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Wates Group

Gosberton House Academy

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report was produced by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of Wates Group and provides details of surveys undertaken to inform a forthcoming planning application at Gosberton House Academy, Spalding, Lincolnshire
- 1.2 There are 2 non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the site, none of which are within the site boundary and, based on the proximity of these LWS to Site, the proposed works are considered unlikely to impact these designated sites.
- 1.3 The site is dominated by buildings, hardstanding and amenity grassland with an area of woodland, scattered trees, ornamental planting and a boundary hedgerow. The site is surrounded by agricultural land to the north and west. To the east is Gosberton House Care Home and grounds and to the south is Westhorpe Road.
- 1.5 No buildings or trees within the Site were assessed as having potential roosting features for bats. Habitats on the site met the criteria for 'moderate', however due to the limited impacts to these habitats from the scheme it has been considered disproportionate to undertake activity surveys at the Site. It is considered that the implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme and provision of bat boxes on some of the retained trees will maintain/enhance the overall suitability of the area for bats.
- 1.6 The Site was considered to provide terrestrial habitat for great crested newts with suitable habitat including the woodland, scrub and unmanaged grassland edges. No ponds were identified within the site however there were incidental records of GCN presence on Site.
- 1.7 P1 adjacent to the site entrance in the grounds of Gosberton House Care Home was assessed as having good suitability for GCN and a predicted presence of 79%. A further five ponds were identified within the within 500m with the majority having suitable habitat links to the Site and few barriers to dispersal. It is recommended that further surveys are undertaken on the off-site waterbodies to establish presence or likely absence of GCN and inform further mitigation as necessary.
- 1.8 Woodland and scrub along with composting areas provide suitable reptile habitat within the Site. There have also been incidental sightings of grass snake within the grounds. However, based upon the small-scale nature of the proposals and the limited suitable habitat to be impacted it is considered that works could be undertaken following precautionary working methods.
- 1.9 The proposals provide a net gain in biodiversity units of 13.62% for habitats and 13.79% for hedgerows. In addition, recommendations have been made for any new planting to focus on native species particularly fruit and nut-bearing varieties. Native seed mixes that maximise their benefit to biodiversity should also be considered for grassland areas, along with the inclusion of bat and bird boxes on retained trees, insect hotels and log piles (where appropriate).

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report contains the details of a Desk Study and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, and potential roost assessment undertaken by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of Wates Group in support of a new classroom building and carparking at Gosberton House Academy, Spalding.

Background

- 2.2 Gosberton House Academy, (hereafter referred to as the 'Site') comprised approximately 1.15ha of managed amenity grassland, broadleaved woodland, hardstanding and associated school buildings, with an access road and carparking, also present were boundary hedgerows, compost heaps, and a forest school area.
- 2.3 The Site was located to the West of the village of Gosberton, Lincolnshire approximately 10km north of Spalding. Habitats in the wider area were dominated by arable land and urban residential areas of Gosberton. Directly to the east of the site is Gosberton House Care Home and grounds and to the south is Westhorpe Road.

Proposed Development

- 2.4 The proposed development is for the construction of a single new classroom block c.650m² and a new carparking area, which will involve the loss of some small areas of onsite habitats. It is likely during the construction phase that there will also be a temporary impact on grassland within the Site to allow for a site compound.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 3.1 Desk study information was compiled from OS maps, aerial imagery and online sources, with data on national and international designated sites taken from the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website¹.
- 3.2 Local records of protected/notable species, and information on non-statutory designated sites was obtained from Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP).
- 3.3 The search area was varied depending on the likely significance and zone of influence of the data requested, search areas are as follows;
- 5km around the application area for sites of International Importance (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar sites);
 - Up to a 2km radius around the Site boundary for sites of national importance with a statutory designation e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or National Nature Reserve (NNR);
 - Up to a 1km radius around the Site boundary for sites of local importance with statutory designation of Local Nature Reserve, or non-statutory designation (e.g. of Site for Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC), Local Wildlife Site (LWS) etc.); and
 - 1km radius search area around the Site boundary for records of protected species (i.e. including former UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan species).

Field Study- Flora/Habitats

Extended Phase 1 Survey

- 3.4 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey was conducted on 9th October 2023, which involved classification of the broad habitat types present using the system published by the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2010², but where considered appropriate, with additional information collected beyond that required to determine the Phase 1 Habitat type. The survey was also extended to assess the suitability of the habitats and other features to support protected and notable fauna species.
- 3.5 The survey comprised a walkover of the Site, mapping the principal habitat types present and identifying the characteristic species present within them. The DAFOR scale was used to quantify the abundance of species. The scale ranges from Dominant to Abundant through Frequent and Occasional to Rare.
- 3.6 Any habitats deemed suitable for, or containing features with the potential to support, protected/notable species, were also assessed and recorded.

¹ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> (accessed 10.10.2023)

² JNCC. (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*. Peterborough: JNCC

Hedgerows

- 3.7 Hedgerows within the Site were surveyed using the standard Hedgerow Evaluation and Grading System (HEGS)³ methodology to assess their conservation value.
- 3.8 The Hedgerows were also assessed against the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 ‘wildlife and landscape’ criteria to determine if they were ‘Important’. This involved recording similar attributes to those recorded for the HEGS assessment but with the average number of woody species determined by sampling specific 30m sections. No assessment was made against the Regulations’ ‘Archaeology and History’ criteria.

Field Study – Fauna

- 3.9 The ‘Extended’ Phase 1 Habitat survey also sets out to record any signs of, or suitable habitat for, species afforded protection under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) a

Consideration was also given to the potential use of the Site by other notable fauna such as those species listed within S41 of the NERC Act (2006), the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, or relevant Red Data Book (RDB).

Bats

- 3.10 During the survey building and tree assessments were undertaken from ground level, with the aid of a torch and binoculars (where appropriate) by a licenced bat ecologist from FPCR (Natural England licence number 2018-38185-CLS-CLS). During the survey Potential Roosting Features (PRF) for bats such as the following were sought (Based on P16, British Standard 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland, October 2015):
- Natural holes (e.g. knot holes) arising from naturally shed branches or cavities created by branches tearing out from parent stems);
 - Man-made holes (e.g. cavities that have developed from flush cuts or branches previously pruned back to a branch collar);
 - Woodpecker holes;
 - Cracks/splits in stems or branches (horizontal and vertical);
- 3.11 Trees were classified into general bat roost potential groups based upon the presence of these features based upon Table 6.2 of the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines⁴.

³ Clements, D., & Toft, R. (1992). *Hedgerow Evaluation and Grading System (HEGS) A Methodology for the ecological survey, evaluation and grading of hedgerows*.

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

Herpetofauna

- 3.13 An assessment of the suitability of the terrestrial habitats to support reptiles and amphibians including great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) was completed during the survey. Suitable terrestrial habitats include areas that may provide shelter, such as scrub and rank vegetation, and habitats which may provide suitable hibernation sites, such as rubble piles, compost heaps and tussock grassland.
- 3.14 Evidence of ponds within 500m of the Site boundary with connectivity to the Site were sought using colour 1:25000 Ordnance Survey base maps and aerial photographs. Where accessible, these were assessed against the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) during the habitat survey.

Habitat Suitability Index

- 3.15 The HSI provides a measure of the likely suitability that a waterbody has for supporting great crested newts. In general, ponds with a higher score are more likely to support GCN than those with a lower score, and there is a positive correlation between HSI scores and ponds with this species recorded.
- 3.16 The surveyed waterbodies were assessed for their potential to support an amphibian population, including GCN, using the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). This provides a measure of the likely suitability that a waterbody has for supporting GCN (Oldham et al. 2000)⁶. Generally, ponds with a higher score are more likely to support GCN than those with a lower score and there is a positive correlation between HSI scores and ponds with newts recorded. Ten separate attributes were assessed for each pond to calculate the suitability of the ponds to support GCN:

- Geographic location
- Pond area
- Pond drying
- Water quality
- Shade
- Presence of water-fowl
- Presence of fish
- Number of linked ponds
- Terrestrial habitat
- Macrophytic coverage

- 3.17 A score is assigned according to the most appropriate criteria level set within each attribute and a total score calculated of between 0 and 1. Pond suitability is then determined according to the scales shown in Table 1.

Table 1: HSI Scores as a Measure of Pond Suitability

HSI score	Pond Suitability
<0.5	Poor

⁶ Herpetological Journal 10(4); (2000) Evaluating the suitability for the Great Crested Newt, Oldham et al.

HSI score	Pond Suitability
0.5 - 0.59	Below average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

Limitations

- 3.18 The habitat survey was undertaken in October which is a sub-optimal time for habitat surveying as many plant species will not be visible, therefore the species list provided should not be considered exhaustive. However due to the nature of habitats present at the Site, sufficient information was gathered to determine broad habitat types.

4.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

- 4.1 Results of the desk study are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.2 No internationally designated sites for nature conservation interest were located within a 5km radius of the site.
- 4.3 No statutory designated sites of national importance were located within 2km radius of the site.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.4 Two non-statutory designated sites were located within 1km of the site boundary, the sites identified did not fall within the site boundary. Details of the two sites are provided below.

Table 2: Non-Statutory Designated Sites

Site Reference/ Name	Designation	Description	Approximate Distance From Site
Boston Road Brick Pits	LWS	This is a Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Reserve, it consists of an improved pasture with a network of dry ditches and a small entrance field with a permanently wet area. Surrounded by a small mixed woodland and a large pond on the northern boundary.	890m
Risegate Eau	LWS	Watercourse extending from South Forty Foot Drain in the west to River Welland in the east. This watercourse has banks with a botanical interest throughout.	1.2km

Protected Notable Species

- 4.5 A number of protected or notable species records from 2013 onwards were highlighted within 1km of the site boundary by Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, those considered relevant to habitats within the site are provided in Table 3.
- 4.6 Records without accurate locations outside 1km from the site are available on request.
- 4.7 A total of 22 notable plant species were identified within 1km of the site boundary, none of these were recorded within the site as shown on Figure 2.

Table 3: Protected and Notable Species Records

Common Name	Status	Approximate Location of Closest Record
Bats		
Unidentified Bat Sp.	HR2, NERC S41, WCA5	12 records, closest 110m northeast
<i>Myotis</i> Sp	HR2, NERC S41, WCA5	1 record 75m southeast
<i>Pipistrelle</i> Sp	HR2, NERC S41, WCA5	2 records, closest 100m southwest
Birds		
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	NERC, BCO Red	5 records, closest 175m northwest
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	NERC, BCO Red	6 records, closest 175m northwest
Herpetofauna		
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	NERC S41, WCA5	1 record 530m northeast
Grass Snake <i>Natrix helvetica</i>	WCA5, NERC S41	1 record 800m northwest
Mammals		
Brown Hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i>	NERC S41, HSD5	2 records, closest 890m northeast
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	RLGB.VU, Sect.41, Sect. 41	1 record 695m southeast
Water Vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	WCA5, NERC S41	3 records, closest 415m north
Status key: HR2 - Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) Schedule 2; NERC S41 – The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006); WCA5 - Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); BCO Red – Red listed under Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC5);		

Field Results Habitats

- 4.8 The locations of the habitats below are illustrated in Figure 3.

Broadleaved Semi-Natural Woodland

- 4.9 The western portion of the site adjacent to the grassland is dominated by an area of broadleaved woodland which is used for outdoor learning and shows signs of excessive wear on the ground resulting in a number of bare patches. The trees are mostly mature and varied in height with a mix of species including beech *Fagus sylvatica*, horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, and whitebeam *Sorbus aria*. Separating the woodland from the grassland is a short line of immature crack willow *Salix fragilis* and within the woodland woven willow walkways were noted, these showed signs of previous management but had been left to grow out.

Scrub

- 4.10 A small area of scrub was present along the northern boundary which was dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, also present were some alder *Alnus* sp. common nettle *Urtica dioica* and broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.

Scattered Trees

- 4.11 Along the access drive and to the edge of the grassland were some scattered mature trees species which included false acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia*, hybrid black poplar *Populus x canadensis* and field maple *Acer campestre*.

Amenity Grassland

- 4.12 For the majority of their extent the grassland areas within the site were heavily managed and dominated by perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with occasional occurrences of daisy *Bellis perennis* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. Where the grass had been subject to less intensive management and disturbance, tussocks of cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and large areas of nettle were present.

Hedgerow

- 4.13 A single native species hedgerow (H1) was present along the western site boundary. The hedgerow was relatively young and as such had some small gaps at the base between the individual plants. Species present within the hedgerow included hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*.

Buildings and Hardstanding

- 4.14 An access drive led to the centre of Site from Westhorpe Road, off this to the north was a large carparking area and to the west, the main school building and playground. The majority of buildings within the school are to be retained therefore this area falls outside the redline for the application. Building descriptions for those buildings to be lost as part of the proposals are detailed in the bat section below.

Other

- 4.15 Other habitats within the site included a variety of raised planting beds, a small herb garden, and two composting areas one of which was formerly a pond.

Field Results – Fauna**Amphibians**

- 4.16 The site offered suitable habitat within the woodland area for sheltering and hibernating amphibians, including GCN. An incidental sighting of a GCN had also been recorded at the Site in 2021 (TN1).
- 4.17 There were no ponds within the Site at the time of survey however, to the north-west of the Site in the wider school grounds there was an area where water from the school drains into, which is understood to be often inundated throughout the winter and into early spring. A dry ditch was present just off site for the length of the access road which had no signs of aquatic vegetation

implying that it is only seasonally wet. Adjacent to the site, in the grounds of Gosberton House Care Home was a large pond c.900m² (P1) the HSI results are presented in the table below.

- 4.18 A further three ponds were identified within 250m of the site and in total six were present within 500m of the site, these were not accessed during the survey however, their locations are provided in Figure 4.

Table 4: Results of HSI assessment

Pond Number & Description	Photograph	HSI Score	Predicted Presence of GCN
P1 Off-site garden pond, moderate levels of shading.		0.77 Good	79%

Bats

- 4.20 Details of bat species within 1km of the site were provided by the local records centre (Figure 2), none of the records fell within the site boundary.

Tree Surveys

- 4.21 All trees on site were assessed for bat potential by a licenced ecologist, none were deemed to have features suitable for roosting bats.
- 4.22 The trees are spread around the site along with a newly planted hedgerow connecting to other surrounding suitable habitats outside of the site boundary which provide foraging opportunities for bats. However, the majority of the trees within the site will be retained and impacts on these

connective habitats are considered likely to be negligible, it is therefore considered further survey effort such as activity surveys would be disproportionate.

Buildings

- 4.23 The site comprised a number of buildings however the majority will be will not be impacted to facilitate the proposals. The buildings to be demolished on site were assessed for their bat roosting potential, all of the buildings were assessed as negligible potential, the building descriptions are provided below.
- **B1:** mobile classroom building; the building located within a playground to the north-west of the site had a green plastic coating, a flat bitumen felt roof and was overall in good condition. There were some small gaps between the walls and facias however, these were heavily cobwebbed, and due to the texture of the wall it is unlikely bats would be able to utilise this space.
 - **B2:** bandstand; A circular wooden bandstand structure was present within the grassland; this building was open on all sides and had a well-sealed slatted wooden roof which was open inside and no suitable roosting features were identified.
 - **B3:** forest school tent; there was a large timber framed structure within the woodland which was protected from the elements with a green tarpaulin roof. The building was considered unsuitable for roosting bats.

Reptiles

- 4.24 A single record of grass snake was provided by the records centre c.750m north-west of the site. Habitats within the site including composting areas, unmanaged grassland and the woodland, were considered to offer some suitable resting sheltering and egg-laying opportunities for a range of reptile species. There are also incidental records of grass snake within the woodland area and on the access road.

Riparian Mammals

- 4.25 Multiple records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were provided by the local records centre, the closest of which was noted c.400m north of the Site. Habitats within the site were not considered suitable for the species, and the drainage ditch adjacent to the access road was dry at the time of survey. This species group is not considered a constraint to development and is not discussed further in this report.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevant Local Policy

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036

5.1 The current South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036⁷ adopted March 2019 provides details of policies to be considered during the development phase. Particularly relevant to this report;

5.2 Policy 3: Design of New Development states:

“All development will create distinctive places through the use of high quality and inclusive design and layout and, where appropriate, make innovative use of local traditional styles and materials. Design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable. Development proposals will demonstrate how the following issues, where they are relevant to the proposal, will be secured:

...

14. the incorporation of existing hedgerows and trees and the provision of appropriate new landscaping to enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure, flood risk mitigation and urban cooling;”

5.3 And Policy 28: The Natural Environment states:

“A high quality, comprehensive ecological network of interconnected designated sites, sites of nature conservation importance and wildlife-friendly greenspace will be achieved by protecting, enhancing and managing natural assets;

...

3. Addressing gaps in the ecological network: by ensuring that all development proposals shall provide an overall net gain in biodiversity, by:

- i. protecting the biodiversity value of land, buildings and trees (including veteran trees) minimising the fragmentation of habitats;*
- ii. maximising the opportunities for restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats and species of principal importance;*
- iii. incorporating beneficial biodiversity conservation features on buildings, where appropriate; and maximising opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and ecological corridors, including water space; and*
- iv. conserving or enhancing biodiversity or geodiversity conservation features that will provide new habitat and help wildlife to adapt to climate change, and if the development is within a Nature Improvement Area (NIA), contributing to the aims and objectives of the NIA.”*

⁷ South East Lincolnshire (2019). *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036*. Available at: <http://www.southeastlincslocalplan.org/adopted-plan/> [Accessed 16.10.2023].

Statutory and Non-statutory Designated Sites

- 5.4 The degree to which designated sites receive consideration under the planning system and legislative protection depends on the designation itself and its level of importance and value. This ranges from sites of international importance protected by UK legislation that transposes European directives, to protection under UK legislation or national and local planning policy.
- 5.5 No sites of international or national nature conservation importance were identified within 2km of the Site however, the Site does fall within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Surfleet Lows SSSI.
- 5.6 IRZs have been developed by Natural England to provide an initial assessment of the potential risk to statutory designated sites from development proposals. These zones are defined around designated sites which reflect the sensitivity of the site and indicates the types of development within these zones which could potentially have adverse impacts. From reviewing the IRZs that the site falls within on Natural England's MAGIC¹ website, this application does not fit the criteria of a development which may have an adverse impact upon Surfleet Lows SSSI.
- 5.7 There were two LWS identified within 1km of the site, the closest of which was Boston Road Brick Pits LWS which is a Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Reserve c.850m east of the Site. It is not anticipated that the small scale of works proposed at Gosberton House will have a negative impact on the grassland and wetland habitats within the LWS.

Field Survey

Habitats and Flora

- 5.8 The degree to which habitats receive consideration within the planning system relies on a number of mechanisms, including:
- Inclusion within specific policy (e.g. veteran trees, ancient woodland and linear habitats in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), or non-statutory site designation);
 - Identification as a Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) for biodiversity under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 and consequently identification as a Priority Habitat within the local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and a Priority Habitat for England under Biodiversity 2020.
- 5.9 The NPPF considers that development should seek to contribute to a net gain in biodiversity with an emphasis on improving ecological networks and linkages where possible.
- 5.10 The site was dominated by amenity grassland, hardstanding and scattered trees all of which were of limited ecological value and considered common throughout the wider area. The minor loss of grassland habitat would not result in a significant negative effect to biodiversity locally.

Broadleaved Plantation Woodland and Scrub

- 5.11 An area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, and small area of scrub are to be lost to facilitate the proposals, these habitats provide shelter and foraging opportunities, and links to the wider area for a variety of species groups identified during the surveys. Where possible development proposals should seek to provide replacement planting of any trees felled on a two-for-one basis, and incorporate new areas of scrub within the scheme.

Hedgerow

- 5.12 The hedgerow on the western boundary provides connective habitat to the wider area, and the trees within the hedgerow provides structural diversity and additional biodiversity value. The hedgerow was dominated by native species and are therefore classified (together with associated trees) as an HPI under Section 41 of the NERC Act.
- 5.13 It is recommended that the hedgerows is retained and suitably protected during construction activities by adhering to best practice guidance such as BS5837 Trees in Relation to Construction –Recommendations: 2012 for trees and hedges.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.14 The Environment Act 2021 (9th November 2021) was passed and will mandate the need for at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), as calculated using a Biodiversity Metric and a Biodiversity Gain Plan, with habitat used for net gain to be secured for a minimum of 30 years.
- 5.15 Whilst the Act mandates a 10% BNG delivery and for this to be a condition of planning permissions (Part 6 section 98 and Schedule 14 part 1), section 147 (3) states that this will only come into force once the secondary legislation is in place to support this requirement which is anticipated in January 2024.
- 5.16 A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment using Defra Metric 4.0 has been completed for the proposed development based on drawing number GHA-ALA-XX-00-DR-L-9006 (Ares Landscape Architects, 2023). Currently proposals do provide a net gain on Site of 13.62% (1.22 units) for area-based habitats, and a gain of 13.79% (0.10 units) for hedgerows.
- 5.17 However, the trading rules have not been satisfied due to the loss of 0.71 woodland units and 0.12 units of mixed scrub both of which are medium distinctiveness habitats.
- 5.18 Trading rules are automatically calculated within the metric with a view to ensuring that habitats of the highest distinctiveness are not replaced by those of a lower distinctiveness. The landscaping proposals are unable to satisfy the trading rules in respect to woodland or mixed scrub. However, until the secondary legislation detailed above is passed, there is no requirement for these to be satisfied.
- 5.19 Some of the habitats proposed are also within the medium distinctiveness category and provide habitat gains; rural tree planting results in a gain of 1.65 units and other neutral grassland provides 0.70 units. These habitats are of the same distinctiveness as the those being lost and are considered to be more appropriate habitat types considering the nature of the proposed green infrastructure and development proposals.
- 5.20 Therefore, as the scheme can demonstrate a deliverable net gain in biodiversity exceeding the 10% threshold. The development proposals are therefore considered to be in compliance with the NPPF requirements, and ensure the sustainable development objectives of local planning policy are achieved.
- 5.21 In order to ensure that the benefits of the proposed habitat creation are maximised it is recommended that habitats are managed and maintained in accordance with a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

Protected Species

- 5.22 Principal pieces of legislation protecting wild species are Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

The impact that this legislation has on the planning system is outlined in ODPM 06/2005 Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System.

- 5.23 This guidance states that as the presence of protected species is a material consideration in any planning decision, it is essential therefore that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent to which they are affected by proposals, is established prior to planning permission being granted. Furthermore, where protected species are present and proposals may result in harm to the species or its habitat, steps should be taken to ensure the long-term protection of the species, such as through attaching appropriate planning conditions.
- 5.24 In addition to protected species, there are those that are otherwise of conservation merit, such as Species of Principal Importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity under the NERC Act 2006. These are recognised in the NPPF, which advises that when determining planning applications, LPAs should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying a set of principles including:
- *If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided....., adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
 - *Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

Amphibians

- 5.27 Great crested newt are listed as a Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act and are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

- 5.28 Where GCN are present and impacts upon them arising from activities such as development cannot be avoided, a European Protected Species (EPS) Licence from Natural England is required in order to allow proposals to derogate from the legislation (licences cannot be obtained to provide protection against offences under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)).
- 5.29 No records of GCN within 1km of the Site were returned by the local records centre. A search of the MAGIC website returned no records of granted European Protected Species mitigation licences for GCN within 2km (the closest licence application was 4.2km west of the site).
- 5.30 No ponds were present within the site boundary at the time of the survey. A single pond in the grounds of Gosberton House Care Home adjacent to the Site was subject to an HSI assessment, during the survey visit and scored 'good' with a predicted GCN presence of 79%.
- 5.31 Six waterbodies were identified within 500m of the site, along with a series of field drains, none of which were accessed during the initial survey visit.
- 5.32 The site offers suitable terrestrial habitat for foraging and sheltering GCN and during the survey the ecologists were shown a photo of a GCN found on site in February 2021. It is recommended that a full suite of GCN surveys are conducted to inform the proposals and any subsequent necessary mitigation. However, due to the nature of the proposals it is considered that appropriate mitigation could be provided as part of the scheme to ensure the maintenance of the Favourable Conservation Status of this species.

Bats

- 5.33 All species of bats and their roosts are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) making it illegal to deliberately disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Bats are also afforded full legal protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is illegal to recklessly or intentionally kill, injure or take a species of bat or recklessly or intentionally damage or obstruct access to or destroy any place of shelter or protection or disturb any bat whilst they are occupying such a place of shelter or protection. Some bat species are also Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act.
- 5.34 Multiple bat records were provided within 1km of the Site, and a search of MAGIC provided no details of any mitigation licences within 2km of the Site.
- 5.35 None of the structures or trees assessed were considered to offer any suitability for roosting bats. The BCT guidelines⁴ state that buildings and trees with negligible roost suitability do not require any further surveys.
- 5.36 To minimise any potential negative impacts on commuting and foraging bats within the site, it is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is developed in accordance with best practice guidelines (BCT 2023⁸). This would involve limiting light spill from the building wherever possible and only incorporating artificial external lighting where necessary and where located adjacent to retained and created habitats, lights should be installed facing away from the habitats and will be fitted with rear light baffles or cowls to prevent light spill behind them.

⁸ Bat Conservation Trust and ILP (2023). Guidance note 8/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night. Available from: <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released>

- 5.37 To enhance the site for bats, it is recommended that 3-6 bat boxes are installed on some of the larger retained trees, the boxes should be erected between three and four meters and installed on trunks with no surrounding branches or vegetation to allow clear flight paths. Three boxes should be installed on each tree at the same height, facing north, south-east and south-west.

Birds

- 5.38 All birds whilst breeding, their eggs, dependent young and active nests are protected from damage or destruction under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Furthermore, many species are listed as Species of Principal Importance under the NERC Act.
- 5.39 The site provides opportunities for a range of bird species including nesting opportunities in the woodland, scrub and scattered trees. Where required, clearance or heavy pruning of these habitats is unavoidable these works should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive).
- 5.40 Where this is not possible, a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist should be undertaken no more than 48-hours before works are scheduled. If active nests are found, vegetation will be left untouched and suitably buffered from works until all birds have fledged. Specific advice will be provided prior to undertaking the clearance.

Reptiles

- 5.41 The four widespread species of native UK reptiles; grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* receive some protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Only part of sub-section 9(1) and all of sub-section 9(5) apply; which prohibits intentional killing, injuring and trade (i.e. sale, barter, exchange, transporting for sale and advertising to sell or to buy).
- 5.42 Only one reptile record was provided by the local records centre for a grass snake and the site is dominated by amenity grassland and hardstanding which is considered to be largely unsuitable for reptile species. However, the woodland area, compost heaps and scrub habitats provide a more structurally diverse habitat which is more suitable for reptile species. There are also incidental records from school staff of grass snake within the grounds, and on the access road.
- 5.43 However, based upon the small-scale nature of the proposals and the limited suitable habitat to be impacted it is considered that works could be undertaken following precautionary working methods including:
- Vegetation clearance works will be undertaken when reptiles are active, typically March to mid-October and during suitable weather condition with temperatures above 9°C and free from rain.
 - Prior to the commencement of the vegetation clearance works, a hand-search of each area will be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist. Any reptiles found will be moved by the suitably experienced ecologist to an area of retained suitable reptile habitat
 - Following the completion of the hand-search, clearance of tall or dense vegetation of the working areas will be undertaken using a strimmer or brush cutter with all arisings raked and removed from these areas on the same day. All cutting of vegetation will be supervised by a suitably experienced ecologist and undertaken adopting a two-stage process comprising the vegetation cut to an initial height of no less than 200mm at the first cut and to ground-level as part of the second. The two cuts should be undertaken a few hours apart as to allow sufficient time

for any reptiles present to disperse away from the area of works. Following each cut the area would be walked by the supervising ecologist and any reptiles found will be moved to an area of retained suitable reptile habitat away from the works.

- The temporary storage of materials and plant would be located on areas not suitable for reptiles (i.e., on existing areas of hard standing, areas of bare ground).

5.44 The above precautionary measures would ensure that no reptiles were killed or injured as a result of the proposals whilst the enhancement of the retained on-site habitats (including measures recommended below) would ensure the site remained suitable for this species in the long-term.

6.0 RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS

- 6.1 The following recommendations should be considered when designing the scheme;
- New planting should seek to incorporate native tree and shrub species, including fruit and nut-bearing varieties.
 - Native seed mixes that maximise their benefit to biodiversity should be considered for grassland areas, for example, amenity areas could be seeded with a flowering lawn mix. A species-rich native meadow mix should be considered for less formal areas. Any of the mixes used should be managed appropriately to support varied invertebrate communities, which will provide a food source for a wide range of fauna including bats and birds.
 - Inclusion of ecological enhancement features integrated within the development such as bat and bird boxes, insect hotels or log piles and hibernacula.
- 6.2 The above recommendations will provide help to maintain and increase the availability of foraging opportunities for locally present bat and bird species and enhance the overall ecological value of the site.



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Key

-  **Site Boundary**
-  **1km Buffer**
-  **Local Wildlife Site (LWS)**

- 1- Boston Road Brick Pits (LWS)**
- 2- Risegate Eau (LWS)**

Species with 1km Accuracy

Species Within TF2332- Hedgehog

Species Within TF2432- 34 Notable Plant Species

Species within TF2331- Unidentified Bat Spp

Species Within TF2431- Brown Long-eared, Common Toad, Chinese Muntjac, Small Heath, Barn Owl

Species Within TF2230- Brown Long-eared, Natterer's, Pipistrelle Spp, Common Pipistrelle

Species Within TF2430- 11 Notable Plant Species, Bader

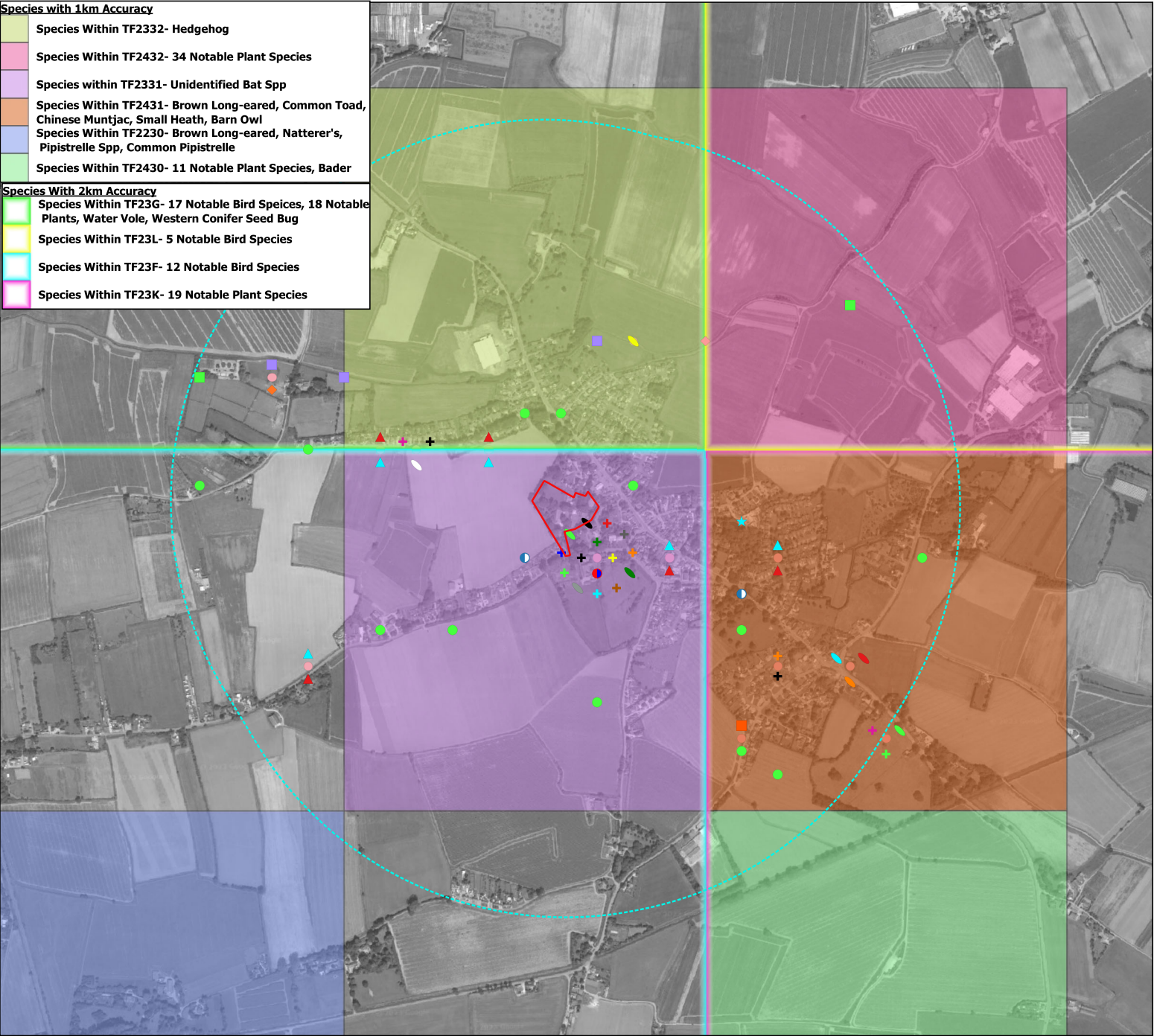
Species With 2km Accuracy

Species Within TF23G- 17 Notable Bird Speices, 18 Notable Plants, Water Vole, Western Conifer Seed Bug

Species Within TF23L- 5 Notable Bird Species

Species Within TF23F- 12 Notable Bird Species

Species Within TF23K- 19 Notable Plant Species



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Key

- 12048- 1km buffer
- Site Boundary

Bats

- Unidentified Bat Spp
- Pipistrelle Spp
- Myotis Spp

Birds

- House Sparrow
- Starling

Herpetofauna

- Common Toad
- Grass Snake

Invasive Non-native Species

- Harlequin Ladybird

Mammals

- Brown Hare
- Water Vole
- Hedgehog

Notable Plants

- Abraham-Isaac-Jacob
- Mind-your-own-business
- Alexanders
- Opium Poppy
- Arum italicum
- Reflexed Stonecrop
- Bluebell
- Snowdrop
- Bristly Oxtongue
- Water Fern
- Common Field-speedwell
- White Dead-nettle
- Greater Celandine
- White Stonecrop
- Green Alkanet
- Winter Aconite
- Honesty
- Yellow-flowered Strawberry
- Ivy-leaved Speedwell
- Ivy-leaved Toadflax

CONFIDENTIAL

fpcr

client

Wates Group Limited

project

Gosberton House School,
Spalding

drawing title

SITE LOCATION AND CONSULTATION PLANS
- SPECIES RESULTS

scale @ A3

1:11000

drawn

EM/LRC

issue date

9/10/2023

drawing / figure number

Figure 2

rev

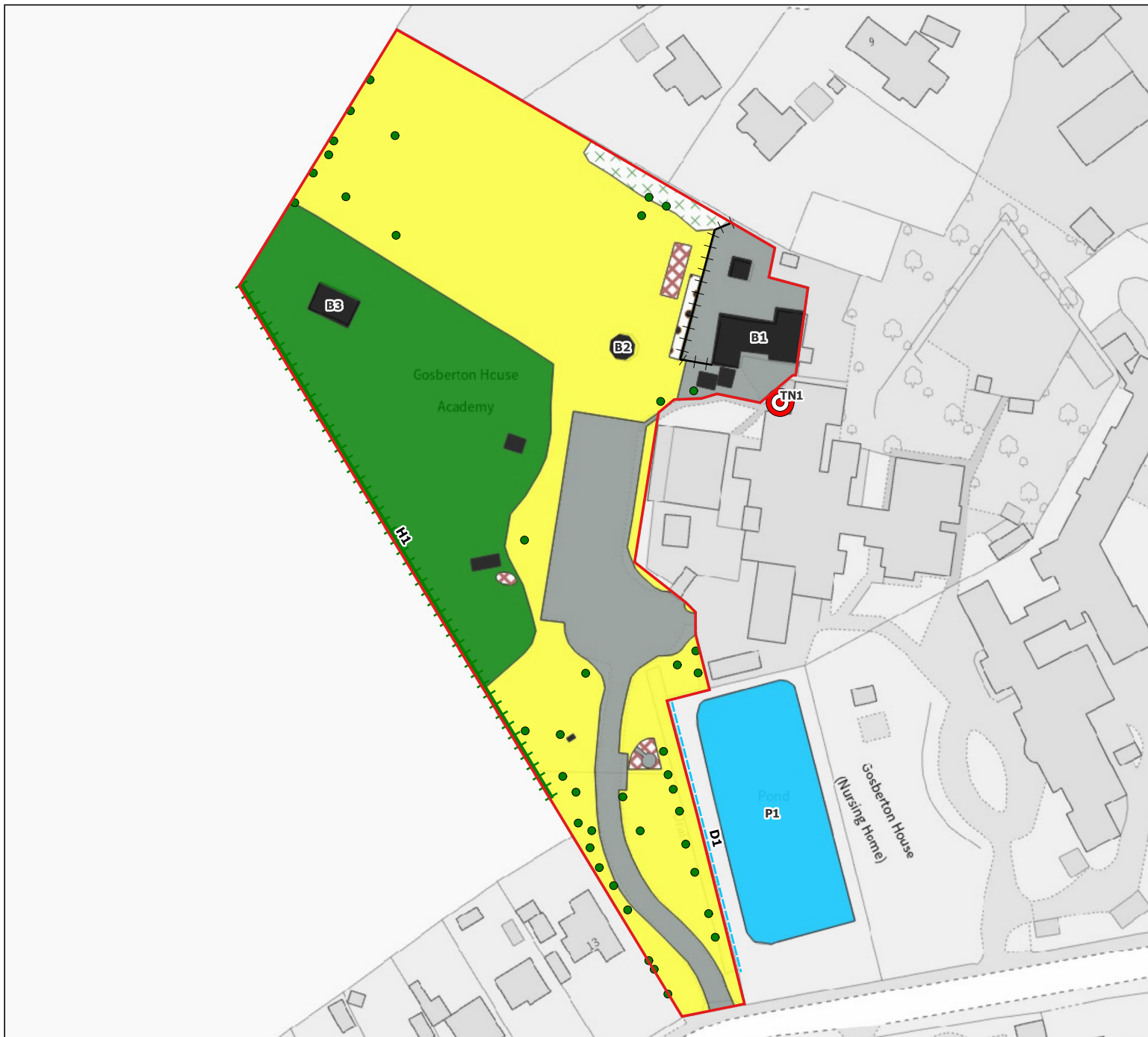
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Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Bare ground
-  Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
-  Buildings (with reference)
-  Hardstanding
-  Amenity grassland
-  Flower bed/planting
-  Scrub
-  Standing water
-  Hedgerow with trees (with reference)
-  Fence
-  Dry ditch (with reference)
-  Target note (with reference)
-  Broadleaved tree



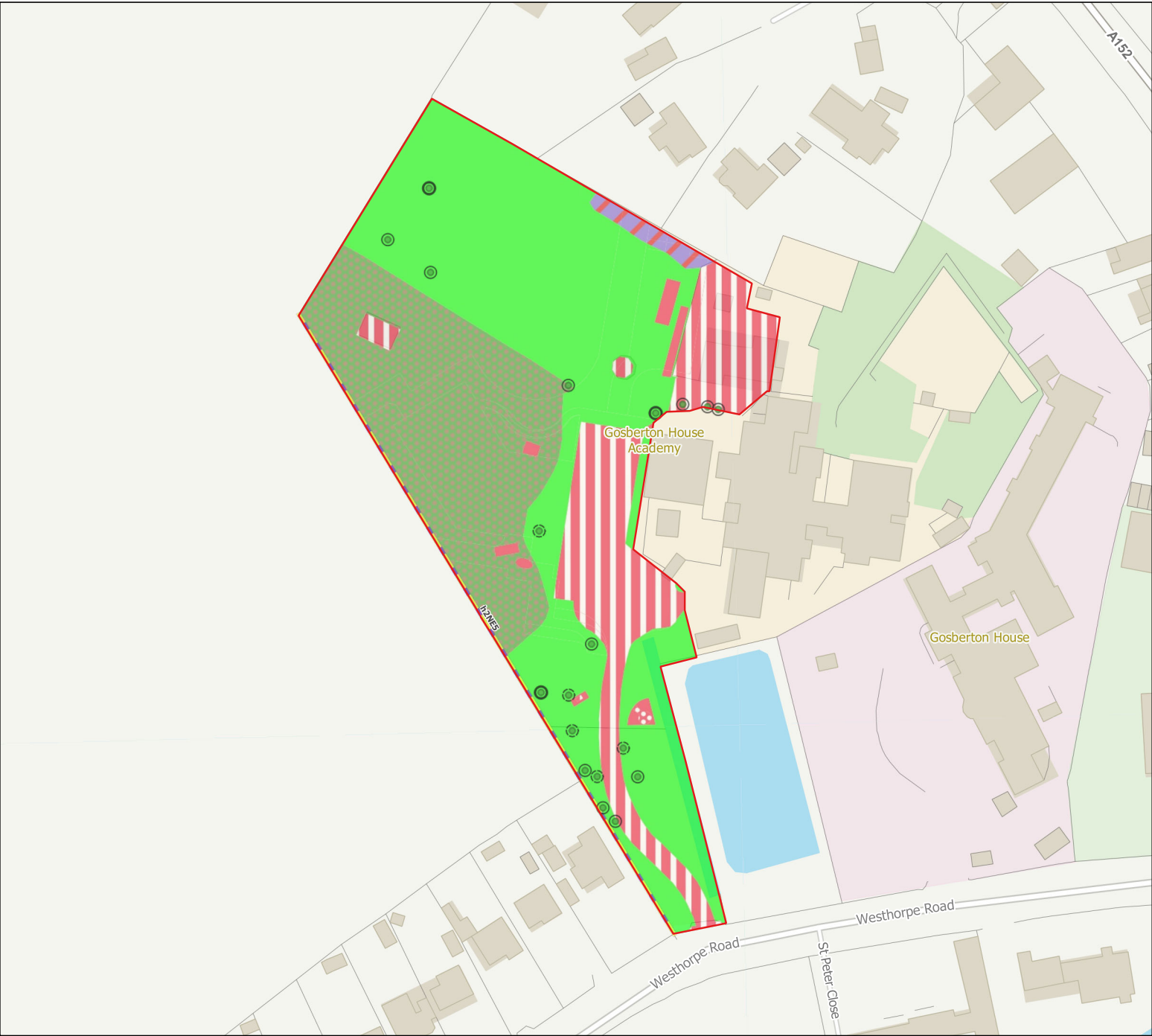


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Key

- Site Boundary
- 250m Buffer
- 500m Buffer
- Pond (with reference)



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Key

Site Boundary

Baseline Habitats

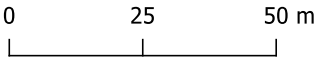
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Ground level planters
- Mixed scrub
- Modified grassland
- Other woodland; broadleaved

Baseline Hedgerows

Native hedgerow

Baseline Trees

- Large Rural Tree
- Medium Rural Tree
- Small Rural Tree





client
Wates Group Limited

project
Gosberton House Academy,
Spalding

drawing title
BASELINE HABITATS

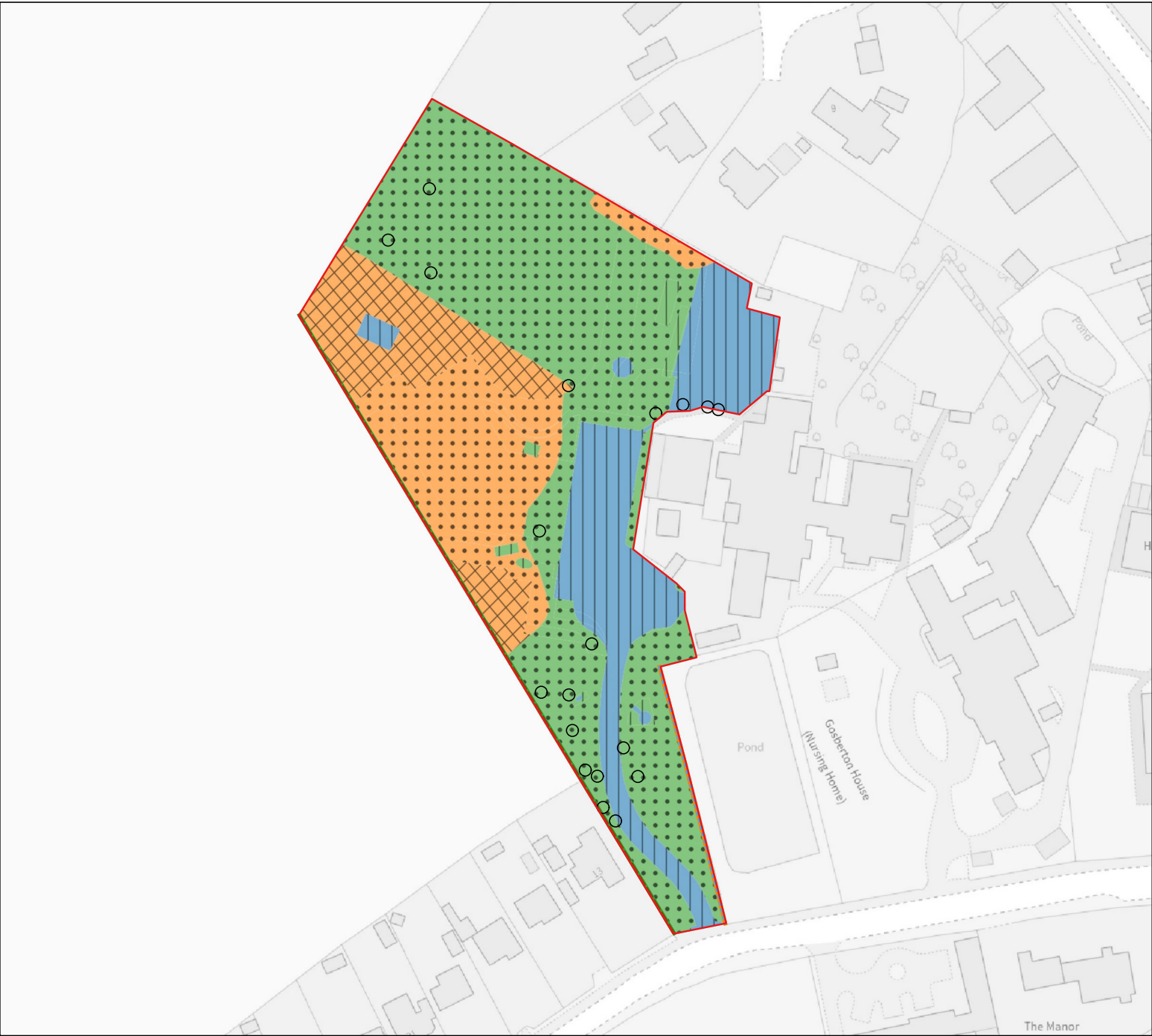
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drawn
LG / LRC

drawing / figure number
Figure 1

issue date
25/10/2023

rev
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Key

 Site Boundary

Baseline Habitat Condition

 Moderate

 Poor

 N/A - Other

 Condition Assessment N/A

Baseline Habitat Distinctiveness

 Medium

 Low

 V.Low

Baseline Linear Watercourse Condition

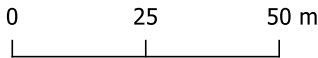
 Poor

Baseline Linear Watercourse Distinctiveness

 Medium

Baseline Tree Condition

 Moderate



Key

 Site Boundary

Habitat Retention

 Retained

 Habitat Retained

Hedgerow Retention

 Retained

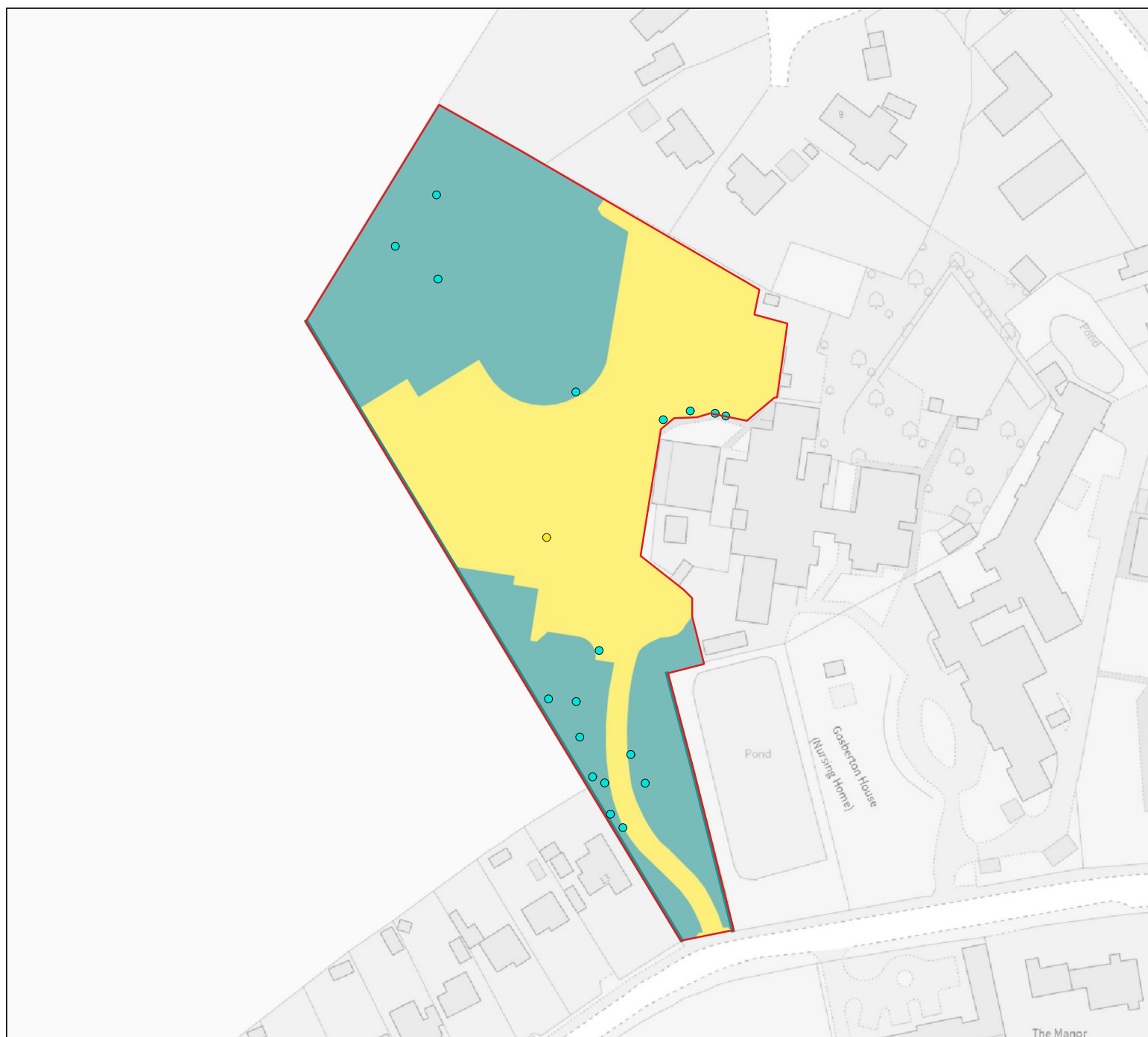
Tree Retention

 Tree Retained

 Tree Lost

Linear Watercourse Retention

 Retained



Key

 Site Boundary

Proposed Habitats

 Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

 Developed land; sealed surface

 Ground level planters

 Introduced shrub

 Modified grassland

 Other neutral grassland

 Other woodland; broadleaved

Proposed Hedgerows

 Native hedgerow

 Species-rich native hedgerow

Proposed Linear Watercourse

 Ditches (r1eNE2)

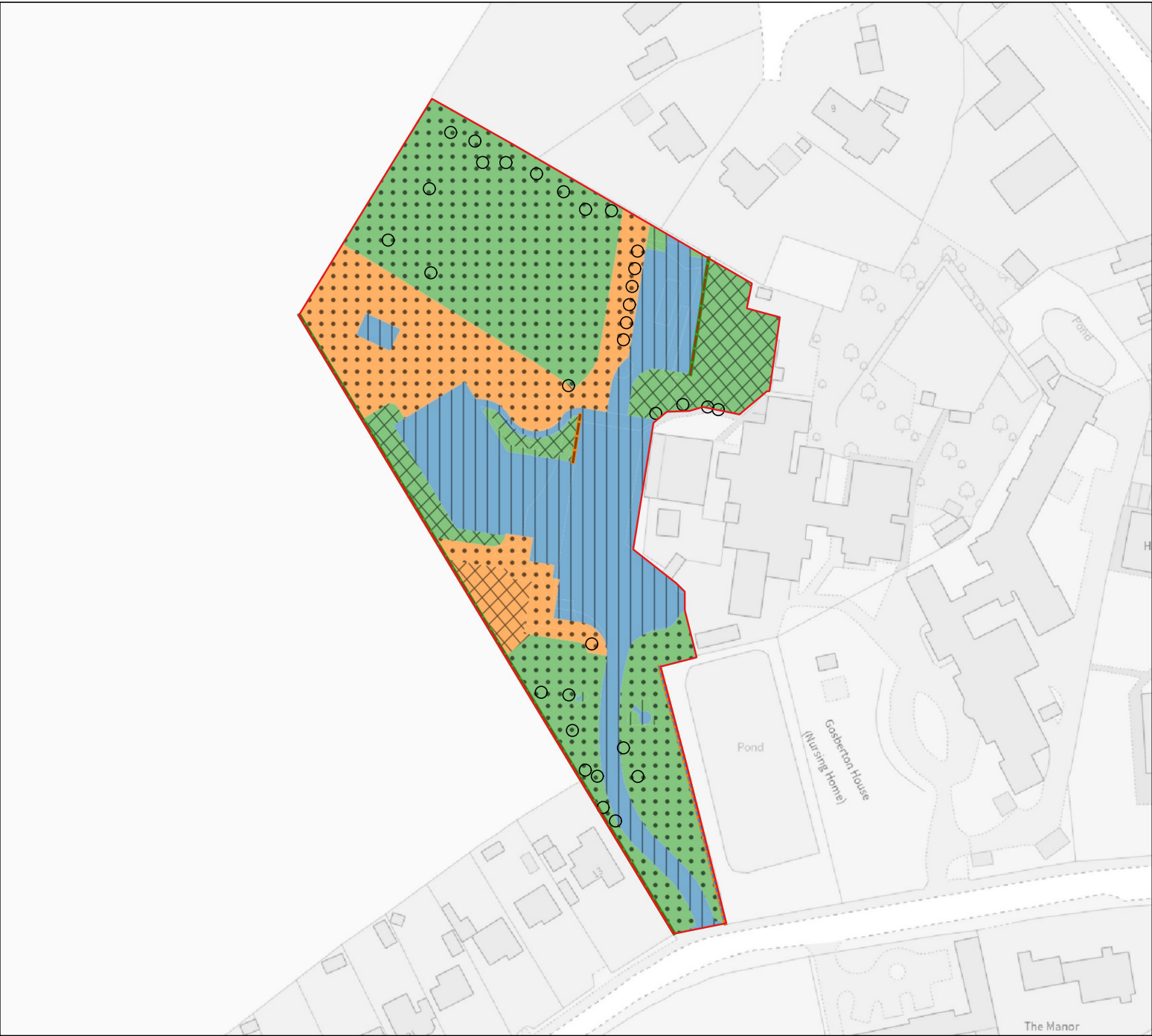
Proposed Trees

 Large Rural Tree

 Medium Rural Tree

 Small Rural Tree





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Key

Site Boundary

Proposed Habitat Condition

Moderate

Poor

N/A - Other

Condition Assessment N/A

Proposed Habitat Distinctiveness

Medium

Low

V.Low

Proposed Hedgerow Condition

Moderate

Proposed Hedgerow Distinctiveness

Medium

Low

Proposed Tree Condition

Moderate

Proposed Linear Watercourse Condition

Poor

Proposed Linear Watercourse Distinctiveness

Medium

