# Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

**PEA-001**

**Twin Elms, Distington, Workington Cumbria, CA145UH**

**Proposed demolition of Existing Dwelling & Rebuild New Detached Bungalow**

**Full Planning Application**

**Survey Date: 15 February 2026**

**Survey Methodology: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC)**

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**Document Control**

| Date | Issue Number | Change/Amendment | Author: |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15/02/2026 | - | Original submission | |
| 12/02/2026 | Rev A | Following consultation with the County Ecologist email dated 10/03/2026 | |
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This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017) and BS42020: Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

The survey was undertaken by a suitably competent person with experience in ecological habitat assessment and protected species identification.

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## 1 Executive Summary

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken for land at Twin Elms, Distington, Cumbria to inform a planning application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and construction of a replacement bungalow, the appraisal comprised a desk study review and extended Phase 1 habitat survey undertaken in accordance with CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017).

Habitats recorded within the site include semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal vegetation, areas of hardstanding, boundary scrub and the existing dwelling structure. These habitats are typical of previously developed residential land and are considered to be of **low ecological value within a local context**.

No statutory or non-statutory ecological designations occur within the site boundary, and the development proposals are unlikely to result in significant ecological effects, the building is assessed as having **low bat roost potential**, and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey, subject to implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this report, the proposed development is considered compliant with national and local planning policy relating to biodiversity.

The existing dwelling has been assessed as having low bat roost potential and the habitats present provide limited opportunities for protected species, subject to the implementation of standard mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures.

The proposed development is anticipated to result in minimal ecological effects, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures and completion of the precautionary bat survey described within this report.

## 2 Introduction

EDS Design Cumbria Ltd was commissioned to undertake a **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)** in support of a planning application for the **demolition of the existing dwelling and construction of a replacement bungalow at Twin Elms, Distington**.

The purpose of this report is to identify ecological constraints associated with the proposed development and provide recommendations to ensure compliance with relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy.

The objectives of the PEA are to:

- Identify habitats present within the site and assess their ecological value
- Identify the potential for protected species to occur within the site
- Assess potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development
- Recommend mitigation and enhancement measures where appropriate

This report follows guidance contained within:

- **CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017)**
- **BS42020: Biodiversity — Code of Practice for Planning and Development**
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The scheme is described in the accompanying **Design and Access Statement**

## 3 Site Description

### Site Location

The application site is located within the village of Distington, Cumbria and comprises residential land associated with the property known as Twin Elms. The site lies within an established residential area characterised by detached and semi-detached dwellings with associated gardens and access roads.

The site is bounded by:

- North – Residential properties
- South – Residential gardens
- East – Open land and highway corridor
- West – Residential development

### Site Area

Approximately **0.26 hectares**

### Current Site Condition

The site currently comprises a mixture of previously developed land and unmanaged grassland. The central portion of the site contains an existing residential dwelling with associated driveway and areas of hardstanding. Surrounding the building are areas of semi-improved grassland and disturbed ground.

The eastern section of the site contains tall ruderal vegetation and the remains of a partially collapsed former structure.

### Landscape Context

The site sits within a settlement-edge residential environment with:

- Domestic gardens
- Managed grassland
- Small areas of woodland and scrub
- Hedgerow boundaries

The wider ecological connectivity is considered moderate due to surrounding vegetation corridors.

### Ecological Zone of Influence

For the purposes of this assessment, the ecological zone of influence is defined as the site boundary and the surrounding land within approximately 250m where ecological receptors could potentially be affected by the proposed development.

## 4 Legislative and Planning Policy Context

Key legislation relevant to ecological protection includes:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992

- Environment Act 2021

**Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
Protects:

- Wild birds
- Bats
- Reptiles
- Certain plant species

**Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**

Provides protection for:

- European Protected Species
- Special Areas of Conservation

**Environment Act 2021**

Introduced mandatory **10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** requirements for most development.

**Planning Policy**

Relevant policy includes:

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning decisions to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide measurable biodiversity net gains where possible. Minimise impacts on biodiversity

Local policy includes:

- Copeland Local Plan:
- ENV3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

**5 Methodology**

The ecological walkover survey was undertaken on 15 February 2026 during suitable weather conditions. Visibility across the site was good and vegetation structure allowed effective habitat identification.

**Limitations**
This survey represents a preliminary ecological assessment only. While the survey was sufficient to identify habitats and assess protected species potential, it does not constitute a full protected species survey.

**Desk Study**
A desk study was undertaken to identify statutory and non-statutory ecological designations within a 2km radius of the site. The desk study also reviewed aerial imagery, historical mapping and habitat datasets to identify potential ecological features within the wider landscape.

Data sources included:

- MAGIC database
- DEFRA environmental datasets
- Ordnance Survey mapping
- Aerial imagery review
- Local planning authority information

No statutory ecological designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Ramsar sites occur within the site boundary.

**Field Survey**

The site habitats were classified following the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC). The survey included:

- Habitat classification
- Assessment of ecological features
- Identification of protected species potential

The survey followed **Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology**.

**6 Desk Study Results**

**Designated Sites**
No statutory ecological designations occur within the site boundary.

The nearest potential ecological designations include:

- Local Wildlife Sites
- Woodland habitats within the wider landscape

None are directly affected by the development.

**Priority Habitats**
No priority habitats were identified on the site.
The habitats present are typical of **disturbed residential land**.

**7 Field Survey Results**

The field survey confirmed the site consists primarily of:

**Semi-Improved Grassland**
The grassland is dominated by common species including:

- Perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne)
- Yorkshire fog (Holcus lanatus)
- Common dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)
- Creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens)

**Ruderal Vegetation**
Areas of disturbance supporting species such as:

- Nettles
- Thistles
- Dock

**Scrub Vegetation**
Boundary vegetation includes:

- Hawthorn
- Bramble
- Elder

**Built Structures**
Existing dwelling and former outbuilding structure.
These provide **limited ecological niches**.

**8 Habitat Assessment**

Habitat Ecological Value Assessment

| Habitat Type | Ecological Value |
|---|---|
| Semi-improved grassland | Low |
| Tall ruderal vegetation | Low |
| Hardstanding | Negligible |
| Buildings | Negligible |
| Scrub vegetation | Low |

The habitats present are typical of previously disturbed residential land and are not considered to be of ecological significance beyond the local level.

**9 Protected Species Assessment**

**Bats**
The existing dwelling was inspected externally for features which could support roosting bats.

The building was assessed as having **LOW** bat roost potential due to:

- absence of lifted or missing roof tiles
- absence of ridge or soffit gaps
- relatively modern roof construction
- No bat droppings, staining or feeding remains were observed.
- In accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidance, buildings assessed as having low bat roost potential would not normally require further survey. However, following consultation with the County Ecologist a precautionary emergence survey will be undertaken to confirm the absence of roosting bats prior to demolition.

This classification follows the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines for bat surveys and mitigation (2016).

**Birds**
Scrub vegetation and trees may support **nesting birds**.
All birds and active nests are protected under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**.
Vegetation clearance should avoid the **nesting season (March–August)** where possible.

**Hedgehogs**
Boundary vegetation may support **hedgehog movement corridors**.
This species is listed under **UK Priority Species**.

**Reptiles**
The site has very limited reptile habitat.
The risk of reptiles being present is considered **low.**

**Badgers**
No evidence of badger activity, including setts, latrines or foraging signs, was identified during the survey.

Badgers are unlikely to be present on the site.

**Amphibians**
There are no ponds or suitable breeding habitats within the site.
Risk is considered **negligible**.

**10 Invasive Species**

No invasive plant species listed under **Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act** were recorded during the survey.

**11 Ecological Constraints**

The site presents limited ecological constraints.

Potential sensitivities relate to:
- Nesting birds
- Potential bat roost features

These can be addressed through standard mitigation.

**12 Impact Assessment**

Potential Ecological Impacts

| Impact | Significance |
|---|---|
| Loss of grassland habitat | Negligible |
| Disturbance during construction | Minor |
| Impact on protected species | Negligible |

The grassland habitats affected are common and species-poor and therefore their loss is not considered to represent a significant ecological impact.

Overall ecological impacts associated with the development are considered minor and localised.

**13 Mitigation Measures**

The following measures should be implemented:

**Vegetation Clearance**
Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive) where practicable.

If clearance is required during this period, vegetation should be inspected by a competent ecologist prior to works commencing.

**Bat Precaution**
During demolition:

- Structures should be inspected for bats
- Any bats discovered must halt works immediately

**Site Management**
Construction should follow best practice:

- Pollution control
- Avoid disturbance to boundary vegetation

Standard construction best practice should be followed including:

- Appropriate storage of materials
- Avoidance of unnecessary vegetation clearance
- Prevention of pollution entering surrounding land or drainage systems

**14 Biodiversity Enhancements**

In addition to the standard ecological enhancements identified within this report, the development proposals incorporate further habitat improvements to strengthen ecological connectivity and increase biodiversity value within the site.

The proposals include the planting of approximately 20 additional native trees within the retained woodland area located along the eastern boundary of the site. This planting will diversify the woodland structure and improve habitat suitability for birds, invertebrates and small mammals.

The scheme will also introduce approximately 15 metres of new native hedgerow planting along the northern and eastern site boundaries. The hedge will comprise locally appropriate species such as hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna), hazel (Corylus avellana), field maple (Acer campestre), blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) and dog rose (Rosa canina).

These measures will strengthen the existing boundary vegetation corridor and enhance ecological connectivity between surrounding gardens and adjacent woodland habitats.

Together with the installation of bat boxes, bird nesting boxes and hedgehog access gaps described within this report, these habitat enhancements will deliver a measurable biodiversity improvement across the site.

**15 Biodiversity Net Gain**

The development has been reviewed against the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and DEFRA Biodiversity Metric.

The existing site comprises predominantly disturbed ground, semi-improved grassland, ruderal vegetation, hardstanding and built form, which collectively represent habitats of limited ecological value.

In response to consultation comments from the County Ecologist, a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment will be prepared using the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric to quantify both baseline and post-development habitat units.

Where applicable:

- Areas used for plant production or nursery activities will be classified as “Urban – Unsealed Surface”
- Existing boundary vegetation will be retained where practicable
- Additional landscaping will be incorporated to enhance habitat value

The development will also include ecological enhancement measures such as:

- Installation of bat boxes
- Installation of bird nesting boxes
- Provision of hedgehog access gaps within boundary fencing
- Native species planting within landscaped areas

These measures will ensure the development contributes positively to local biodiversity.

The proposed landscaping and biodiversity enhancements are expected to deliver a measurable biodiversity uplift when assessed using the DEFRA Small Sites Biodiversity Metric. Retention of boundary vegetation, native planting and the incorporation of ecological features such as bat boxes, bird boxes and hedgehog access gaps will contribute to the ecological value of the site post-development.

The Biodiversity Net Gain assessment prepared using the DEFRA Small Sites Biodiversity Metric demonstrates that the proposed development delivers a measurable biodiversity uplift exceeding the statutory 10% requirement for both habitat and hedgerow units.

The biodiversity gain is achieved through the retention of existing woodland, creation of additional landscaped grass areas, extension of native hedgerow boundaries and the planting of additional native trees within the retained woodland area.

**16 Bat Roost Potential and Further Survey Requirements**

The buildings present on site comprise an existing residential dwelling and associated domestic outbuildings of conventional construction, an external inspection identified limited potential roosting features and the structures are therefore assessed as having low bat roost potential in accordance with current ecological guidance.

Notwithstanding this assessment, and in response to consultation feedback from the County Ecologist, the applicant will undertake a precautionary bat survey to ensure the development proceeds in accordance with best practice.

Accordingly:

- A single dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist
- The survey will be undertaken during the optimal survey window between May and August inclusive
- A brief bat survey report will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of demolition works

Subject to the outcome of the survey, appropriate mitigation or precautionary working methods will be implemented where necessary.

Given the low roost potential identified during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, it is anticipated that the survey will confirm the absence of significant bat roosting activity.

**17 Conclusions**

The site at Twin Elms comprises previously disturbed residential land supporting semi-improved grassland, ruderal vegetation, hardstanding and boundary scrub habitats typical of residential plots within the settlement. These habitats are considered to be of low ecological value within a local context.

No protected species were recorded during the site walkover survey.

The proposed development is anticipated to result in minimal ecological impact, subject to completion of the precautionary bat survey and implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined within this report.

Biodiversity enhancements recommended within this report will ensure the development delivers a net ecological improvement to the site.

Overall, the site supports habitats of low ecological value and the proposed development is unlikely to result in any significant effects on biodiversity. With the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined within this report, the scheme is considered compliant with national and local planning policy relating to biodiversity.

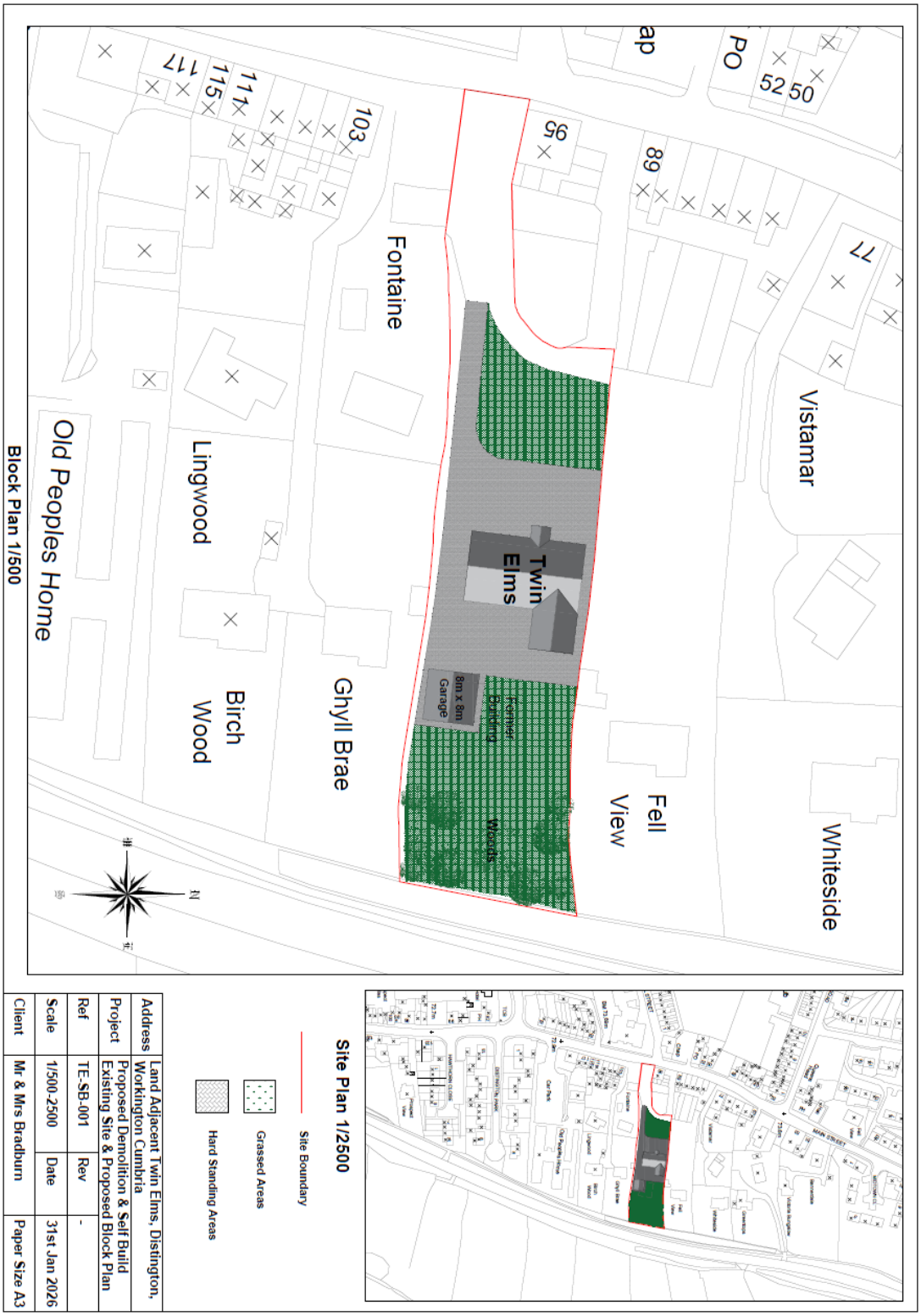
The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy ENV3 of the Copeland Local Plan in respect of biodiversity protection.

**17 References**

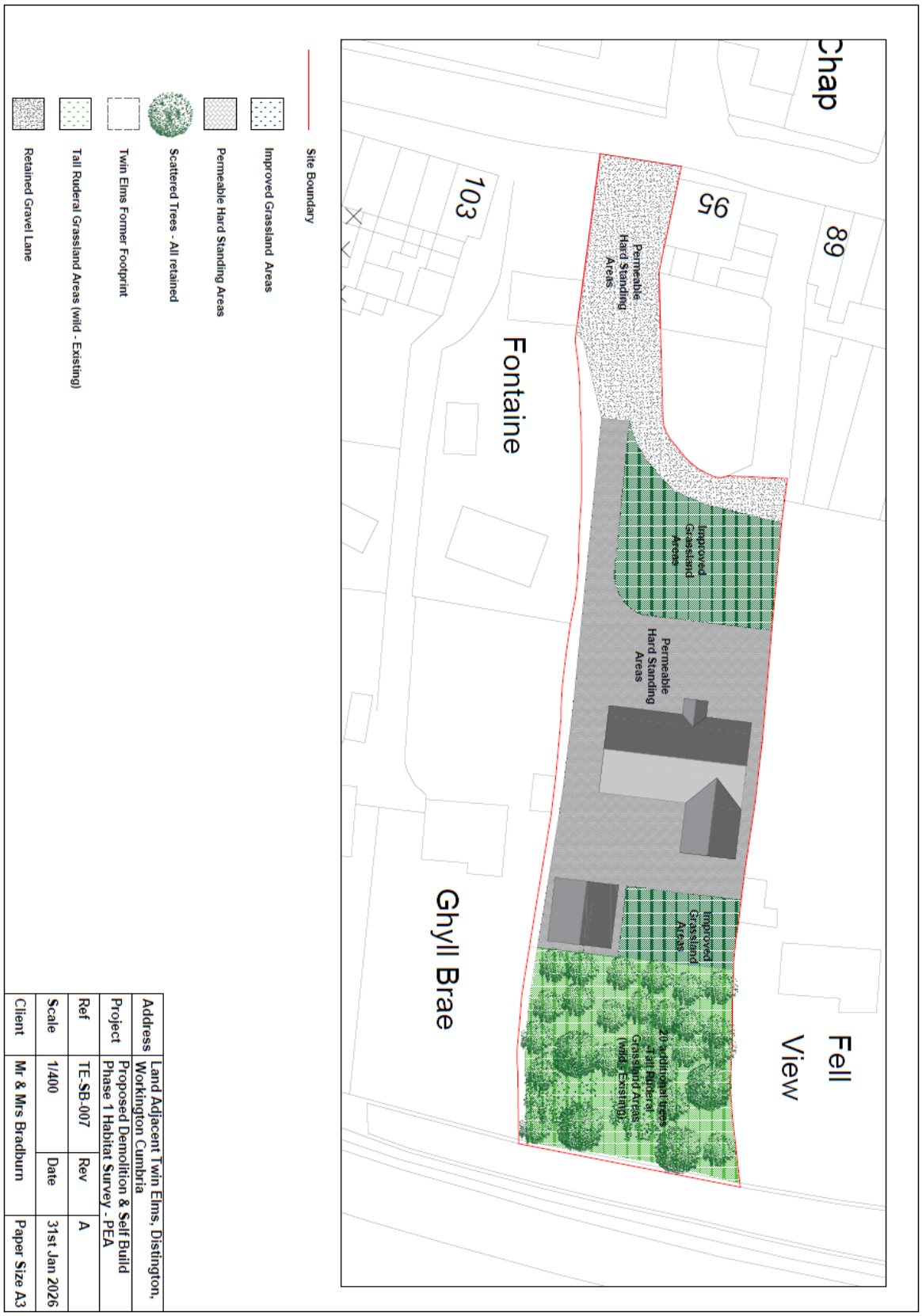

- CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- BS42020 Biodiversity — Code of Practice for Planning.
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- Environment Act 2021.
- National Planning Policy Framework.

## 18 Appendices

Appendix A – Site Location Plan

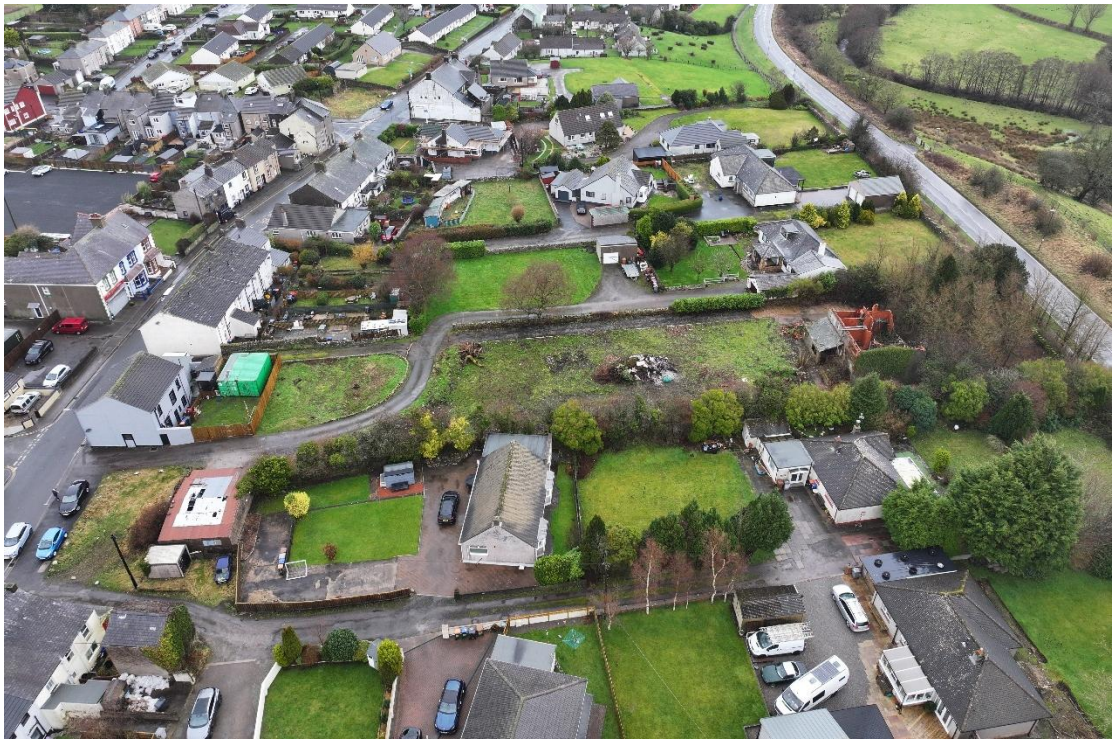


**Appendix B** – Habitat Plan

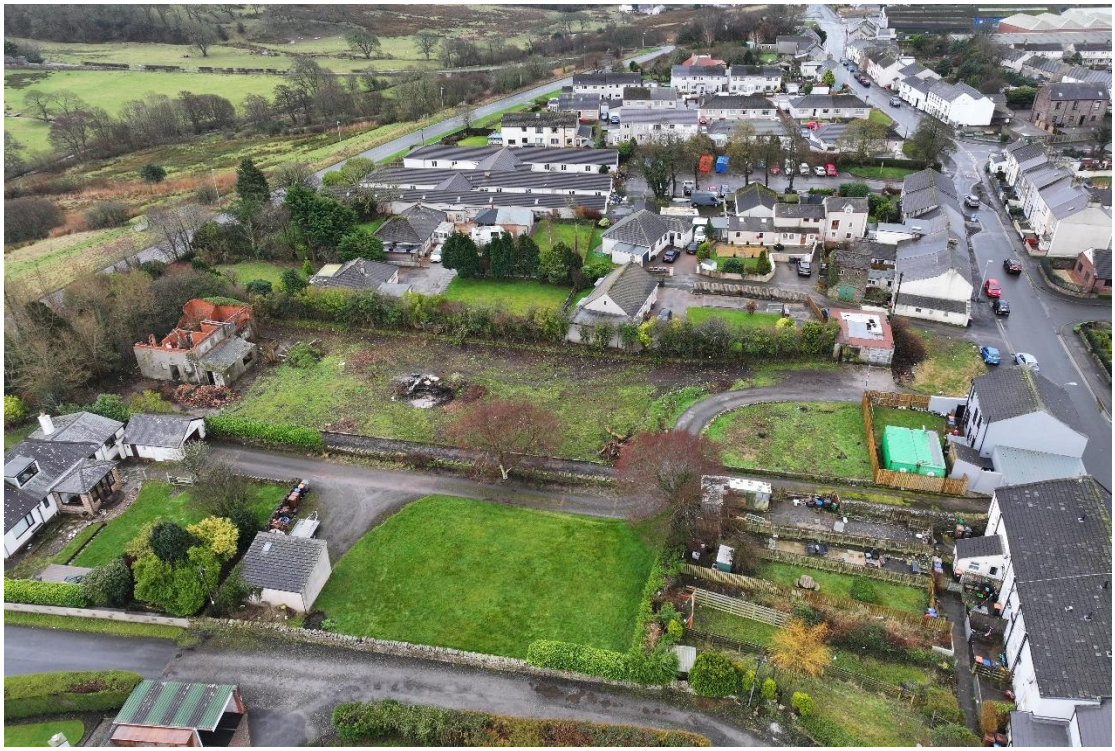


**Appendix C** – Aerial Photography
**Photograph 1** – Aerial site view East to West

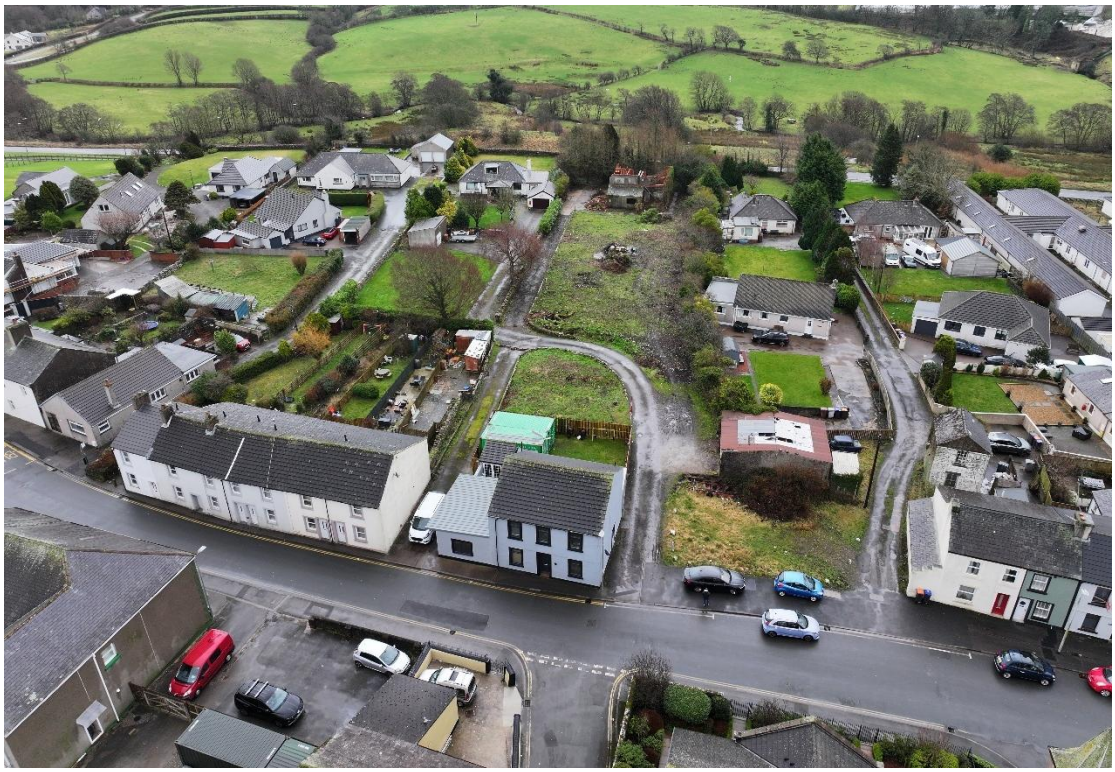
**Photograph 2** – Aerial site view South to North



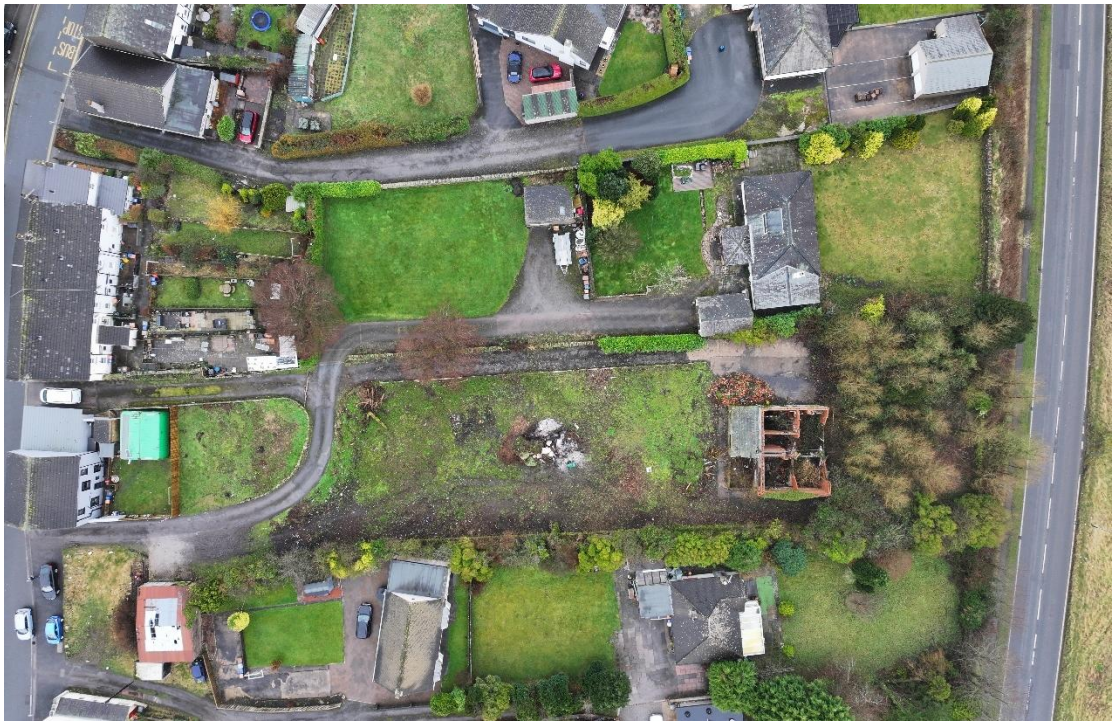
**Photograph 3** – Aerial site view North to South



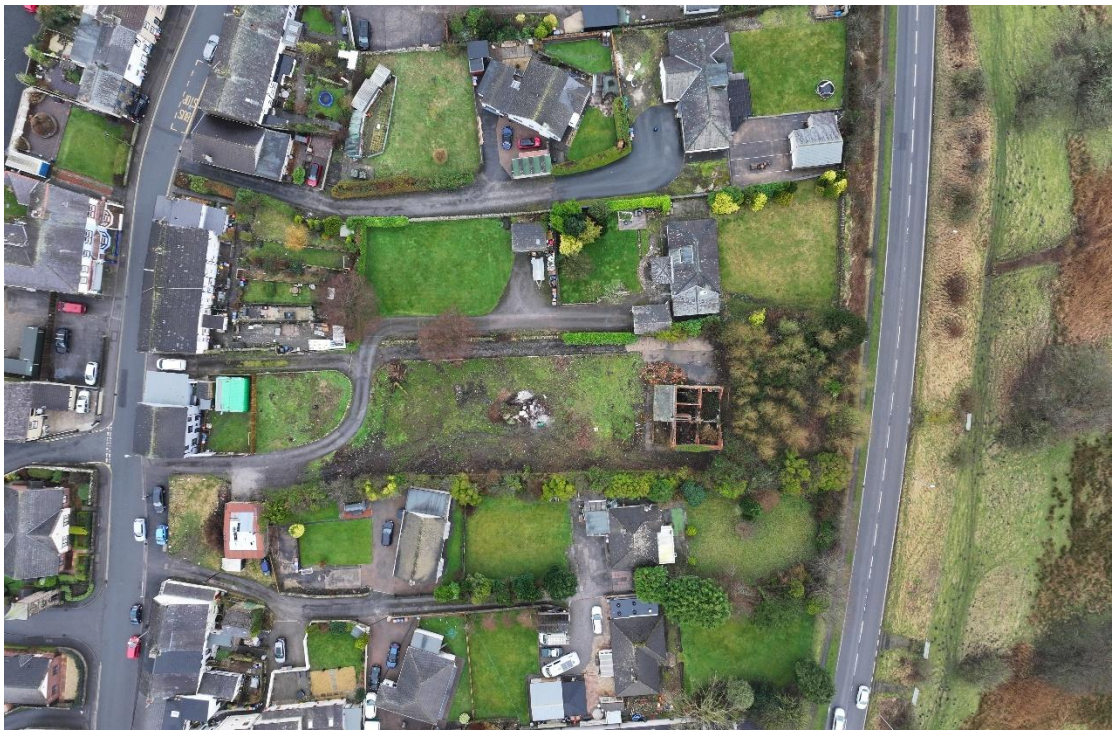
**Photograph 4** – Aerial site view West to East



**Photograph 5** – Aerial site view - Plan View 60m



**Photograph 6** – Aerial site view - Plan View 120m



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