Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

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1. Summary

Table 1: Summary

Report Purpose	With reference to the development proposals and the applicable planning policy & legislation, the scope of the present report is to: • Identify key ecological constraints associated with the project. • Identify avoidance, mitigation or compensation measures likely to be required in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. • Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform the above. • Identify likely opportunities to deliver ecological enhancement.
Methodology	A desk study was carried out including a study of the UK Government MAGIC[1] website for designated sites of nature conservation, Natural England licensing, and the site in the context of habitat connectivity to the surrounding landscape. The field survey included a UKHab Habitat survey of the site, extended to consider protected species.
Key Notes	Hedgerow H1 overhanging the site met the criteria as a priority habitat. The line of trees TL1 on site and the lines of trees TL2-TL3 overhanging the site are of local conservation value. The site offered some habitat suitability for hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, Eurasian badgers *Meles meles*, bats, brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, amphibians (including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN)), reptiles and nesting birds.
Conclusions	• **Recommendation 1 – Night-Time Bat Walkover Survey:** To assess any impacts of commuting and foraging bats, with reference to best practice guidelines (BCT, 2023), it is recommended that a Night-Time Bat Walkover (NBW) survey is carried out. • **Recommendation 2 – HSI Assessment and GCN eDNA Survey:** To further inform the impacts of the development on GCN due to the close proximity to ponds P1 and P2, the scale of the development, and the suitability of habitats on site, it is recommended that an assessment of eDNA of the ponds be carried out to establish the presence/likely absence of GCN. • **Recommendation 3 – Precautionary Methods During Works:** Precautionary methods should be implemented during works to protect hazel dormouse, badger, bats, hedgehog, brown hare, reptiles, and nesting birds.

[1] Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside: www.magic.gov.uk.

	• **Recommendation 4 – Artificial Lighting Mitigation:** Bats are present in the wider area. Where lighting is required, this should be sympathetic to wildlife through the design of lighting observing the principles set out in guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) & Institution of Lighting Professionals (BCT & ILP, 2018).

2. Introduction

Background

2.1. Elton Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Wilson Architects to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site known as Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria.

2.2. The resulting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) has been prepared by Ecologist CM BSc (Hons), MSc, accredited agent on Natural England Bat Licence Reference Number: 2018-33647-CLS-CLS. CM holds a Natural England Level 1 Great Crested Newt Licence (CL08) (reference number: 2024-12521-CL08-GCN), is a Qualifying member of CIEEM, has attended formal training in UKHab survey, Biodiversity Net Gain, and botanical species identification, and is experienced in undertaking ecology surveys, GIS mapping, and report writing.

Site Description

2.3. The site comprises a sheep-grazed field. The site is located at Hunter Rise, Beckermet, CA21 2YP (Figure 1: Site Location Plan) (central OS grid reference: NY 01717 06794).

Development Proposals

2.4. The development proposals include the erection of nine residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping.

2.5. Relevant documents used to inform the assessment include:

- Proposed Site Plan (Drawing Number: 24121-P-004) (Wilson Architects, received via email 1st May 2025)
- Tree Constraints Plan (Plan Reference and Number: 250207 25024 TCP V1 OE-001) (Castle Surveys Ltd, February 2025)
- Tree Schedule (Reference: 250206 25024 TS V1) (Castle Surveys Ltd, 6th February 2025)

Report Purpose and Scope

2.6. With reference to the Development Proposals, the purpose and scope of the present report is to:

- Identify key ecological constraints associated with the project.
- Identify avoidance, mitigation or compensation measures likely to be required in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy.
- Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform the above.
- Identify likely opportunities to deliver ecological enhancement.

Planning Policy and Legislation

2.7. A summary of biodiversity planning policies and wildlife legislation relevant to the site is provided in Appendix 1: Planning Policy and Legislation Summary. The relevant planning policy and legislation includes:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

- Government Circular ODPM 06/05 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 – Habitats and species of principal importance.
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 (as amended).

2.8. The site is covered by the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which includes:

- Bats
- Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*
- Great crested newt

3. Methodology

Assessment

3.1. The present assessment has been carried out with reference to best practice guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017).

Personnel

3.2. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was carried out by Ecologist CM BSc (Hons), MSc, accredited agent on Natural England Bat Licence Reference Number: 2018-33647-CLS-CLS. CM holds a Natural England Level 1 Great Crested Newt Licence (CL08) (reference number: 2024-12521-CL08-GCN), is a Qualifying member of CIEEM, has attended formal training in UKHab survey, Biodiversity Net Gain, and botanical species identification, and is experienced in undertaking ecology surveys, GIS mapping, and report writing.

3.3. Quality Assurance was carried out by Associate Ecologist AC BSc (Hons), MSc MCIEEM. AC has over twenty-years' experience of Ecological Consultancy.

3.4. The final review was carried out by TE BSc (Hons), MCIEEM. TE has professional experience in ecological consultancy since 2013, including Protected Species Survey, Extended UKHab Habitat Survey and report writing. TE is trained in a wide variety of protected species survey, including holding Natural England class licences for bats (Level 2 Licence CL18), barn owl *Tyto alba*, great crested newt (level 1), and dormice (level 1). TE is trained in botanical species identification and holds a Level 3 Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) Field Identification Skills Certificate.

Desk Study

3.5. The sources of information and study areas of the desk study data are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Desk study sources and areas

Feature		Study Area	Data Source	Date of Search
Designated sites of nature conservation	International (e.g. Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, and Ramsar)	10 km radius of the site boundary	UK Government MAGIC[2] website	12/03/2025
	National (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), SSSI Impact Risk Zones (SSSI IRZ)), Local Nature Reserves, National Nature Reserves	5 km radius of the site boundary		
Granted Natural England Mitigation Licences		2 km radius of the site boundary	UK Government MAGIC website	
Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory		Site & 1 km radius of the site boundary		

[2] Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside: www.magic.gov.uk.

Feature	Study Area	Data Source	Date of Search
Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory	Site & 1 km radius of the site boundary		
The site in the context of habitat connectivity to the surrounding landscape	2 km radius of the site boundary	Satellite and OS map data	
Relevant ecological information used to inform other planning applications	Site & surrounding area	LPA planning portal - Cumberland Council	

Field Survey

UKHab Habitat Survey

3.6. The UKHab Habitat survey was carried out on the 6th March 2025 and was extended to include an assessment for Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and of the sites potential to be used by protected or notable species as described below. The study area included the site boundary and a 30m radius for evidence of mobile protected species such as badger, access permitting. Weather conditions were appropriate for field survey with temperatures of 12°C, no rain, and good visibility.

3.7. The site was walked over, and botanical species lists of representative and notable plant species for each habitat type were recorded. Habitats were classified and mapped with reference to best practice guidelines from UKHab Ltd (2023). The nomenclature used for botanical species lists broadly follows that of Stace (2019). Protected or notable plant species were recorded where observed.

Hedgerow Survey

3.8. During the UKHab Habitat Survey, the hedgerow(s) at the site were assessed for their importance under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and determined as either species poor (fewer than five woody species per 30m length) or species rich (greater than five woody species per 30m length). Notes were also made on other features of the hedgerow such as height and width, ground flora, standard trees, percentage gaps, structure, and connectivity.

3.9. A hedgerow is defined as a boundary line of shrubs, provided that at one time the shrubs were stock proof and more or less continuous. Any bank, wall, ditch, or tree within 2m of the centre of the hedgerow is considered to be part of this habitat, as is the herbaceous vegetation within 2m of the centre.

Amphibians (Including Great Crested Newt)

3.10. The habitats at the site were assessed for their suitability to support amphibians, including a search of the site for ponds and suitable terrestrial habitat. The desk study included a search of ponds within a 250m radius of the site.

Badger

3.11. The badger walkover survey included a search for evidence of badger at the site, such as sett entrances (normally 25 to 35cm wide and shaped like a ‘D’ on its flat edge), large spoil heaps outside sett entrances, bedding, footprints, mammal paths, latrines, hairs, scratching posts, and signs of digging for food or ‘snuffle holes’. The survey included a search of the site and 30m radius (access permitting) for badger setts.

Bats – Ground Level Tree Assessment

3.12. The preliminary Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) was carried out with reference to best practice industry guidelines (Collins, 2023). The study area included all trees within the survey area.

3.13. The survey included a surveyor assessing the tree(s) from ground level aided by binoculars, noting potential bat entry/exit points, potential roosting features (PRFs), and any evidence of bats. The trees were graded for their suitability to support roosting bats, which will inform the need for further survey effort, if required, such as a potential roost feature (PRF) inspection via rope and harness access and/or nocturnal survey.

3.14. The suitability of the trees for roosting bats was then categorised with reference to best practice industry guidelines (Collins, 2023) (Table 3) as either none, further assessment required (FAR), potential roosting features present for individual bats (PRF-I), or potential roosting features present for multiple bats (PRF-M), which informs the need for further survey effort to establish the presence/ likely absence of roosting bats.

Table 3: Guidelines for Assessing the Potential Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees (Adapted from Collins, (2023))

Suitability	**Description of Trees**
None	No features likely to be used by roosting bats or highly unlikely features are present. An absence of accessible voids, cracks and crevices.
FAR	Further assessment is required to determine if features likely to be used by roosting bats are present.
PRF-I	The PRF is suitable for individual or small numbers of bats due to lack of size or suitable surrounding landscape.
PRF-M	The PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may be used by a maternity colony.

Bats – Commuting and Foraging

3.15. An assessment of the habitats at the site to support commuting and foraging bats was made, within the context of habitat connectivity to features in the wider landscape with reference to best practice industry guidelines (Collins, 2023) (Table 4: Guidelines for Assessing the Potential Bat Roosting Suitability of Structures and Trees). The site was assessed as either negligible, low, moderate, or high suitability for commuting and foraging bats.

Table 4: Guidelines for Assessing the Potential Bat Suitability of Structures and Habitats (Adapted from Collins, (2023))

Suitability	**Description of Roosting Habitats**	**Commuting and Foraging Habitats**
Negligible	Negligible features likely to be used by roosting bats. An absence of accessible voids, cracks and crevices.	Negligible features likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats. A lack of landscape habitat features.
Low	A structure or tree with a potential roost site which could be used by individual bats, which does not provide enough space, shelter, protection, or appropriate conditions (i.e. temperature, humidity, height above ground level,	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a hedgerow with gaps or unvegetated stream, but isolated (i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by habitat).

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats	Commuting and Foraging Habitats
	light levels, disturbance) or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis by larger numbers of bats.	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	A structure or tree with a potential roost site that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (such as a maternity colony).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by commuting bats 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	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are 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, and surrounding habitat.	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees, and woodland edge. Continuous 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. Sites which are close to and connected to known roosts.

Nesting Birds

3.16. An assessment of the habitats on site to support nesting birds was made, and the site was searched where accessible for active or historical bird nests. Any sightings of bird nesting behaviour associated with the site was also noted.

Hazel Dormouse

3.17. An assessment of the suitability of the habitats at the site to support hazel dormouse was made with reference to *Wells et al.* (2025), and any incidental sightings of dormouse evidence recorded where encountered.

Terrestrial Invertebrates

3.18. An assessment was made of the suitability of the habitats at the site to support notable assemblages of invertebrates, such as vegetation structure, vegetation species diversity, deadwood, and host plants/ animals.

Reptiles

3.19. An assessment was made of the suitability of the habitats at the site for reptiles. Optimal habitat for reptiles includes rough grassland, moorland, heathland, woodland and scrub, sub-urban areas such as railway embankments, golf courses and allotments, and sympathetically managed farmland. Favourable features for reptiles include sunny south facing banks for basking, ecotones such as the transition between grassland and scrub, and hibernacula such as stone, log, and brash piles.

Otter

3.20. An assessment of the habitats at the site to support otter *Lutra lutra* was made, and a search for evidence of otter carried out with reference to Chanin (2003a), Chanin (2003b) and Chanin (2005).

Water Vole

3.21. With reference to Dean *et al.* (2016), Strachan *et al.* (2011), and Natural England (2008) an initial assessment of the habitats at site was carried out for the suitability to support water vole *Arvicola amphibius* during the Extended UKHab Habitat Survey.

Fish

3.22. An initial assessment of the habitats at site was carried out for the suitability to support notable fish species during the Extended UKHab Habitat Survey, such as presence of suitable watercourses and waterbodies.

Aquatic Invertebrates (including White-clawed Crayfish)

3.23. With reference to Peay (2002), Peay (2003), and Holdich (2003) an initial assessment of the suitability of habitats present at the site to support white clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* was undertaken during the Extended UKHab Habitat Survey

Other Mammals

3.24. An assessment of the site to support other mammals including brown hare, harvest mouse *Micromys minutus*, and hedgehog was also made.

Invasive Species

3.25. Invasive plant species such as those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended) were recorded where encountered during the UKHab Habitat survey.

Limitations

3.26. It must be noted that survey effort has been made to provide detailed descriptions of the site within the context of potential usage by protected species, however a fully comprehensive assessment and prediction of natural factors cannot be made. The protected species assessment provides a professional view of the likelihood of such species being present and cannot be taken as a definitive presence or absence of the same. Systematic presence/ likely absence surveys for such species, which typically require multiple survey visits, have not been undertaken and are outside of the scope of Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Such surveys are recommended in the present report if considered proportionate to the potential ecological impacts of the development proposals.

3.27. A full search of crevices and cavities on buildings typically cannot be made without specialist access equipment and in most cases intrusive works, and therefore accessible areas only have been searched for evidence of protected species and a negative result of evidence does not conclusively equate to absence of such species which may occupy inaccessible crevices on the building. However, provided any recommended nocturnal emergence/ re-entry bat survey(s) are undertaken, this is not considered a significant limitation to assessing the presence/ likely absence of roosting bats at the site.

3.28. Third party desk study data is not exhaustive, and an absence or a negative result of a species does not indicate the absence of protected species from the site/ search area.

3.29. The UKHab Habitat survey was undertaken outside of the optimal survey period of April to October. However, species identification of plants present outside of the optimal period is typically still possible based on the vegetative characteristics. Where additional surveys during the optimal period are required to assess the habitat type present, these are recommended.

3.30. All dimensions, locations and distances provided are approximate.

4. Results

Desk Study

Surrounding Landscape

4.1. The surrounding landscape is primarily rural (Figure 2: Surrounding Landscape Plan).

4.2. Habitat features favourable to ecology in the wider landscape include arable and pasture grazed, wetland, woodland, and standing open water connected via hedgerows and treelines. The treelined Kirk Beck and River Ehen are located approximately 0.2km east and 0.5km west of the site, respectively.

4.3. Landscape features which may limit habitat quality and connectivity include areas of artificial lighting, hardstanding, and disturbance in the village of Beckermet.

Statutory Designated Sites

4.4. The site does not form part of an international or national designated site for nature conservation.

4.5. A summary of designated sites identified via the desk study are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of Statutory Designated Sites

Site Name	Designation	Description/ Main Reasons for Designation	Distance & Direction from Site
Low Church Moss	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wetland habitats including fen, swamp, open water, willow scrub, wet heath and marshy acid grassland.	0.9km S
Silver Tarn, Hollas and Harnsey Mosses	SSSI	Kettlehole habitats including open water, tall fen, acid flush, and carr.	1.6km W
Haile Great Wood	SSSI	Ancient woodland within the valley of the Kirk Beck comprising a variety of woodland types.	2.4km NE
Florence Mine	SSSI	Geological interest.	3.4km
Black Moss	SSSI	Lowland raised bog in a natural depression.	3.8km
Ehen River	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Largest freshwater pearl *Margaritifera margaritifera* population in England.	6km N

Site Name	Designation	Description/ Main Reasons for Designation	Distance & Direction from Site
		Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* present.	
Drigg Coast	SAC	Bar-built estuary, Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes, and creeping willow *Salix repens ssp. argentea* dune, and 'grey' dune habitats.	7km SE

4.6. The site lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone (SSSI IRZ), requiring the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England on likely risks from planning applications of the following type, which may be applicable to the site:

> "*Infrastructure:* […] *Any transport proposal including new or extended footways, cycleways, roads/car parks, railways and waterways (excluding routine maintenance).*"

Priority Habitats and Ancient Woodland

4.7. No priority habitats were noted on site via the desk study.

4.8. An area of ancient woodland was identified within the search radius via the desk study, located approximately 0.9km southeast of the site.

4.9. A summary of priority habitats identified via the desk study are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary of Priority Habitats

Habitat type	Distance & Direction of Closest Priority Habitat Type from Site
Traditional orchards	0.03km SE
Deciduous woodland	0.2km E
Reedbeds	0.7km S
Lowland fens	0.7km S
Purple moor grass and rush pasture	0.95km S

Relevant Ecological Information Used to Inform Other Planning Applications

4.10. No relevant ecological information used to inform other planning applications was identified via the desk study.

Field Survey

UKHab Habitat Survey

4.11. The habitats recorded at the survey site during the UKHab Habitat survey are presented in Table 7 and mapped on Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan.

Table 7: UKHab Habitat Assessment Results

UKHab Primary Code	Habitat Type	UKHab Secondary Code	Description	(NERC) Act 2006 HPI*	Habitat of Local Importance	Photograph Ref No. (Appendix 2: Photographs)
g4	Modified grassland	102 – sheep grazed	The site comprised a sheep-grazed modified grassland with an average of 2 species per m^2 and approximately 90% of the sward cover grazed to 5cm in height. Species present included dominant annual meadow-grass *Poa annua* and rarely present dandelion *Taraxacum officinale agg.*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, and broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, with locally frequent lesser celandine *Ficaria verna* present on the south site boundary.	No	No	1
h2	Hedgerow		One native hedgerow was present off-site overhanging over the site. For full details, see Table 8: Hedgerow Survey Results.	Yes	No	2
w1	Broadleaved and mixed woodland	33 – line of trees	Treeline TL1 related to the line of trees approximately 28m in length present at the southwest site boundary. Species present included abundant hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* in the south of the treeline and frequent ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* trees in the north of the treeline. A canopy gap was present in the south due to the presence of hawthorn stumps. Two lines of trees were present off-site overhanging the site. Treeline TL2 related to the line of trees overhanging the northwest site boundary. Species present included dominant sycamore, frequent hawthorn, and rarely present holly *Ilex aquifolium* and hazel *Corylus avellana*, with one mature ash tree and one standing deadwood ash present. Treeline TL3 related to the line of trees associated with a fence overhanging southeast site boundary. Species present included dominant sycamore, abundant hawthorn, occasional elder *Sambucus nigra* and holly shrubs, and rarely present plum *Prunus domestica* tree.	No	No	3-5
u1e	Built linear features	612 – fence 853 – mortared wall	A series of wooden fences and mortared walls were present at the site boundaries.	No	No	1-6

*Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI). As defined with reference to habitat descriptions provided in Maddock, A. (ed) (2011).

Hedgerow Survey

4.12. The results of the hedgerow survey are provided in Table 8.

Table 8: Hedgerow Survey Results

Hedgerow number**	Description	UKHab Code	Important under Hedgerow Regulations (1997)	NERC Act HPI*	Photograph Ref No. (Appendix 2: Photographs)
H1	Hedgerow H1 related to the native hedgerow overhanging the northeast site boundary. The hedgerow was approximately 2m in height, 1.5m in width, and 11m in length. Species present included frequent hawthorn and holly, and rarely present sycamore.	h2a6	No – hedgerow is residential boundary feature.	Yes – hedgerow is at least 80% one or more woody species.	2

**See Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan for hedgerow reference numbers.

Protected/ Notable Species

4.13. The results of the protected/ notable species assessment undertaken during the Extended UKHab Habitat Survey are provided in Table 9 overleaf.

4.14. A summary of desk study results is also provided in Table 9.

Table 9: Protected/ Notable Species Assessment

Species/ Species Group	Desk Study	Evidence Observed During Extended UKHab Habitat Survey	Suitability of Habitats Present
Amphibians (including great crested newt)	No previous granted mitigation licences relating to GCN were noted within 2km of the survey site. Three records of Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Returns were noted during the desk study. The records related to the surveys with GCN recorded as present between 12th April 2016 and 5th May 2016 at a location approximately 1.7km southwest of the site. No records of Great Crested Newt Pond Surveys 2017 - 2019 recording GCN as present were noted during the desk study.	No evidence observed.	During the desk study, two ponds were identified as present within a 250m radius of the site. No ponds were identified on site during the site walkover survey. Pond P1 related to an agricultural pond located approximately 120m west of the site. Pond P2 related to an agricultural pond located approximately 230m northwest of the site. Access to the ponds was not possible at the time of survey and therefore an HSI assessment was not carried out. The terrestrial habitat on site offered suitable habitat for amphibians, including modified grassland, a line of trees, and the rubble pile located at target note TN1 (Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan, Appendix 2: Photographs, Photo 6).
Badger	N/A	No evidence observed.	The site offered suitable commuting and foraging habitat for badger including modified grassland and a line of trees.
Bats – GLTA	No previous granted mitigation licences relating to bats were noted within 2km of the survey site.	No evidence observed.	No trees with PRFs were noted during the survey.
Bats – commuting and foraging			The site offered moderate suitability for commuting and foraging bats, comprising a field bounded by treelines and hedgerows, with direct links to further suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape.
Birds	N/A	No evidence observed.	The grassland and line of trees on site, and the overhanging hedgerow and lines of trees offered suitable breeding and foraging habitat for a range of bird species.
Hazel dormouse	N/A	No evidence observed.	The site offered limited suitability for dormouse with one on-site treeline TL1 and off-site hedgerows and treelines overhanging the boundaries. The short sward grassland on site offered negligible habitat for dormouse.
Fish, otter, water vole, and aquatic invertebrates (including white-clawed crayfish)	Due to the lack of suitable watercourses and waterbodies present on site and in the surrounding landscape, these species are not considered further.		
Terrestrial invertebrates	N/A	No evidence observed.	The site offered common or widespread habitats that were considered unlikely to support notable invertebrate populations.
Reptiles	N/A	No evidence observed.	The habitat on site offered suitable habitat for reptiles including a line of trees, and a rubble pile located at target note TN1 (Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan, Appendix 2: Photographs, Photo 6). The grassland, being intensively managed via sheep grazing, was sub-optimal reptile habitat.
Other Mammals (including brown hare, harvest mouse, and hedgehog)	N/A	No evidence observed.	The site offered suitable habitat for brown hare in the form of grassland. The site offered suitable habitat for hedgehog in the form of grassland and the hibernacula including the rubble pile located at target note TN1 (Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan, Appendix 2: Photographs, Photo 6).
Invasive species	N/A	No evidence observed.	N/A

5. Ecological Constraints & Opportunities

5.1. The ecological constraints and opportunities, and recommendations for avoidance, mitigation, or further survey (where required) are provided in Table 10 overleaf.

Table 10: Ecological Constraints & Opportunities

Ecological Feature	Potential Ecological Impact & Level of Constraint	Potential Avoidance, Mitigation and/or Compensation Measures	Further Survey Required to Inform an Ecological Impact Assessment
Statutory Designated Sites	The site lies within a SSSI IRZ whereby "*Infrastructure:* […] *Any transport proposal including new or extended footways, cycleways, roads/car parks, railways and waterways (excluding routine maintenance).*" may result in risks to the relevant SSSI sites. The current development proposals include new access roads and footpaths throughout the site.	The SSSI IRZ requires the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England on likely risks from the planning applications on the relevant SSSI sites.	No further surveys required.
Priority habitats	The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 sets out that: *'192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:* [...] *b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species* […]*'.* The NPPF 2024 defines Priority Habitats and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. No Priority Habitats were identified on site. The native hedgerow H1 overhanging the site met the criteria as a NERC Act (2006) Priority habitat.	Retained hedgerows and trees should be protected via exclusion zones during works with reference to *British Standard (BS 5837:2012): Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*.	No further surveys required.
Habitats (general)	The native trees on site are considered to be of local level ecological importance. However, these should be retained where possible. The remaining habitats on site are considered to be common and widespread habitats of low conservation importance. However, cumulatively these habitats have local conservation value taken as the biodiversity value of the site. The development will result in the loss of areas of modified grassland and two semi-mature hawthorn trees within treeline TL1.		With reference to Section 14 of the Environment Act 2021, developments should achieve a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain via on-site of off-site habitat creation or enhancement. A biodiversity impact assessment to calculate the change in biodiversity units between the baseline habitats and the proposed site plans using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been undertaken. Refer to the corresponding Biodiversity Net Gain report (Elton Ecology, 2025).
Badgers	Badgers are afforded legal protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. No evidence of badger was recorded during the survey, however their presence in the landscape cannot be fully discounted. There remains a residual risk of badger injury and mortality during construction should this species be mobile in the area. There may be some removal of suitable badger habitat on site to facilitate the proposed works, including the removal of areas of modified grassland.	Precautionary methods should be implemented during works to protect foraging and commuting badger. Foundation ditches and other ditches, excavations, or trenches, which can be hazardous to badgers, should be closed overnight or fitted with roughened sloping boards or steps to allow animals to escape should they become trapped. Concrete should not be left unset overnight, or suitable barriers erected to prevent animals accessing the concrete. Pipework with a diameter greater than 120mm should have the ends closed off overnight to prevent entrapment.	No further surveys required.
Birds	Nesting birds are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The habitats on site including the line of trees and the hedgerow and lines of trees overhanging the site offer suitable nesting bird habitat.	Where works affecting nesting bird habitat on site cannot avoid the nesting bird season of March to August (inclusive) and September in mild years, the habitat to be subject to works should be surveyed for nesting birds immediately prior to removal by a suitably qualified ecologist. If nesting birds are recorded, a suitable buffer zone should be defined by	No further surveys required.

Ecological Feature	Potential Ecological Impact & Level of Constraint	Potential Avoidance, Mitigation and/or Compensation Measures	Further Survey Required to Inform an Ecological Impact Assessment
	There will be some removal of suitable nesting bird habitat in the loss of two semi-mature hawthorn trees within treeline TL1.	the ecologist and implemented until the ecologist confirms the chicks have fledged. If species identification is possible, this can be used to inform the typical egg incubation and fledging period, giving an indication of an appropriate time for re-survey to confirm fledging.	
Bats	Bats are a fully protected European Protected Species (EPS) under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The development may fragment bat foraging and commuting habitat through the removal of trees, and the construction of new urban built features with associated artificial lighting.	Further surveys are required to inform the appropriate avoidance, mitigation and/or compensation measures relating to foraging and commuting bats. See adjacent column.	To assess any impacts of commuting and foraging bats, with reference to best practice guidelines (BCT, 2023), it is recommended that a Night-Time Bat Walkover (NBW) survey is carried out. For moderate suitability habitats, one survey visit per season (spring – April/May, summer – June – August, autumn – September/October) should be undertaken. Static surveys should comprise collecting data for a minimum of five consecutive nights per month between April and October inclusive. All surveys should be undertaken in appropriate weather conditions for bats.
Amphibians (including GCN) and Reptiles	GCN are fully protected as a European Protected Species (EPS) under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Reptiles are partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), protecting them from killing or injury. There will be some removal of suitable GCN, amphibian, and reptile habitat on site to facilitate the proposed works, comprising the removal of areas of grassland and rubble piles. Using the Risk Assessment Tool provided within the Natural England Method Statement Template (Table 11 overleaf), on a precautionary basis scenario that the pond P1, 120m west of the site is a GCN breeding site and the basis that area 0.57 ha of land will be affected by the development, the calculator generated a risk of 'Amber: Offence Likely'.	Further surveys are required to provide suitable avoidance, mitigation, and/or compensation measures for GCN. See adjacent column. To prevent the killing and injury of reptiles during the works, it is recommended that vegetation clearance on site is carried out under precautionary working methods for reptiles, to include a fingertip search of suitable vegetation and potential hibernacula prior to works, as well as staged and directional vegetation removal encouraging the safe displacement of reptiles into adjacent habitats. In the highly unlikely event that reptiles are encountered during works, works should cease immediately, and the advice of an ecologist sought.	To further inform the impacts of the development on GCN due to the close proximity of ponds P1-P2, and the suitability of habitats on site, it is recommended that an HSI survey and an assessment of eDNA of P1-P2 be carried out to establish the presence/likely absence of GCN. A single visit to each pond by a suitably experienced ecologist should be made between mid-April and June to collect water samples for eDNA analysis within the laboratory.
Hazel Dormouse	Dormice are fully protected as a European Protected Species (EPS) under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. There will be partial loss of suitable hazel dormouse habitat in treeline TL1. The suitable hazel dormouse habitat in the form of off-site hedgerows and treelines will be retained under the current development.	The treeline (TL1) located on the south-western site boundary is potential dormouse habitat. Plans indicate that a section of this treeline will be removed. It is unlikely that this type of operation would result in offence due to the small amount of habitat to be lost. Therefore it is recommended that works to remove the treeline are immediately preceded by a fingertip search for dormice evidence by a licenced ecologist in and around the area to be removed. Vegetation would then be cleared under the direction of the licenced ecologist who would make additional checks for the presence of dormouse evidence as the clearance works proceed. Vegetation clearance would avoid the hibernation period (November to March inclusive) and the breeding period (June to mid-September inclusive) If dormice are encountered during this process, works must immediately cease, and further advice sought. Should this occur, a European Protected Species licence may be required.	No further surveys required.

Ecological Feature	Potential Ecological Impact & Level of Constraint	Potential Avoidance, Mitigation and/or Compensation Measures	Further Survey Required to Inform an Ecological Impact Assessment
Other Mammals	Some mammals, such as hedgehog and brown hare, are listed as Species of Principal Importance in England under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. These species are termed 'Priority' species and receive special considerations in the planning process. There may be some removal of suitable hedgehog habitat on site to facilitate the proposed works, including the removal of areas of grassland and hibernacula. There may be some removal of suitable commuting and foraging habitat for brown hare and hedgehog to facilitate the development, comprising areas of modified grassland. The rubble pile will likely be removed to facilitate the development, which offers suitable habitat for hedgehog.	The precautionary working methods implemented for badger will also protect other mammals such as hedgehog. Any new fencing which may fragment the landscape for hedgehog should include a 13cm square hole at the base to allow for hedgehog migration through the site.	No further surveys required.
Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)	Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) makes it an offence to cause any plant listed to grow in the wild unless all reasonable steps were taken to prevent an offence and due diligence was exercised.	N/A	No further surveys required.

Table 11: GCN Rapid Risk Assessment

Component	**Likely effect** (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	**Notional offence probability score**
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	**AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY**	

6. Conclusions

Further Surveys

6.1. The following further ecological surveys are required to inform the impact of the proposed development:

- To assess any impacts of commuting and foraging bats, with reference to best practice guidelines (BCT, 2023), it is recommended that a Night-Time Bat Walkover (NBW) survey is carried out. For moderate suitability habitats, one survey visit per season (spring – April/May, summer – June – August, autumn – September/October) should be undertaken. Static surveys should comprise collecting data for a minimum of five consecutive nights per month between April and October inclusive. All surveys should be undertaken in appropriate weather conditions for bats.

- To further inform the impacts of the development on GCN due to the close proximity of ponds P1-P2, and the suitability of habitats on site, it is recommended that an HSI survey and an assessment of eDNA of P1-P2 be carried out to establish the presence/likely absence of GCN. A single visit to each pond by a suitably experienced ecologist should be made between mid-April and June to collect water samples for eDNA analysis within the laboratory.

Biodiversity Enhancement

6.2. Suitable methods of biodiversity enhancement for the site would include:

- An appropriate method of site enhancement for nesting birds would include the installation of an integrated swift brick on each new building such as the '*Manthorpe Swift Brick*' sited at least 5m high and avoiding direct sunlight. No trees, vegetation or other obstructions should be placed in front of or below the swift brick, to ensure an unobstructed flight path and avoiding the creation of perches for predators.

- A landscaping scheme could incorporate native shrubs and trees of value to wildlife. Once matured, these habitats would offer a nesting and foraging resource for birds.

- Biodiversity enhancement opportunities relating to bats will be recommended following the further surveys.

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8. Figures

Legend

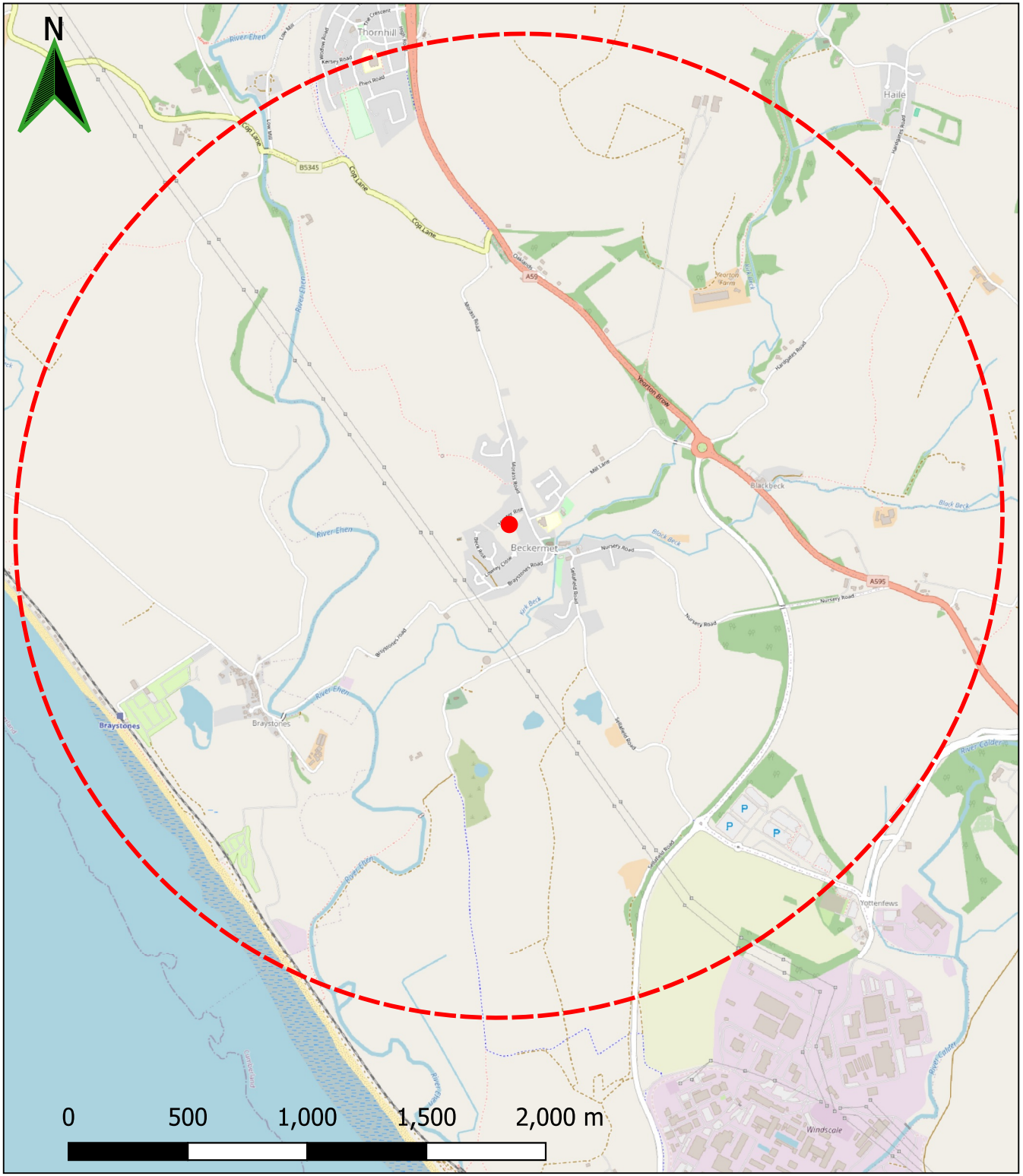
Site Boundary

Project:
Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria

Drawing:
Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Date: 02-05-2025
Version: FINAL
Author: CM
Job No: P2767

Elton Ecology



Legend

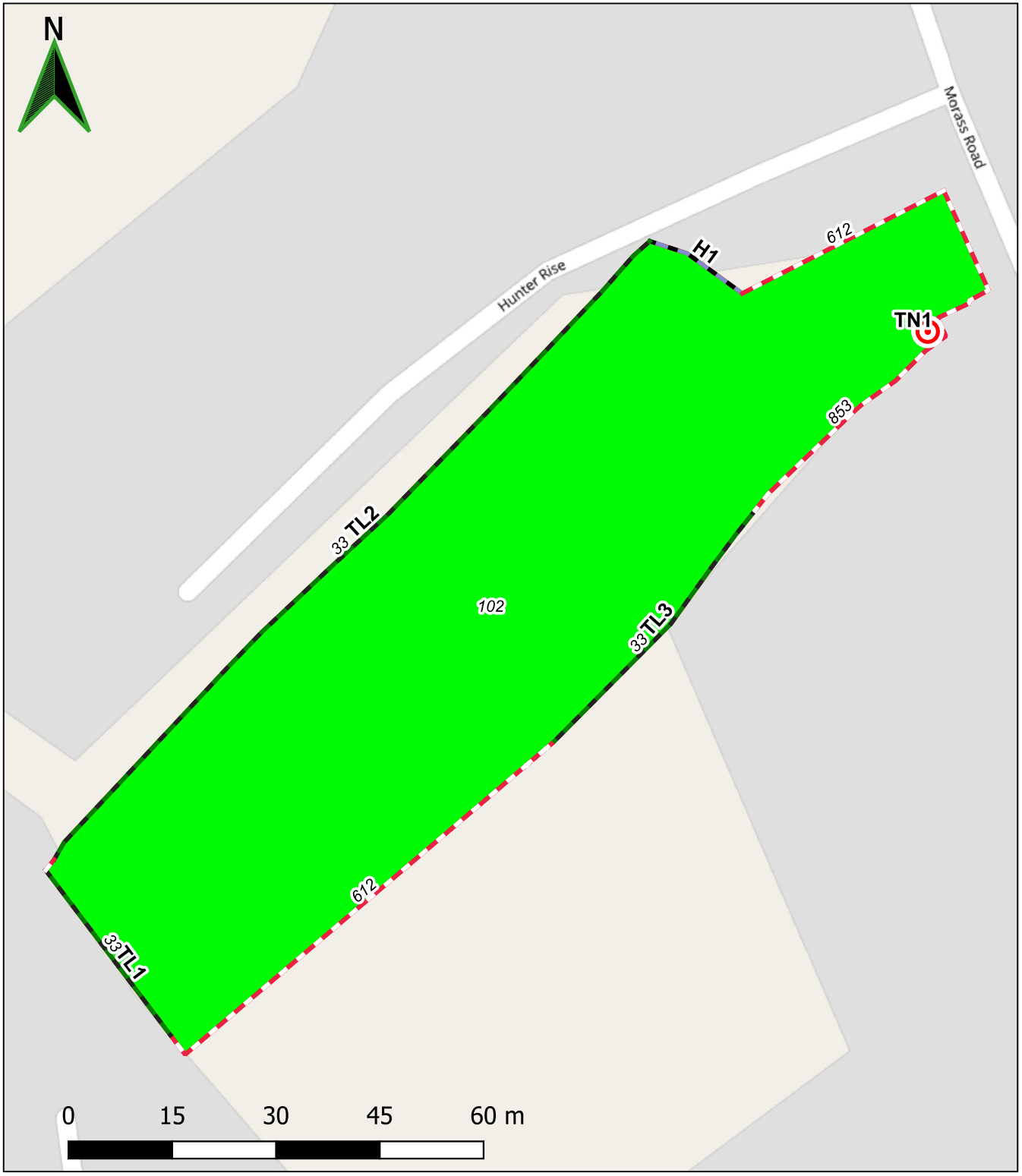
- Site Location
- 2km Buffer

Project:
Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria

Drawing:
Figure 2: Surrounding Landscape Plan

Date: 02-05-2025
Version: FINAL
Author: CM
Job No: P2767

Elton Ecology



Legend

- Site Boundary
- g4 - Modified Grassland
- w1 - Broadleaved and Mixed Woodland - Line of Trees
- h2a6 - Other Native Hedgerow
- u1e - Built Linear Features
- Target Note with Reference Number

Secondary Codes:
33 - Line of Trees
102 - Sheep Grazed
612 - Fence
853 - Mortared Wall

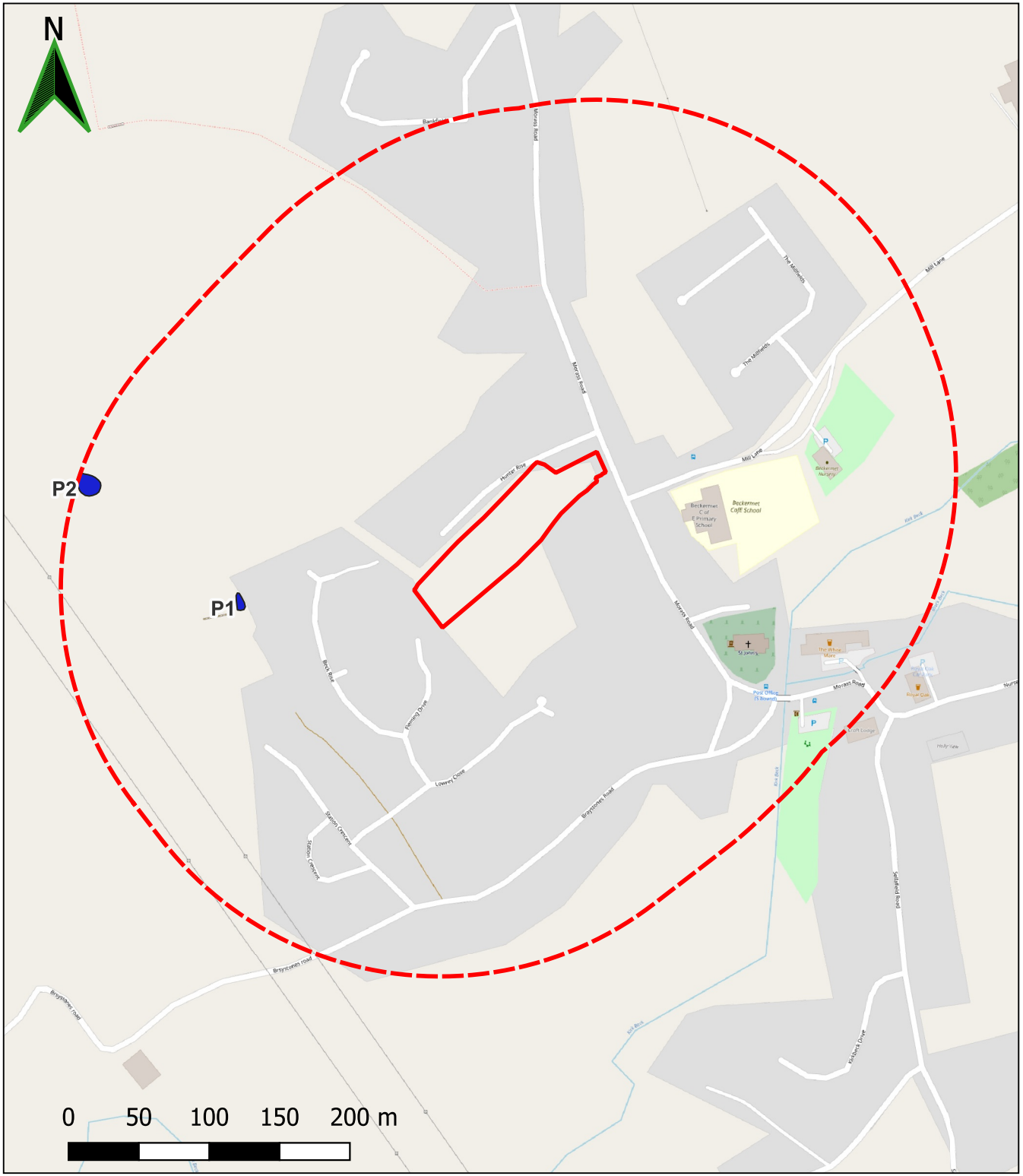
Project:
Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria

Drawing:
Figure 3: UKHab Habitat Plan

Date: 02-05-2025 Version: FINAL

Author: CM Job No: P2767

Elton Ecology



Legend

- Site Boundary
- 250m Pond Buffer
- Pond with Reference Number

Project:
Hunter Rise, Beckermet, Cumbria

Drawing:
Figure 4: Pond Plan

Date: 02-05-2025
Version: FINAL
Author: CM
Job No: P2767

Elton Ecology

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation Summary

This appendix serves as a summary of relevant policy and legislation. It is not intended to supersede the policy or legislation documents to which it refers, and the relevant full documents should always be consulted prior to decision making.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

Biodiversity is a material consideration under the National Planning Policy Framework (2023). Relevant text to biodiversity from the NPPF is described below.

In Section 2 of the NPPF 'Achieving sustainable development', paragraph 8(c), the NPPF sets an environmental objective:

- "to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

In Section 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment', the NPPF states that:

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

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

- recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; […]

- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. […]"

The NPPF, in paragraph 192 sets out that to protect and enhance biodiversity, plans should:

- "Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity65; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

- promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."

In determining planning applications, the NPPF paragraph 193 sets guidance that local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

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

- development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the

benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest […];

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

- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while 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."

Paragraph 194 states that the following sites should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- "potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

- listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and

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

Paragraph 195 states that "The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or projects will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."

Paragraph 198 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure new development is appropriate to its location and take into account likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- "Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development […]; […] and

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

Government Circular ODPM 06/05 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The government circular provides administrative guidance on the application of statutory obligation and legislation relating to planning and nature conservation in England. It complements the National Planning Policy Framework. The document includes guidance on designated sites (international and national), habitats, and protected species.

Relating to protected species and the requirement for their consideration in planning applications, the government circular, in paragraph 98 details that:

"The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Local authorities should consult English Nature [now Natural England] before granting planning permission. They should consider attaching appropriate planning conditions or entering into planning obligations under which the developer would take steps to secure the long-term protection of the species. They should also advise

developers that they must comply with any statutory species' protection provisions affecting the site concerned."

Paragraph 99, relating to the requirement and timing of protected species survey and mitigation, the government circular states that:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and/or planning obligations, before the permission is granted. In appropriate circumstances the permission may also impose a condition preventing the development from proceeding without the prior acquisition of a [Natural England] licence."

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

The term 'European Protected Species' (EPS) is used to describe species listed on Schedule 2 of the The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Regarding these species, Regulation 43 of the Regulations make guilty of an offence a person who:

- "Deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species;
- Deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species;
- Deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or;
- Damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal […]"

Regulation 43 defines that the disturbance of animals includes any disturbance which is likely to:

- Impair their ability:
    - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
    - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
    - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

A person guilty of an offence under Regulation 43 is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine, or to both.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) lists species on Schedule 5 for which the Act make it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take;

- Recklessly or intentionally damage or destroy, or obstruct access to any structure or place which any wild animal included uses for shelter or protection;

- Recklessly or intentionally disturb any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection.

Some species receive partial protection under the Act, which limits their protection under the Act to intentional killing or injury.

All wild nesting birds are protected under the Act, making it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird; and

- Take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs of any wild bird.

Some bird species are afforded special protection via their inclusion in Schedule 1 of the Act, which makes an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any schedule 1 bird building a nest or which is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young of such a bird, or whilst such a bird 'leks' (i.e. congregates for community courtship behaviour).

Schedule 9 of the Act makes it an offence to cause any plant listed to grown in the wild, unless all reasonable steps were taken to prevent an offence and due diligence was exercised.

The Act sets out provisions to protect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Section 40 of the Act places a legal duty on public authorities (including planning authorities) to have regard to biodiversity conservation in their normal functions (including planning applications).

Under Section 41 of the Act, lists of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and Species of Principal Importance (SPI), of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, are produced which serve to guide public authorities in carrying out their functions with consideration for biodiversity conservation.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 (as amended)

The Act protects wild mammals against certain cruel acts, including intentional crushing, downing or asphyxiation.

Appendix 2: Photographs

Photo 1: Modified grassland on site.

Photo 2: Hedgerow H1 overhanging the site.

Photo 3: Treeline TL1 on site.

Photo 4: Treeline TL2 overhanging the site.

Photo 5: Treeline TL3 overhanging the site.

Photo 6: Rubble pile located at target note TN1.