# Land to the North of Hinxton Court, Hinxton

# Protected Species Walkover Survey Report

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1. SUMMARY 2

2. INTRODUCTION 3

3. SITE SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY 5

4. RESULTS AND ASSESSMENT 6

5. CONCLUSIONS 9

6. PHOTOS 10

# 1. Summary

- The proposed development site (from hereon referred to as 'the Site'), is located to the North of Hinxton Court, within the land ownership of Hinxton Grange Estate, Hinxton, Cambs CB10 1RG (Grid ref: TL 50494 46947)

- The client is appealing a decision to refuse planning permission for business units at the Site

- An updating protected species survey was undertaken in October 2025 to assess whether protected or notable species will be impacted by the proposed development, following a previous survey in 2022

- A Site visit survey was undertaken by the author on 7th October 2025

- The Site is predominantly a recently sown arable field, with species-poor grass field margins and a native hedgerow along the eastern boundary

- No evidence of presence, or potentially suitable habitat for protected species was noted, except potential for nesting birds and foraging bats along the eastern Site boundary hedgerow

- With appropriate mitigation to avoid birds nesting in the hedgerow, and wildlife-sensitive external lighting design to prevent bat disturbance, there is predicted to be no impact of the proposed development on protected species

## 2. Introduction

A proposal for the building of new business units surrounding a courtyard, has been refused planning permission. The applicant is appealing this decision. The proposed development plan is shown in Figure 1.

The proposed development site comprises the south-east corner of an existing arable field, with associated grass field margins and a species-poor native hedgerow along the eastern boundary, dividing the Site from a farm track.

The existing hedgerow and grass field margins will be largely retained, although a 5m breach in the hedgerow and margin will be required for vehicle access. Three separate lengths of new native hedgerow planting, totalling approximately 25m, will be planted within the proposed development, along with new tree/orchard planting, as shown in Figure 1.

An ecological site walkover survey was undertaken by Concord Ecology in 2022[1] to inform a previous planning application. Our report presents the methods, results and assessment of a protected and notable species ecology walkover survey, to update the 2022 survey.

I am a suitably qualified ecologist, being a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) for 23 years, a practising ecologist for 34 years, and having a BSc in Zoology and a PhD in Ecology.

[1] Concorde Ecology (2022). Letter Report, 4th July.

**Figure 1. Proposed layout of the business unit development, including planting of new native hedgerows and orchard/trees**

# 3. Site survey and assessment methodology

## 3.1 Walkover Survey

A site visit was made by the author, Dr Denny, on 7th October 2025, to search for evidence of, and potential to support protected and/or notable species presence within and adjacent to the Site. Weather conditions were: 100% cloud, calm, 16°C and dry. Areas up to 40m surrounding the Site were included in the survey. In particular, areas were surveyed for badgers, great crested newts (GCNs), bats, nesting bird and hedgehog evidence/potential habitat using standard survey methods.

## 3.2 Desk Study

A search for existing ecological records within 2km of the Site was made in 2022 by Concord Ecology, requesting data from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre. These data were reviewed for the current assessment. In addition, we searched the 1:10,000 scale OS map for ponds and other waterbodies within 250m of the Site. We also searched from the nearest protected sites notified for bat species, and interrogated aerial images (Google Earth) for nearby existing breaches along the adjacent length of the eastern boundary hedgerow to inform the bat potential for the Site.

# 4. Results and assessment

Most of the site is arable crop and unsuitable for any protected or notable species. The only habitats within the Site with potential to support protected or notable species are the eastern grass margin, the hedgerow and the grass margin of the track. These habitats are largely being retained except where the new vehicle entrance is proposed.

There was no evidence of protected or notable species presence within the Site and survey area.

The only potential protected species issues within the site are nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats using the hedgerow, as describe below. Although it is also considered possible that hedgehogs (a notable species, protected under planning policy rather than legislation) use the Site.

Nesting bird assessment and mitigation: an offence can be avoided through appropriate timing of clearance work (during October-February inclusive, outside the nesting bird season), which will ensure legislative compliance.

Bat foraging and commuting habitat assessment and mitigation: whether foraging and commuting routes for bats are protected is not clearly defined and would be largely dependent on the value of the bat populations using it. The nearest protected site designated for bat interest is Eversden Woods SPA, designated for its barbastelle breeding population. This is over 15km to the west/north-west of the Site, and therefore beyond the normal foraging range for the species (core sustenance zone for barbastelle defined by Bat Conservation Trust is 5-7km). The 2022 data search results returned records for only brown long-eared and common pipistrelle bats within 2km of the Site – both common and widespread species in the UK and Cambridgeshire. Given this, combined with the largely arable landscape surrounding the Site, we do not predict the area around the Site to be of particular importance for bats. The existing eastern hedgerow is already severed in a number of locations along its length, so already compromised as a continuous linear bat commuting feature (see Figure 2). The loss of a 5m length of the existing hedgerow, and associated bat foraging habitat, will be compensated for by the proposed planting.

Elm trees adjacent to (but outside) the south edge of the Site are early-mature with some ivy cover. No potential bat roosting features were noted on these trees during the survey, and they are of an age and size that are unlikely to support such features. However, as they grow and mature, they may provide bat roost features and should be protected from artificial light pollution spilling from the edge of the Site through appropriate design and location of external lighting for the development.

No evidence of badgers was recorded, despite the scrub/woodland belt 15m south of the Site providing suitable habitat. Several mammal paths were recorded through the eastern field margin/hedgerow, which were consistent with characteristics of small deer, and considered likely to be made by muntjac deer. They were not consistent with badger paths, being narrower and less marked on the ground.

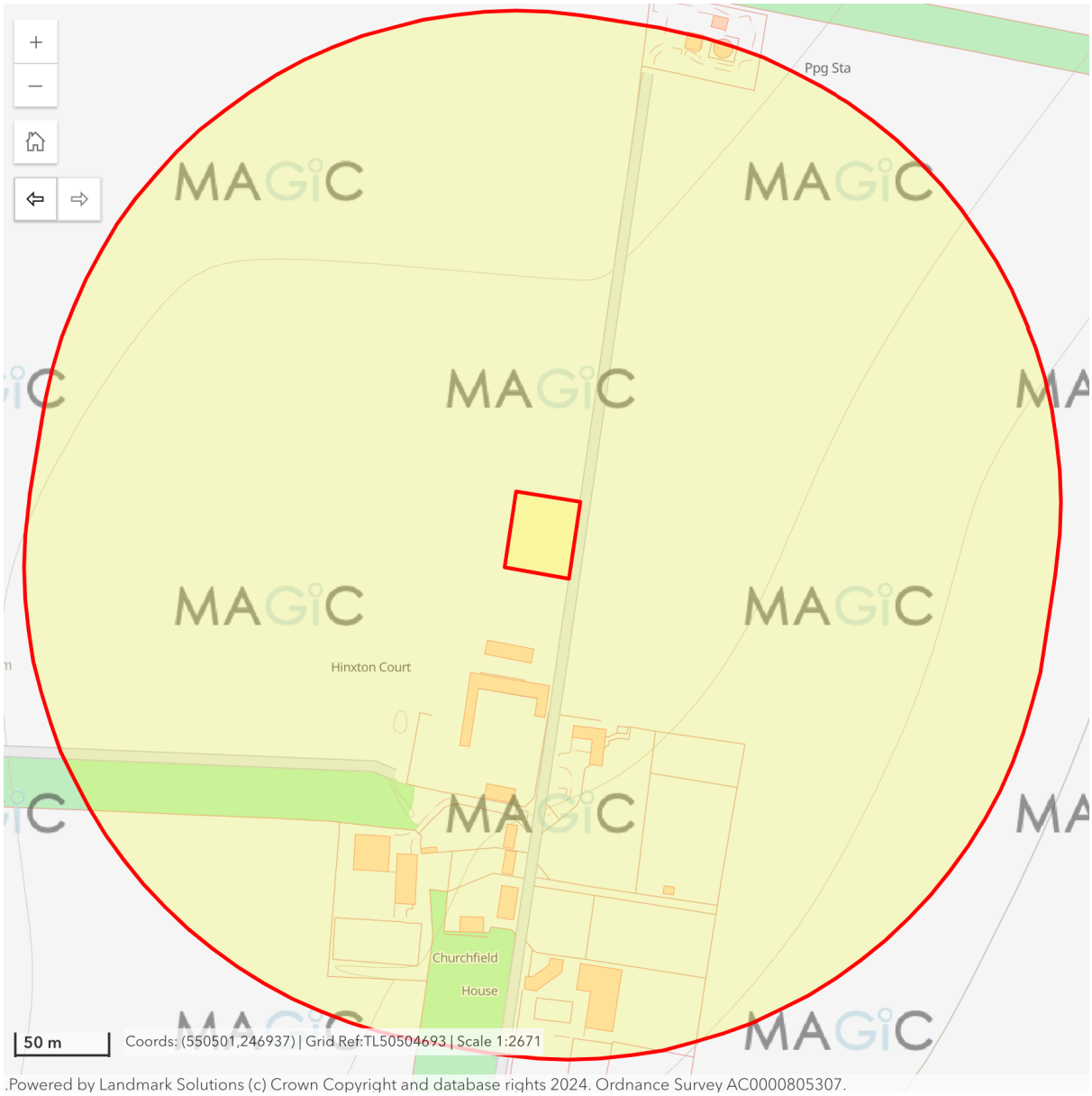
There are no ponds or other waterbodies noted on the OS map within 250m of the Site (Figure 3), and the only potential GCN terrestrial habitat within the Site was the hedgerow and grass margins, which are relatively isolated from other potential GCN habitat. GCN have previously been identified 1.5km from the site but this was on the opposite side of a major road which represents a barrier for this species' dispersal. We therefore consider it highly unlikely this species occurs within the Site.

There is little opportunity for reptiles to occur on the Site, due to the small extent and sub-optimal grassland field margin habitat present, and the isolation of this margin from other suitable habitat within the wider landscape.

Whilst the hedgerow provides some sub-optimal suitability for dormice, the site is not within the known dormouse distribution (supported by the lack of existing local records), and is isolated from other suitable dormouse habitat within the wider landscape
There are no suitable habitats for otter or water vole on, or near to the site

**Figure 2. Google Earth aerial image of the eastern boundary hedgerow and adjacent length, showing 5m section proposed for removal and adjacent existing breaches marked by red arrows**

**Figure 3. OS map taken from DEFRA's MAGIC website, showing no ponds or other waterbodies within 250m (yellow shaded buffer) around the Site (central yellow polygon)**



# 5. Conclusions

In accordance with the 2022 ecological appraisal (Concord Ecology), the proposed development should not adversely affect protected species.

The only habitat within the Site with potential to support protected or notable species (nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats) is the existing hedgerow and grass margin which will be retained except for the new vehicle entrance. Nesting bird mitigation can be achieved through appropriate timing of clearance work to ensure legislative compliance. (The applicant is an ecologist and therefore fully understands these compliance requirements and the purpose of them).

In terms of the hedgerow for foraging and commuting bats, the existing hedgerow is already severed in at least seven places along its length, so already compromised as a continuous linear commuting feature. The planting of new species-rich hedgerows (Figure 1) and infilling existing hedgerow gaps are fundamental to the landscaping/BNG scheme proposed and will provide habitat enhancement for bats and nesting birds within the development site. Roosting and nesting boxes will also be installed, and bat-sensitive lighting design will ensure that any bat roosting features in the surrounding area remain undisturbed by artificial light post-development.

Tracks in field margin were consistent with muntjac rather than badgers, and no evidence of badger presence found within a 30m buffer of the site, including in the more suitable woodland belt to the south of the site, which was searched thoroughly.

Hedgehogs may occur on the Site, but the post-development Site will be more suitable for this notable species.

There is little or no opportunity for other protected species to occur on or near to the Site.

# 6. Photos

Photo 1. Site looking east, with arable field, southern filed margin (right) and eastern hedgerow (back)

Photo 2. Eastern edge of Site looking south, with arable field and eastern grassland margin/hedgerow (left)

Photo 3. Native hedgerow and grass track margin forming eastern Site boundary, looking south

Photo 4. Significant gaps in the eastern boundary hedgerow just north of the Site, looking north

Photo 5. Significant gap in the eastern boundary hedgerow just north of the Site, looking east

Photo 6. Southern field margin and adjacent garden/woodland belt of Hinxton Court to south, looking west

Photo 7. Early mature elm trees in adjacent garden to Hinxton Court, south-east of the Site. Note ivy growth.

Photo 8. Interior of woodland/scrub belt 15m south of the Site, looking north. Note, no badger evidence found in this or any other areas of the Site

Photo 9. Mammal path through eastern field margin and hedgerow, too narrow for badger and showing characteristics of small deer