voids in tree stumps or banks, and refugia such as rock piles or dead wood.

Reptile Species

2.3.28 The site and its surroundings were assessed in terms of their suitability for use by reptile species using the important characteristics for reptiles outlined in the draft document *Reptile Mitigation Guidelines* (Natural England, 2011), and the *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook* (Edgar, et al., 2010). These habitat characteristics are outlined in **Table 2.8**.

Table 2.8: Important Habitat Characteristics for Reptiles

1. Location (in relation to species range)	7. Connectivity to nearby good quality habitat
2. Vegetation Structure	8. Prey abundance
3. Insolation	9. Refuge opportunity
4. Aspect	10. Hibernation habitat potential
5. Topography	11. Disturbance regime
6. Surface geology	12. Egg-laying site potential

Other Wildlife

2.3.29 Evidence of other wildlife, including Priority Species, observed whilst on site, but for which specific surveys were not made, was recorded and has been included in this report where it is considered of relevance to the planning application.

2.3.30 Habitats have been assessed for their suitability for Priority Species identified in the data search results where this is considered relevant to the application.

2.4 Survey and Reporting Limitations

2.4.1 The survey was completed at a suitable time of year and under suitable conditions. No survey limitations were experienced.

2.4.2 All measurements within this report are approximate only, and have been either measured (using QField) or estimated whilst on site or calculated using mapping software (QGIS) or internet-based mapping services such as MAGiC Maps and Google Earth.

2.5 Evaluation Methods

2.5.1 The habitats, vegetation and animal life were evaluated with reference to standard nature conservation criteria as described in *A Nature Conservation Review* (Ratcliffe, 1977) and *Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs* (Bainbridge, et al., 2013). These are size (extent), diversity, naturalness, rarity, fragility, typicality, recorded history, position in an ecological or geographical unit, potential value and intrinsic appeal.

2.5.2 Habitats have been assessed to determine whether they meet those described in *UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Priority* Habitat *Descriptions* (Maddock, A (ed), 2008); these lists are used to help draw up the statutory lists of Priority Habitats, as required under Section 41 of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities* (NERC) *Act 2006*. Where suitable, the ecological value of the habitats present has been assessed using the terms outlined in *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2018). Each habitat and individual trees have been assessed to determine whether they are 'irreplaceable habitat', defined in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024)[2] as '*Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen*'. The further detail presented in *The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024* (GOV.UK, 2024) has also been referred to.

2.5.3 Government advice on wildlife, as set out in the NPPF and associated government circulars has been taken into consideration. Legislation relating to protected species, such as those listed under Schedules 1, 5, 6 and 8 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*, is referenced where applicable, and any impacts to protected species are evaluated in accordance with current guidance.

2.5.4 The presence of any Priority Species, as listed under Section 41 of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006* is noted, and habitats are assessed in terms of their suitability and value for

[2]Hereafter the NPPF

these species. The presence of habitats and / or species listed by the Lancashire BAP has been taken into account in the evaluation of the site.

3.0 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Desktop Study and Data Search

Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation and SSSI Impact Risk Zones

3.1.1 The site is not and does not form part of any statutory designated site for nature conservation.

3.1.2 The site lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone for the West Pennine Moors SSSI, located 8.8 kilometres to the south of the site and designated for its extensive mosaic of upland and upland fringe habitat.

3.1.3 The SSSI Impact Risk Zone requires the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England on likely risks from the following development categories (Natural England, 2025):

a. **Infrastructure:** Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.

b. **Discharge:** Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 20m³ per day that is discharged to ground (i.e. to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.

3.1.4 The proposals do not meet any of the development categories which would require further consultation with Natural England on likely risks from the proposed development to the statutory designated sites for nature conservation present in the wider area.

Non-statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

3.1.5 The site is not and does not form part of any non-statutory designated site for nature conservation, called 'Biological Heritage Sites' or 'BHS' and District Wildlife Sites (DWS) in Lancashire.

3.1.6 Five BHS and two DWS are located within a 2 kilometres radius from the centre of the site, and are summarised in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: BHS and DWS within a 2 Kilometres Radius from the Centre of the Site

BHS / DWS Name	Distance and Direction from the Site	Reasons for Designation
Wood House Farm Fields BHS	0.72 kilometres to the north	Two adjacent fields managed as pasture situated on either side of Zechariah Brook approximately 3km north-east of Mellor. Both fields support species-rich neutral grassland.
Hagg's Wood BHS	1.25 kilometres to the north-east	Woodland which is ancient semi-natural in character.
Blackburn Golf Course DWS	1.48 kilometres to the south	Landscaped golf course north of Revidge Road.
Pleckgate Rough BHS	1.49 kilometres to the south-east	An area of acid grassland on the edge of playing fields to the south of Ramsgreave Drive, in the Pleckgate area of Blackburn.
Ramsgrave Wood BHS	1.52 kilometres to the north-east	Semi-natural woodland which is identified within Natural England's Inventory of Ancient Woodland.

BHS / DWS Name	Distance and Direction from the Site	Reasons for Designation
Old Park Wood BHS	1.65 kilometres to the north-west	A large area of semi-natural woodland adjoining the south bank of the river Ribble approximately 1.5 km south of Ribchester. It includes Old Park Wood and Mire Wood, both of which are listed in the *Lancashire Inventory of Ancient Woodland* (Provisional), (English Nature 1994).
Pleckgate Streams and Fields DWS	1.68 kilometres to the south-east	A series of fields with amenity grassland, unmanaged grassland and a damp, species rich sandy bank.

3.1.7 The presence of the BHS and DWS is considered further at **Section 4.2**.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.1.8 The site is not listed as an Area of Particular Importance or a Potential Area of Particular Importance by the Lancashire LNRS.

Priority Habitats Inventory

3.1.9 The Priority Habitats Inventory[3] was checked via MAGiC Maps. No Priority Habitats are identified at the site by the inventory.

Ancient Tree Inventory

3.1.10 No ancient or veteran trees are identified at the site by the inventory.

Protected and Notable Species

3.1.11 LERN hold no records of protected and notable species for the site.

3.1.12 Records of protected and notable species for a 2 kilometres radius from the centre of the site are summarised in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Records of Protected Species within a 2 Kilometres Radius from the Centre of the Site

Taxon Group	Species Name and Designations[1] and Notes
Amphibians	Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*): EPS, WCAs5, PS & LBAP. 1 record from 2019, located 1725 metres to the west.
	Common frog (*Rana temporaria*): WCAs5 (sale only) & LBAP. 5 records, dated between 1993 and 2023. The closest record is 540 metres to the south, and from 2023.
Birds – WCAs1 Species	Barn owl (*Tyto alba*): WCAs1. 3 records, dated between 1999 and 2023. The closest record is 1540 metres to the west, and from 2023.
Birds – Priority and LBAP Species	**PS & LBAP:** Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), tree sparrow (Passer montanus), grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*), wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). **PS Only:** Lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*) and linnet (*Linaria cannabina*).

[3] A spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance.

Taxon Group	Species Name and Designations[1] and Notes
	LBAP Only: Meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), swift (*Apus apus*), grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*).
Bony Fish	**PS & LBAP:** European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) and brown / sea trout (*Salmo trutta*). **LBAP Only:** Bullhead (*Cottus gobio*).
Flowering Plants	**LBAP Only:** Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*), Wild Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*), Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), Stinking Hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*), Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*), Tuberous Comfrey (*Symphytum tuberosum*), Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minus*) and Common Cornsalad (*Valerianella locusta*).
Invertebrates - butterflies	**PS & LBAP:** Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*) and wall (*Lasiommata megera*). **LBAP Only:** Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*).
Invertebrates - Moths	White ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda*): PS. 1 record from 2010, located 570 metres to the south.
Terrestrial Mammals	Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*): EPS, WCAs5, PS & LBAP 1 record from 2007. An accurate estimation of distance of the record to the site cannot be made due to the locational data being less than a six figure grid reference.
	Bat (Order *Chiroptera*): EPS, WCAs5 & LBAP. 2 records, dated 2007 and 2011. The closest record is 770 metres to the north, and from 2011.
	Myotis bat species (*Myotis* sp.): EPS, WCAs5 & LBAP. 3 records, all from 2007. The closest record is 1005 metres to the south-west.
	Whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*): EPS, WCAs5 & LBAP. 2 records, both from 2004. The closest record is 1795 metres to the west.
	Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*): EPS & WCAs5. 49 records, dated between 2007 and 2019. The closest record is 645 metres to the west, and from 2007.
	Water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*): WCAs5, PS & LBAP. 1 record from 2024, located 1485 metres to the south.
	Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*): PS & LBAP. 1 record from 2008, located 700 metres to the west.
	Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*): PS & LBAP. 17 records, dated between 2007 and 2023. The closest record is 765 metres to the south-west, and from 2019.
	Polecat (*Mustela putorius*): PS & LBAP. 1 record from 2015, located 1800 metres to the south-west.
	Badger (*Meles meles*): PBA 1 record from 2024. An accurate estimation of distance of the record to the site cannot be made due to the locational data being less than a six figure grid reference.

[1]Key to Designation Codes:
EPS = European Protected Species under The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
WCAs1 = Species receives full protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
WCAs5 = Species receives full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
PBA = Protection of Badger Act 1992.
PS = Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.
LBAP = Species listed on the Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.1.13 The presence of these protected and notable species within the wider area has been taken into account throughout this report.

3.2 Vegetation and Habitats

General Description

3.2.1 The approximately 0.09 hectares site is located within Everything Retreat, which is characterised by amenity grassland, hardstanding, buildings, scrub, ornamental shrubs and trees. Everything Retreat itself is located within a wider area characterised by farmed pasture grassland.

3.2.2 The site supports buildings and hardstanding, an area of amenity grassland scrub and individual trees. The northern site boundary is partially defined by the café / bar (Building 1) and lies partially within the outbuildings to its rear (Building 2). The eastern site boundary is defined by a hardstanding footpath, beyond which lies amenity grassland and car parking. The southern site boundary lies within an area of amenity grassland, and the western site boundary is defined by an area of willow scrub and fencing beyond which lies a field of improved grassland (at the western boundary's southern end) and a vegetated garden (at the western boundary's northern end).

3.2.3 The appended **Figure 2** can be referred to for all habitat descriptions. Photographs are appended in **Section 8.2**.

Buildings and Hardstanding

3.2.4 The buildings and hardstanding are located at the northern end of the site, and are described in detail in relation to their suitability for use by roosting bats at **Section 3.3**. No significant assemblage of plant species is associated with either building or the hardstanding within the site.

3.2.5 The buildings are classified as J5 - Other habitat - individual buildings in Phase 1 Habitat Survey terminology, and are described by the UKHab as u1b5 buildings with the secondary code 815 commercial building.

3.2.6 A photo of the hardstanding is presented at **Photo 1**. The habitat is classified as J4 Bare ground in Phase 1 Habitat Survey terminology, and is described by the UKHab as u1b6 other developed land.

Amenity Grassland

3.2.7 Refer to **Photo 2**. The grassland occupies the majority of the site and is characterised by constant and abundant Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), frequent Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and occasional and locally frequent Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wavy Bitter-cress (*Cardamine flexuosa*) and Annual Meadow-grass (*Poa annua*). A plant species list is appended at **Table 8.1**.

3.2.8 The amenity grassland is typical of an *MG7 Lolium perenne* leys and related grasslands (Rodwell, 1992) NVC community. The habitat is classified as J1.2 Cultivated / disturbed land - amenity grassland in Phase 1 Habitat Survey terminology, and is described by the UKHab as g4 modified grassland with the secondary code 108 frequently mown.

Individual Trees

3.2.9 Refer to **Photos 3** and **4**. Four small trees are located within the amenity grassland of the site, comprising two Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), one Osier (*Salix viminalis*) and one Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*). The trees do not conform to any Phase 1 Habitat Survey type, and are described as the secondary code '200 trees' over the primary modified grassland habitat.

Willow Scrub Adjacent to the Western Site Boundary

3.2.10 The willow scrub has been included for completeness, and as recommendations will be made for its protection during works within this report. The scrub is located adjacent to the western site boundary is characterised by constant, frequent and locally abundant Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*), locally abundant Osier (*Salix viminalis*), with a field layer of constant and abundant Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and constant and frequent Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

3.2.11 The willow scrub is not typical of any NVC community. The habitat is classified as A2.1 Dense continuous scrub in Phase 1 Habitat Survey terminology, and is described by the UKHab as h3j willow scrub with the secondary code 524 invasive non-native species.

Invasive Plant Species

3.2.12 As illustrated on **Figure 2,** stands of Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Montbretia (*Crocosmia crocosmiiflora*) are located within Everything Retreat. Indian Balsam is located within the area of willow scrub to the west of the site. These species are listed on Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended); it is an offence to spread or cause their spread in the wild. This is considered further at **Section 4.3**.

3.3 Animal Life

Badger

3.3.1 No badger or signs of badger were detected within the site or within the accessible 50 metres around the site. The presence of badger is reasonably discounted.

Bat Species

Daytime Survey: Buildings

Building 1

3.3.2 Refer to **Photos 5** to **8**. Building 1 is a detached single storey restaurant and bar constructed 5 years ago (i.e. 2020) with walls comprising a mortared stone skin on mortared blockwork and timber panelling at its western elevation. The walls support a pitched roof of slate with clay ridge tiles.

3.3.3 The building is well sealed throughout, at the roof, eaves and plastic soffits. No features suitable for access by bats were detected. Internally the building supports a single void which is 2.5 metres in height (from the ridgeline to the floor of the void. The roofing slates are lined with bitumastic roofing felt and supported on pre-fabricated timber trusses.

3.3.4 No bats or signs of bats were detected internally or externally. The building is assessed to be of 'negligible' suitability for use by roosting bats.

Building 2

3.3.5 **Refer to Photos 9** to **13**. Building 2 is a detached single-storey former stables used for storage. The walls are constructed from timber planks and boards on timber frame, and supports a pitched, corrugated roof, which is lined internally with timber boarding at the southern end of the building.

3.3.6 No features suitable for use by crevice dwelling species such as common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) or species known to roost in the open in voids such as brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*) are present at the building, which is unlikely to provide the thermal stable regime preferred by roosting bats, and which does not support any roof voids.

3.3.7 Nesting swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) were detected at the southern end of the building.

Trees

3.3.8 None of the trees within the site support any features suitable for use by roosting bats; all are assessed to conform to the roost suitability category 'none'.

Habitat Assessment for Commuting and Foraging Bats

3.3.9 The improved grassland within the site is unlikely to provide an abundance or diversity of invertebrate prey, and is therefore considered to be of low suitability for use by foraging bats.

3.3.10 The habitats present may be suitable for and contribute to the wider foraging area of low numbers of common species of edge-feeding foraging bats, such as common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), and also low numbers of species known to forage over open habitats and over wide areas, such as noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*).

3.3.11 A diverse range of species and / or a large number of bats are considered unlikely at the site owing to the absence of habitats such as woodland or tree-lined watercourses within the site.

Bird Species

3.3.12 Birds detected in the site and at Everything Retreat in August 2024 are listed in **Table 3.3**.

Table 3.3: Bird species Detected on 22nd August 2024

Scientific Name	Common Name	BOCC Status[1]
Columba palumbus	Woodpigeon	Amber
Corvus corone	Carrion crow	Green
Cyanistes caeruleus	Blue tit	Green
Erithacus rubecula	Robin	Green
Fringilla coelebs	Chaffinch	Green
Gallinula chloropus	Moorhen	Amber
Hirundo rustica	Swallow	Green
Larus argentatus	Herring gull	Red
Parus major	Great tit	Green
Troglodytes troglodytes	Wren	Amber
Turdus merula	Blackbird	Green
[1]BOCC: Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury, et al., 2021). Priority Species are presented in bold.		

3.3.13 The trees, shrubs and Building 2 are all suitable for use by nesting passerine (i.e. perching) species, including those detected within the site during the survey. This is considered further at **Section 4.4**.

Great Crested Newt and other Amphibians

Habitat Suitability Index Assessment of Ponds 1 and 2

3.3.14 Refer to **Photos 14** and **15**. Ponds 1 and 2 are located 16 and 22 metres to the south of the site respectively, and connected terrestrially to the site via amenity grassland. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of the pond was conducted and the results are given in **Table 3.4**.

Table 3.4: Habitat Suitability Index Assessment for Ponds 1 and 2

Criteria	Description	Pond 1	Score1	Pond 2	Score[1]
SI1	Location	Optimal	1.00	Optimal	1.00
SI2	Pond Area	50m^2	0.50	100m^2	0.20
SI3	Permanence	Never dries	0.90	Never dries	0.90
SI4	Water Quality	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67
SI5	Shade	40%	1.00	10%	1.00
SI6	Waterfowl	Minor impact	0.67	Absent	1.00
SI7	Fish	Possible	0.01	Absent	1.00
SI8	Pond count[2]	7 ponds	0.83	7 ponds	0.83
SI9	Terrestrial habitat	Poor	0.33	Poor	0.33
SI10	Macrophyte cover	30%	0.60	10%	0.40
	Assessment Result:	**Below average**	**0.54**	**Average**	**0.65**

[1]Calculated by (SI1 x SI2 x SI3 x SI4 x SI5 x SI6 x SI7 x SI8 s SI9 x SI10)1/10
[2]Ponds within an unobstructed 1 kilometre radius

3.3.15 The assessments of Ponds 1 and 2 are 'below average' and 'average' respectively.

3.3.16 This has been taken into account when assessing the potential impacts to great crested newt from the proposed development, as presented at **Section 4.4**.

Assessment of Terrestrial Habitats

3.3.17 The habitats within the site comprise short-mown amenity grassland, hardstanding and buildings, with 4 trees present. The habitats within the site are of poor suitability for use by foraging great crested newt, and are of negligible suitability for use by sheltering great crested newt.

Reptiles

3.3.18 The regularly disturbed and heavily managed habitats within the site provide poor quality habitat for sheltering, basking and hibernating reptiles. There are no piles of garden waste or other suitable debris for use by sheltering or hibernating reptiles, and the site supports no favourable habitat for basking reptiles. The species-poor habitats within the site are reasonably unlikely to support a large population or a variety of invertebrate prey.

3.3.19 The site is not adjacent or linked to any areas of favourable habitat for reptile species, and there are no records of reptile for the site or the wider area. The presence of reptiles within the site is reasonably discounted.

Other Wildlife

3.3.20 The habitats within the site are suitable for use by foraging and sheltering hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and are suitable for use by foraging amphibian species such as common toad (*Bufo bufo*); both are Priority Species. The site is not large enough to provide core or important habitat for either species, however. The suitability of the site for hedgehog and common toad is considered further at **Section 4.4**.

4.0 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

4.1 Introduction and Description of Proposals

4.1.1 In accordance with *Everything Retreat: Proposed Site Plan – Ground Floor Rev B*. (Zara Moon Architects, 2024) it is proposed to demolish Building 2 and extend Building 1 into its footprint, and construct an outdoor pool at the southern end of the site.

4.1.2 **Section 4.2** provides an assessment of any impacts of the proposed development on the designated sites for nature conservation present in the wider area. The ecological value of habitats within the site is evaluated at **Section 4.3**, and protected and notable species are considered at **Section 4.4**.

4.2 Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

4.2.1 It is considered that the site is sufficiently small and distant from all designated sites for nature conservation that the proposed development will have no adverse direct or indirect effect upon them or their features of interest.

4.3 Vegetation and Habitats

4.3.1 Only common and widespread plant species were found. None of the habitats present are representative of semi-natural habitat. The NVC communities present are typical of the geographical area and conditions present. No Priority Habitat or irreplicable habitat is present.

4.3.2 In terms of each habitat's importance in a geographical context[4], the area of scrub is of 'site' value only, and the modified grassland, hardstanding and buildings are not considered to hold any importance on a geographical scale.

4.3.3 Indian Balsam, Rhododendron and Montbretia are present within the wider Everything Retreat area. All are invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). It is considered that the proposals present an opportunity for the control of Indian Balsam within the site as part of the proposed development. Further guidance is presented at **Section 5.3**.

[4] Using the terms presented at Section 4.7 of *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2018), i.e. International and European, National, Regional, Local Authority-wide area, River Basin District, Estuarine system / Coastal cell or Local. The term 'site' value is additionally used to highlight ecological features considered to be of importance in the context of the wider site habitats, but which are of negligible value in the context of the local area.

4.4 Protected Species and Other Wildlife

4.4.1 Habitats within and adjacent to the site are suitable for foraging and commuting bats. Recommendations relating to the retention of features suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats, and to ensure an unsuitable lighting regime does not impact these habitats, are presented at **Section 5.2**. The presence of roosting bats is reasonably discounted at the site.

4.4.2 Impacts to great crested newt are considered to be reasonably unlikely, as the site supports habitats of negligible suitability for use by foraging and sheltering great crested newt, and the site is small is size; it is not considered that the site is likely to provide core or important habitat for this species, and the site does not lie between the ponds and areas of better-quality habitat and / or any ponds. Areas of better-quality terrestrial habitat are located to the south of the ponds, and away from the site. As best practice however it is recommended that the proposals are completed in a suitable manner to minimise impacts to great crested newt (and other wildlife, including hedgehog and common toad) during the construction phase of the proposed development. Measures to protect wildlife during the construction phase of the development are presented at **Section 5.2**.

4.4.3 The proposals present an opportunity to enhance habitats for nesting birds and roosting bats via the installation of bird and bat boxes on retained mature trees in the Everything Retreat site. Recommendations for ecological enhancements are presented at **Section 5.3**.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 These recommendations aim to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with relevant wildlife legislation, Natural England guidance, the principles of the NPPF, local planning policy and best practice.

5.1.2 In accordance with Chapter 15, paragraph 193(d) of the NPPF:

'opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate'.

5.1.3 Where possible, opportunities to enhance the ecological interest and habitat connectivity and seek biodiversity gain through appropriate landscape planting and habitat creation have been identified.

5.1.4 All recommendations are appropriate to the geographical area, the habitats in the wider area, the wildlife present in the local area (and likely to use the site post-construction) and take into consideration the end use of the site.

5.2 Protection of Existing Vegetation and Wildlife

Protection of Trees and Shrubs

5.2.1 During the construction phase, temporary protective demarcation fencing will be used to protect the trees and shrubs to be retained and at the margins of the site. The fencing must extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until all areas have been developed to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.

5.2.2 The fencing will be in accordance with *BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations* (BSI, 2012).

5.3 Invasive Plant Species

5.3.1 It is an offence under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) to cause the spread of Rhododendron, Indian Balsam and Montbretia in the wild.

5.3.2 Indian Balsam is located in proximity to the site, and the proposals have the potential to cause the spread of this species during works. It is recommended that Indian Balsam is controlled at the site in the long-term as part of a long-term Habitat Management Plan.

Consideration of Lighting

5.3.3 Paragraph 198(c) in Chapter 15 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment) of the NPPF states that development should:

'limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.'

5.3.4 The lighting scheme to be implemented at the developed site must involve the use of appropriate products and screening, where necessary, to ensure no excessive artificial lighting shines over the habitats present in the wider area and areas of ecological enhancement and any landscape planting, as lighting overspill may deter use by wildlife such as foraging bats.

5.3.5 The lighting scheme will be designed with reference to current guidance, namely:

a. *Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night* (Institution of Lighting Professionals & Bat Conservation Trust, 2023); and

b. *Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance* (Stone, 2014).

Protection of Nesting Birds

5.3.6 All wild birds are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) while they are breeding. Any works such as vegetation clearance that will affect habitats suitable for use by nesting birds should be scheduled to commence outside the bird nesting season. Commencement of works in the nesting season must be informed by a pre-works nesting bird survey, carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist. The bird breeding season typically extends between March to August inclusive.

5.3.7 If breeding birds are detected the ecologist will issue guidance in relation to the protection of the nesting birds in conjunction with the scheduled works. This may involve cordoning off an area of the site until the young birds have fledged.

Protection of Other Wildlife

5.3.8 It is recommended that the following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are adopted during the construction phase of the proposed development. An identification guide to amphibian species is appended and a colour copy should be printed out and be made accessible in the site office (i.e. pinned to a site information board or similar within the site office):

a. All site personnel must be made aware of this RAMs, and the RAMs should be made part of the site induction for all personnel involved in soil strip, ground clearance, or other relevant activities;

b. Prior to any soil strip, vegetation will be strimmed to a height of no less than 0.15 metre and all arisings removed;

c. During construction, any holes, trenches or other pits which amphibians (or other wildlife) could fall into will be covered overnight, or have sloped banks or ramps top allow escape;

d. The use of chemicals (such as fertilisers and herbicides) harmful to amphibians should be avoided wherever possible;

e. In the unlikely event of the discovery of a great crested newt whilst any site clearance or construction operations are in progress then all works in the area must cease and ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd. (01772 750502) must be contacted immediately for further assistance;

f. No site contractors must handle a great crested newt; and

g. If any other amphibian species (such as common toad, common frog, palmate newt or smooth newt) is detected, it must be carefully picked up, placed in a clean bucket and moved to an area of suitable habitat beyond the development area.

5.4 Ecological Enhancements

Enhancing Habitats for Roosting Bats

5.4.1 It is recommended that four bat boxes are erected onto suitable retained mature trees within Everything Retreat. An ecologist will advise on the siting of the bat boxes whilst on site.

5.4.2 Bat boxes should be installed to the following guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2024)

a. At least 4 metres above the ground (where safe installation is possible);

b. Sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day (usually south or south-west). Ideally several bat boxes will be installed to provide a variety of different thermal options for bats. Grouping a number of boxes each with a different aspect can achieve this; while a number of boxes is preferable to one, a single box is still viable and may be used by roosting bats;

c. Located close to unlit linear features, such as lines of trees or hedgerows; and

d. Installed where the bat box entrance is not cluttered or impeded by branches, or accessible to predators (such as cats) by large branches underneath them.

5.4.3 Suitable bat boxes are the Schwegler 1FF, Greenwood Ecohabitat's single or double cavity boxes and Schwegler 1FD, see **Insert 1**.

Insert 1: Schwegler 1FF, Greenwood Ecohabitat's single cavity and Schwegler 1FD bat boxes.

Enhancing Habitats for Nesting Birds

5.4.4 Bird boxes suitable for use by a variety of small birds typically associated with garden habitats should be installed within the site and / or the Everything Retreat site. RSPB advice states that boxes should ideally be sited facing north to east, to avoid exposure to direct sunlight, which may cause overheating of chicks in the nest. The boxes should be at least 2 metres from ground level.

5.4.5 Two of each of the boxes presented at **Insert 2** will be used. The boxes are available from www.NHBS.com and / or Wild Care (www.wildcare.co.uk).

Insert 2: Vivara Pro 28mm Seville Woodstone Box and Schwegler 1N suitable for a variety of garden birds.

5.5 Enhancement and Management of Retained Habitats and Landscape Planting

5.5.1 It is recommended that the landscape planting within the site is composed from native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife.

5.5.2 It is recommended that trees which support blossom and fruit which will attract insects are incorporated into the landscape planting. Suitable species are presented in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: Suitable Native Species for Tree and Shrub Planting

Scientific Name	Common Name	Scientific Name	Common Name
Acer campestre	Field Maple	*Prunus spinosa*	Blackthorn
Corylus avellana	Hazel	*Rosa arvensis*	Field Rose
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	*Rosa canina*	Dog-rose
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	*Sambucus nigra*	Elder
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple	*Sorbus aucuparia*	Rowan
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry	*Ulmus glabra*	Wych Elm
Prunus padus	Bird Cherry	*Viburnum opulus*	Guelder Rose

5.5.3 The understorey and ground cover planting design should be prepared to optimise the attraction of invertebrates such as feeding bumblebees and butterflies. Where possible the use of native species should be maximised but where necessary non-native species known to be attractive to invertebrates should be used.

5.5.4 Planting schemes that include flowering species such as *Viburnum, Ceanothus, Hebe*, *Lavandula*, *Lonicera, Potentilla, Rosmarinus* and *Vinca* can maximise opportunities for feeding invertebrates and for the attraction of foraging bats and birds.

5.5.5 For further plants suitable for the attraction of pollinators please refer to the *Perfect for Pollinators Plant List* (Royal Horticultural Society, 2012). It is recommended that the selection of plant species at the site ensures that a variety of flowering species are available throughout the year.

5.5.6 Provision of wildflower grassland within the landscape design is also recommended, where feasible. Wildflower grassland mixtures such as Emorsgate Seeds EM5 Meadow Mixture for Loamy Soils[5] or British Wildflower Seeds Special General Meadow Seed Mix[6] should be considered as part of the landscape design.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This ecological assessment has demonstrated that the proposed development at the site is feasible and acceptable in accordance with ecological considerations and the NPPF.

6.2 It is possible to implement reasonable actions for the protection and long-term conservation of fauna such as nesting birds and commuting / foraging bats associated with the site.

6.3 Development at the site will provide an opportunity to secure ecological enhancement for fauna typically associated with the wider area such as breeding birds and roosting bats.

[5]https://wildseed.co.uk/product/mixtures/complete-mixtures/meadow-mixtures-for-specific-soils/meadow-mixture-for-loamy-soils/

[6] https://britishwildflowermeadowseeds.co.uk/collections/neutral-soils/products/special-general-meadow-seed-mix-44

7.0 REFERENCES

Andrews, H (ed), 2013. *Bat Tree Habitat Key, 3rd Edition.* Bridgewater: AEcol Ltd.

ARG UK, 2010. *ARG Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.arguk.org/advice-and-guidance/view-category

Bainbridge, I. et al., 2013. *Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs.* Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservancy Council.

Bat Conservation Trust, 2024. *Bat Conservation Trust: Bat Boxes.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes/putting-up-your-box
[Accessed 2025].

BSI, 2012. *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations.* London: BSI Standards Limited.

BTHK, 2018. *Bat Roosts in Trees - A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-Care and Ecology Professionals,* Exeter: Pelagic Publishing.

CIEEM, 2013. *Technical Guidance Series Competencies for Species: Bats.* Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

CIEEM, 2018. *Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1,* Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Collins, J. (ed), 2023. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn).* London: The Bat Conservation Trust.

Edgar, P., Foster, P & Baker, J., 2010. *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook.* Bournemouth: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

English Nature, 2001. *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines.* Peterborough: English Nature / Natural England.

GOV.UK, 2024. *The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-biodiversity-gain-requirements-irreplaceable-habitat-regulations-2024
[Accessed 2025].

Institution of Lighting Professionals & Bat Conservation Trust, 2023. *Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.* [Online]
Available at: https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/
[Accessed 2025].

JNCC, 2010. *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A technique for Environmental Audit.* Peterborough: NCC.

Langton, T. E., Beckett, C. L. & Foster, J. P., 2001. *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook.* Halesworth: Froglife.

Legislation.gov.uk, 1981. *Wildlife and Countryside Act.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69
[Accessed 2025].

Legislation.gov.uk, 2006. *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents
[Accessed 2025].

Legislation.gov.uk, 2019. *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573
[Accessed 2025].

Maddock, A (ed), 2008. *UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Priority Habitat Descriptions.* [Online]
Available at: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5718

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024. *National Planning Policy Framework.* London: H.M.S.O.

Mitchell-Jones, A., 2004. *Bat Mitigation Guidelines.* Peterborough: English Nature.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & Mcleish, A. P., 2004. *Bat Workers' Manual, 3rd Edition.* Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Natural England, 2007. *Badgers and Development,* Peterborough: Natural England.

Natural England, 2011. *The Reptile Mitigation Guidelines.* Peterborough: Natural England.

Natural England, 2020. *GCN Method Statement WML-A14-2 (Version April 2020).* [Online]
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence

Natural England, 2022. *Badgers: advice for making planning decisions.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-advice-for-making-planning-decisions
[Accessed 2025].

Natural England, 2022. *Great crested newts: advice for making planning decisions.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-advice-for-making-planning-decisions
[Accessed 2025].

Natural England, 2025. *Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest.* [Online]
Available at:
https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0101000322302&notes=&location=370149,421625%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)
[Accessed 2025].

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005. *Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System,* London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Oldham, R. S., Keeble, J., Swan, M. J. S. & Jeffcote, M., 2000. Evaluating the Suitability of Habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus). *Herpetological Journal,* Volume 10(4), pp. 143-155.

Ratcliffe, D. A., 1977. *A Nature Conservation Review.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rodwell, J. S., 1992. *British Plant Communities: Volume 3, Grasslands and Montane Communities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roper, T., 2010. *Badger (Collins New Naturalist Library, Book 114).* Glasgow: Harper Collins.

Royal Horticultural Society, 2012. *Perfect for Pollinators, Garden Plants.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/encourage-wildlife-to-your-garden/plants-for-pollinators

Stace, C. A., 2010. *New Flora of the British Isles 3rd Edition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stanbury, A. et al., 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds,* Issue 108, pp. 723-747.

Stone, E. L., 2014. *Bats and Lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance.* Bristol: University of Bristol.

UKHab Ltd, 2023. *The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at https://www.ukhab.org),* Stockport: UKHab Ltd.

Woodland Trust, 2025. *Ancient Tree Inventory.* [Online]
Available at: https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/
[Accessed 2025].

Zara Moon Architects, 2024. *Everything Retreat: Existing and Proposed Site Plan Rev. B ,* Preston: Zara Moon Architects.

Zara Moon Architects, 2024. *Everything Retreat: Proposed Site Plan – Ground Floor Rev B,* Preston: Zara Moon Architects.

8.0 APPENDIX 1: TABLES, PHOTOGRAPHS AND FIGURES

8.1 Plant Species Lists

Table 8.1: Plant Species List for Amenity Grassland

Scientific Name	Common Name	DAFOR	Cover
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent	O/LF	<1%
Cardamine flexuosa	Wavy Bitter-cress	O/LF	<1%
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	VLF	<1%
Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb	LF	<1%
Festuca rubra	Red Fescue	O/LF	<1%
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog	F	20%
Juncus effusus	Soft-rush	VLF	<1%
Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass	A*	70%
Persicaria maculosa	Redshank	VLF	<1%
Plantago major	Greater Plantain	O	<1%
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass	O/LF	<1%
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup	O	<1%
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup	O	<1%
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel	O	<1%
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock	O/VLF	<1%
Stellaria media	Common Chickweed	O	<1%
Trifolium repens	White Clover	O/LF	<1%
[1]**Key to DAFOR:** D=Dominant, A=Abundant, F=Frequent, O=Occasional, R=Rare, V=Very, L=Local and *denotes a constant species			

8.2 Photographs

Table 8.2: Photographs of the Site

Photo 1: Hardstanding

Photo 2: Amenity grassland

Photo 3: Trees 1 and 2

Photo 4: Trees 3 and 4

Photo 5: Building 1, southern elevation

Photo 6: Building 1, western and northern elevations

Photo 7: Building 1, northern and eastern elevations

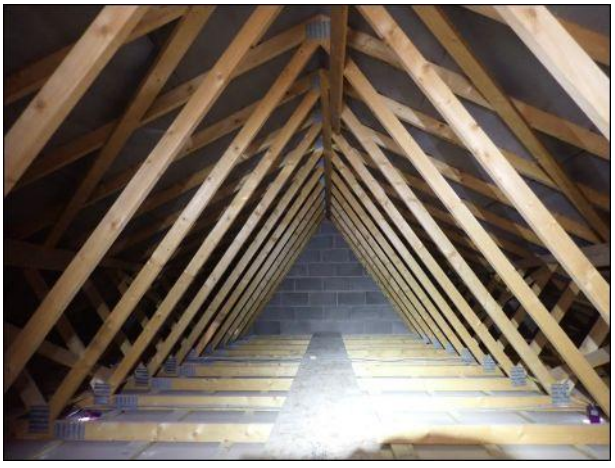


Photo 8: Building 1, roof void

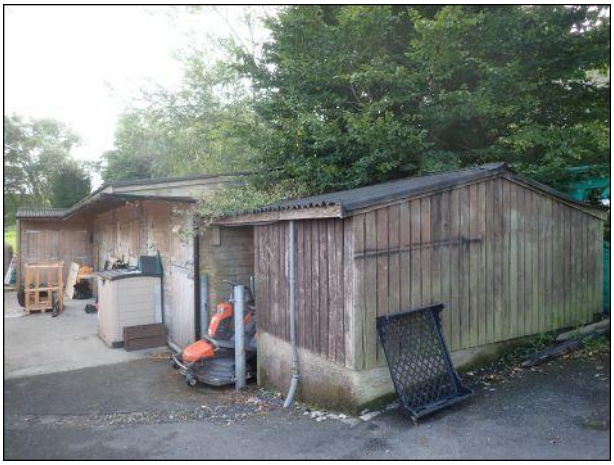


Photo 9: Building 2, northern elevation

Photo 10: Building 2, eastern elevation

Photo 11: Building 2, southern elevation

Photo 12: Building 2, internal area, northern end

Photo 13: Building 2, middle room

Photo 14: Pond 1

Photo 15: Pond 2

8.3 Figures

Figure 1: Aerial Image of the Site and its Surroundings

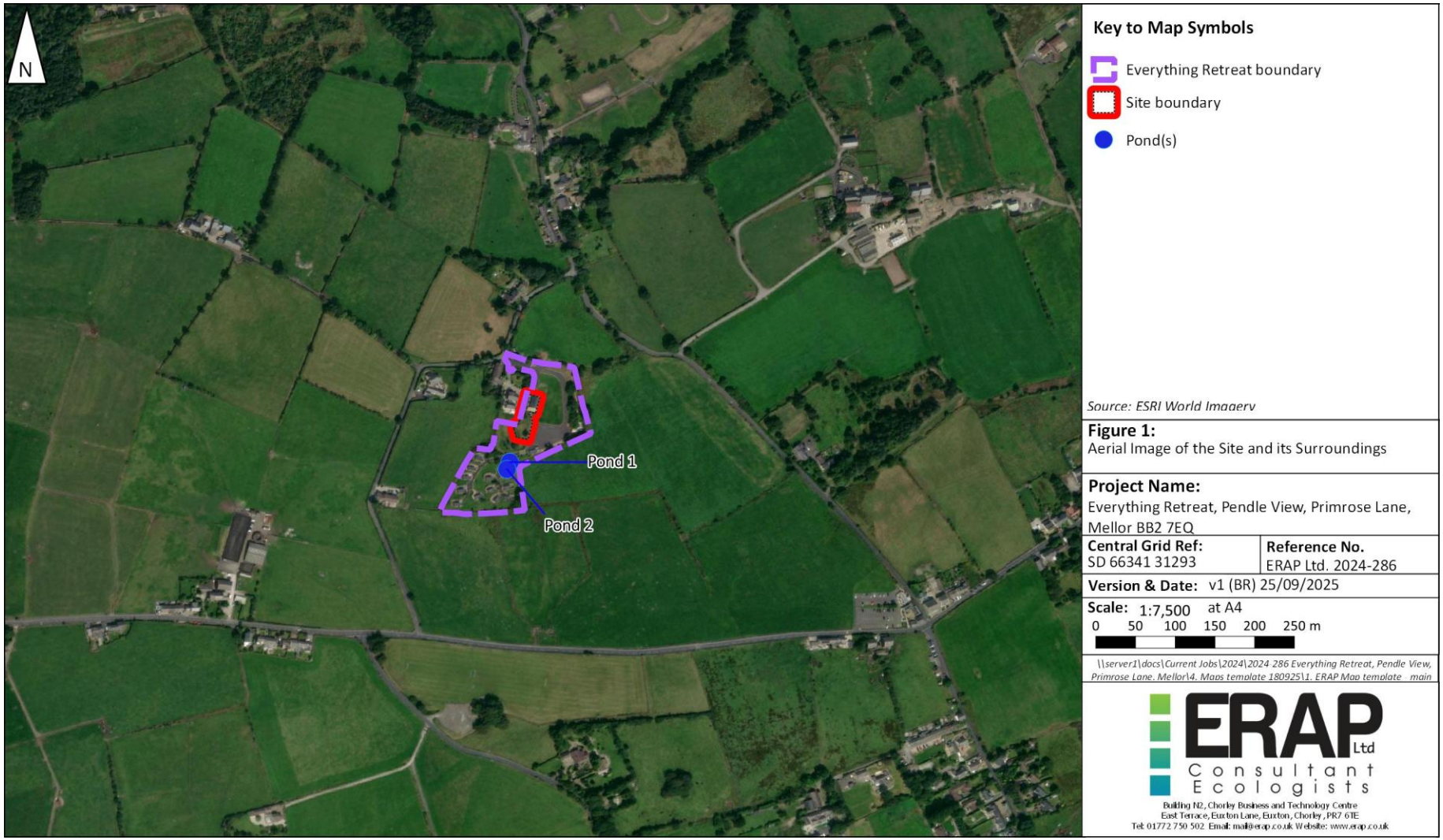
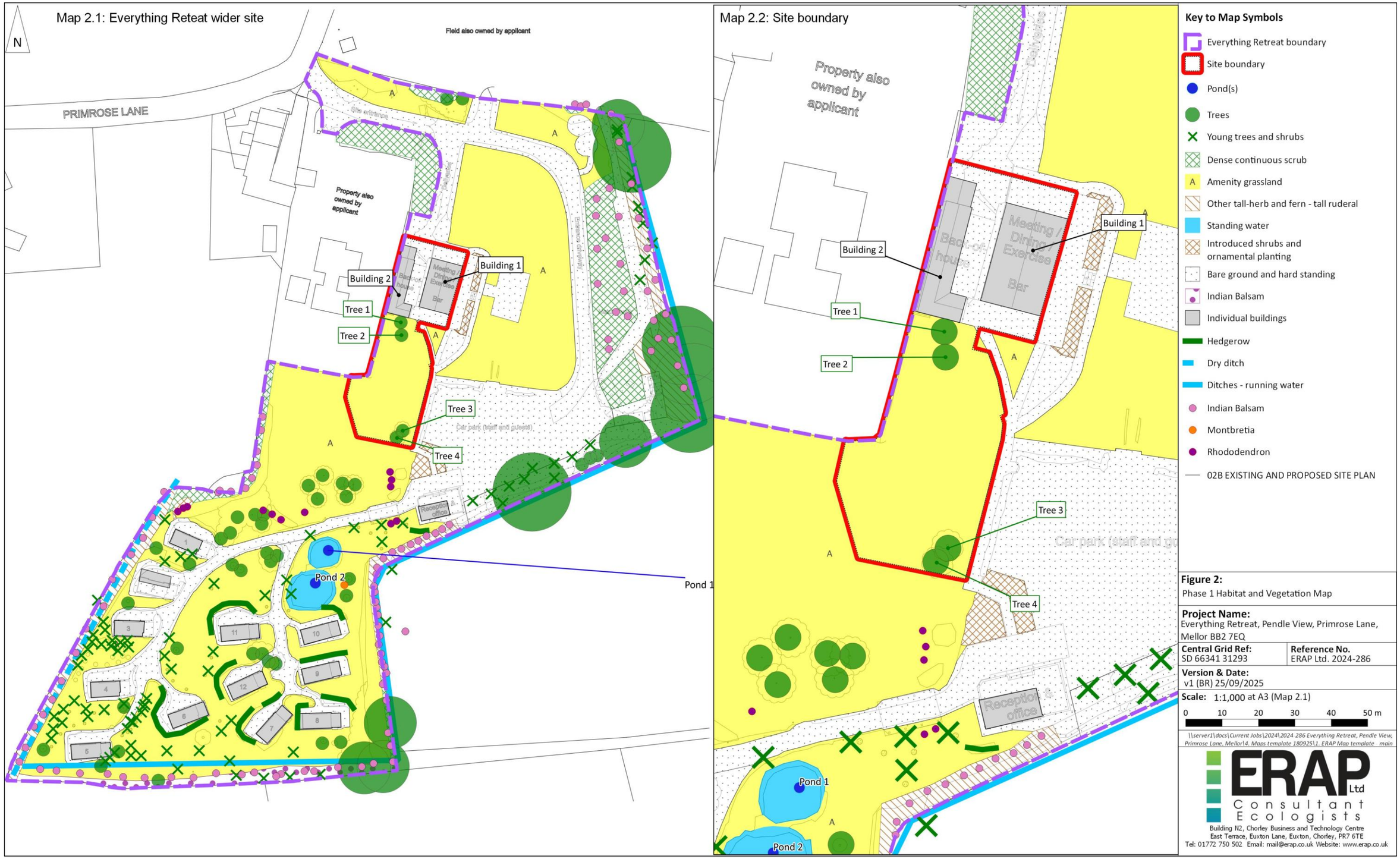
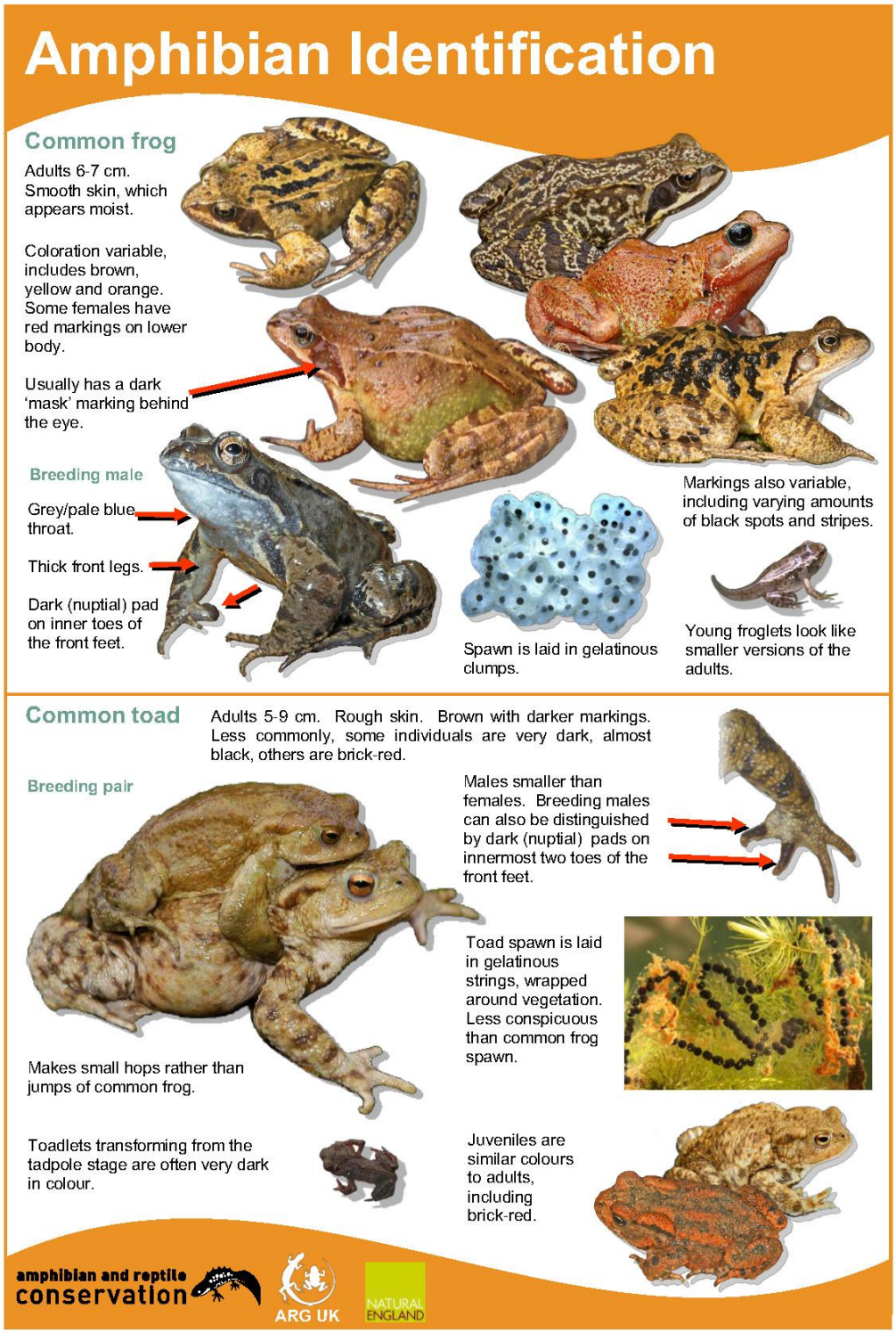


Figure 2: Phase 1 Habitat and Vegetation Map



9.0 APPENDIX 2: AMPHIBIAN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



Natterjack toad

Similar in size and appearance to common toad, but with a pale stripe running along the back.

Strictly protected species, requiring a licence to handle or disturb.

This is a rare species, unlikely to be found outside specific dune and heathland habitats.

Tadpoles

On hatching common frog and toad tadpoles are black. As they develop, common frog tadpoles become mottled with bronze, whereas toad tadpoles remain uniformly dark until the last stages of development.

Common frog and toad tadpoles generally complete development in the summer, but development rates are variable; some tadpoles may not transform until later in the year, or they may even remain as tadpoles over winter, becoming much larger than normal.

Tadpoles of water/green frogs grow larger than native frog and toad tadpoles. There are usually mottled markings on the base of the tail and the belly is usually white.

Frog

Toad

Water frog

Water/green frogs

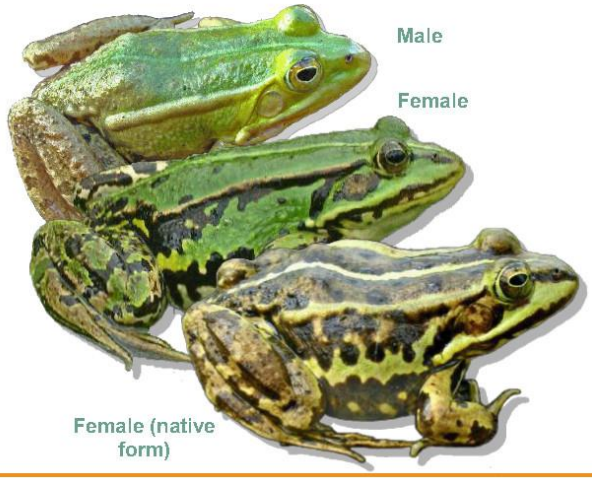
This is a group of non-native frogs, including pool, edible and marsh frogs (although there is one population of pool frogs which is native). There is considerable variation in colour and markings within each species, so identification by eye can be difficult. Water frogs breed in late spring/early summer. Males call loudly at this time and sporadically later in the summer. The calls are a useful way of distinguishing the species and can be heard on the *Alien Encounters* website (www.alienencounters.org.uk).

Calling marsh frog Calling pool frog

Calling male water frogs inflate a pair of balloon-like vocal sacs, one either side of the head. These sacs are dark grey in marsh frogs, white in pool frogs and pale grey in edible frogs.

Pool frog

Pool frogs are similar in size to the common frog.



Male

Female

Female (native form)

Edible frog

Grows to a little larger than the common frog.

Marsh frog

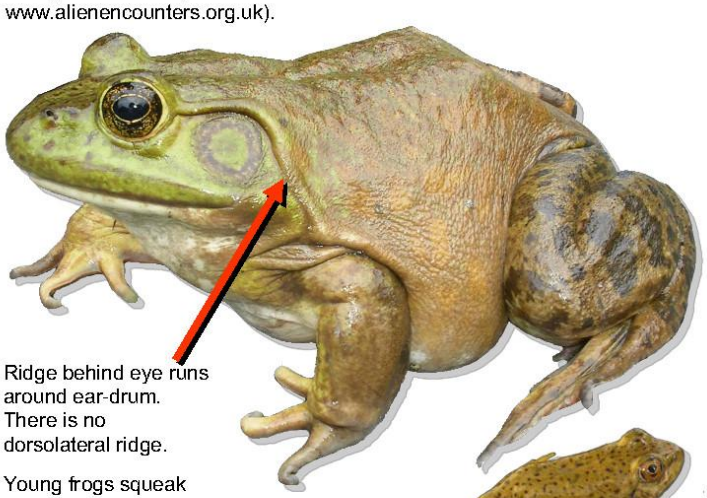
A large frog growing to 13 cm (much larger than the common frog). Variable coloration and markings. May, or may not, have pale dorsal stripe. Marsh frogs usually have some vivid green coloration, but some can be predominantly brown.

Sometimes mistaken for North American bullfrog, but marsh frogs have dorsolateral ridges and calling males have paired vocal sacs, either side of the head (both features absent in bullfrogs).

North American bullfrog

A very large, non-native frog growing to 15 cm. Calls loudly and breeds during the summer (call can be heard on the *Alien Encounters* website www.alienencounters.org.uk).

Black spots on body of tadpole. The tadpole stage can last several years and tadpoles grow to a large size, exceeding 10 cm.



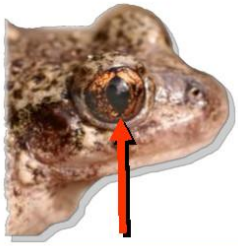
Ridge behind eye runs around ear-drum. There is no dorsolateral ridge.

Young frogs squeak when disturbed.

Unlikely to be found (there is only one known population in the UK) but vigilance is important to identify any additional released animals.

Froglet with remains of tail

Midwife toad



A small non-native species, growing up to 5 cm. Rough skin, so potentially mistaken for a juvenile common toad. Midwife toads, however, have vertical pupils (horizontal in common toad) and males carry the eggs.

Few established populations, which are usually associated with gardens.

Secretive, but has a distinctive call, a single, repeated tone, like an electronic bleep, given on warm summer evenings (can be heard on www.alienencounters.org.uk).

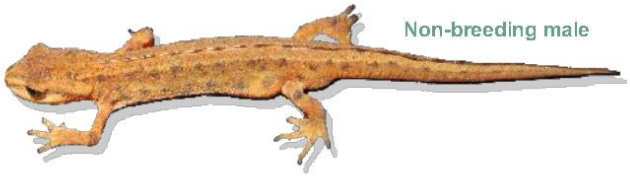
Male carrying eggs

Smooth newt

A widespread species which breeds in a variety of water bodies. Often found in garden ponds.

Both sexes have an orange or yellow belly stripe and rounded spots, which are larger in the male.

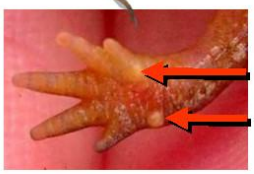
Grows to about 10 cm. Breeding male has an undulating crest running from head to tail tip.



Non-breeding adults live mostly on land. Juveniles live entirely on land.

Palmate newt

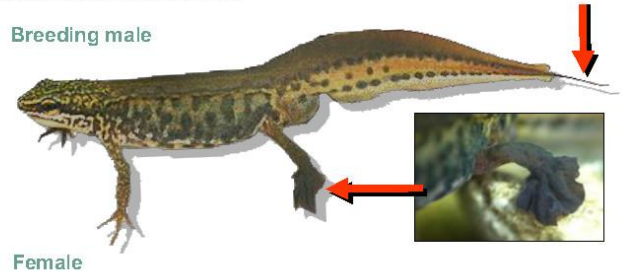
Grows to 9 cm. Breeding male has a ridge running along the back, rather than a crest. Dark, webbed hind feet, and tail ends in filament.



There are two pale coloured nodules on the underside of the hind feet of the female.

Palmate Smooth

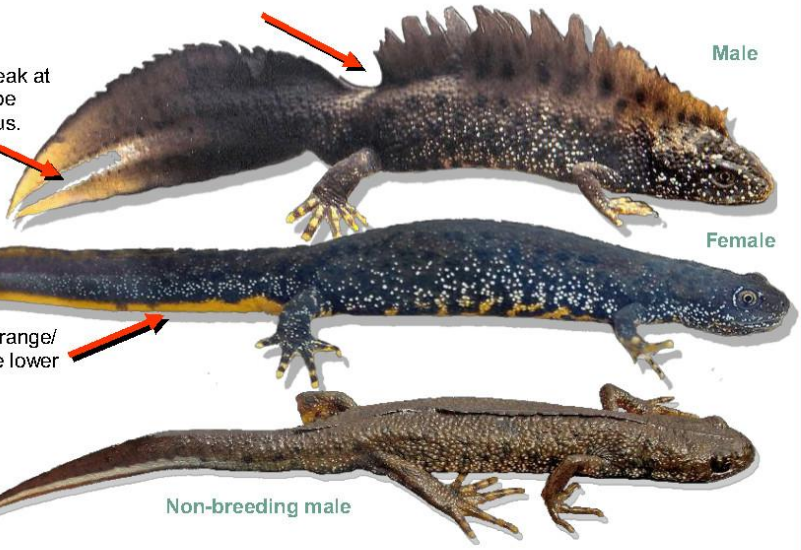
Throat of palmate newt has no pigment (looks pink). Throat of smooth newt is off-white and usually spotted.



Female looks similar to smooth newt.

Juveniles live on land.

Great crested newt



Grows to 16 cm, but usually smaller. Crest in male has break at base of tail. Silvery-white stripe towards rear of tail conspicuous.

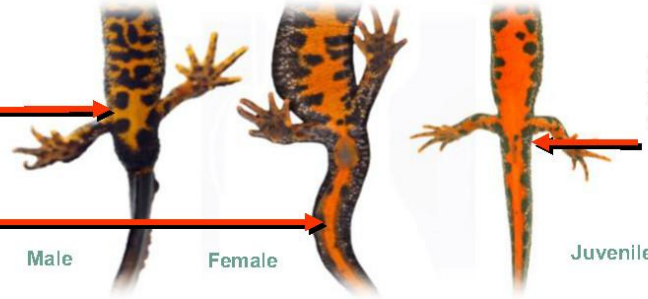
Both sexes have rough, granular skins and yellow/ orange bellies with irregular black spots.

Female has no crest and an orange/ yellow stripe running along the lower edge of the tail.

Outside the breeding season the male's crest shrinks to a ridge along the back.

Juveniles look like smaller versions of the female and may live on land or in the water.

Strictly protected species, requiring a licence to handle or disturb.



Orange/yellow coloration on underside extends to flanks (not confined to central stripe). This continues along lower edge of tail in females.

Juveniles are similar to females but without any cloacal swelling..

Alpine newt

Adults 8-11 cm, females often much larger than males. A non-native species restricted to few sites, but becoming increasingly common. Most likely to be found in garden ponds, or ponds near to gardens.

Females have a marbled pattern on the back.

Underside is bright orange, without spots (although there may be black spots on the throat in some cases).