

KIER CONSTRUCTION

HERONSBRIDGE SCHOOL

ECOLOGY SUMMARY REPORT

AUGUST 2026



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01	P01	Status S3 – Suitable for review and comment	-	26 May 2026	Daniel Jones (Associate Ecologist)	M. WATTS (Director)
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Soltys Brewster Ecology (SBE) were instructed by Kier Construction to prepare an ecological summary report for the proposed Special Educational Needs (SEN) school ('Heronsbridge School') located in Bridgend. The report aims to describe the existing baseline ecological conditions at the proposed site and provide a summary of the targeted ecological survey work undertaken to date, by a combination of AECOM and SBE between 2023 – 2026.
- 1.2 The current report provides a summary of the previous ecological survey work undertaken at the site by AECOM between 2023 – 2025 and an updated Badger walkover survey undertaken by SBE in April 2026. This includes a review of the following documents:
- AECOM (2023) *Heronsbridge School - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and BREEAM Report*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 July 2023
 - AECOM (2024) *Heronsbridge School – Hazel Dormouse (Muscardinus avellanarius) Survey Report*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 January 2024
 - AECOM (2025a) *Heronsbridge School – File Note: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Dormouse Survey Validation and Ground Level Tree Assessment*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 July 2025
 - AECOM (2025b) *Heronsbridge School – Badger Survey File Note*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 July 2025
 - AECOM (2025c) *Heronsbridge School – Invasive Non-Native Plant Species (INNPS) Survey Report and Management Plan*. 60704349 V1.0 August 2025
 - AECOM (2025d) *Heronsbridge School – Bat Activity Report*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 December 2025
- 1.3 The current report also sets out a summary of the recommended avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures considered appropriate to the proposed scheme for identified ecological features at the site (i.e., habitats and protected/priority species). The proposed layout and landscape planting scheme is illustrated on the plans in Appendix I and II.

2.0 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

Methodology

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken by AECOM on 21st March 2023 by two suitability experienced ecologists. The survey followed standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey protocol (JNCC, 2010) and involved a site walkover and preliminary assessment of habitats, land use and ecological features. Habitats present were mapped and assigned to relevant categories using the standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology as described in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010). The abundance of the plant species was recorded using the DAFOR scale (D=Dominant; A=Abundant; F=Frequent; O=Occasional; R=Rare). The Phase 1 Habitat Survey also included a search for any evidence of invasive non-native plant species (INNS) (e.g. Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*) at the site.
- 2.2 The extended element of the survey involved a desk study search as well as assessment of habitats present for their potential to support protected or priority species.

Results

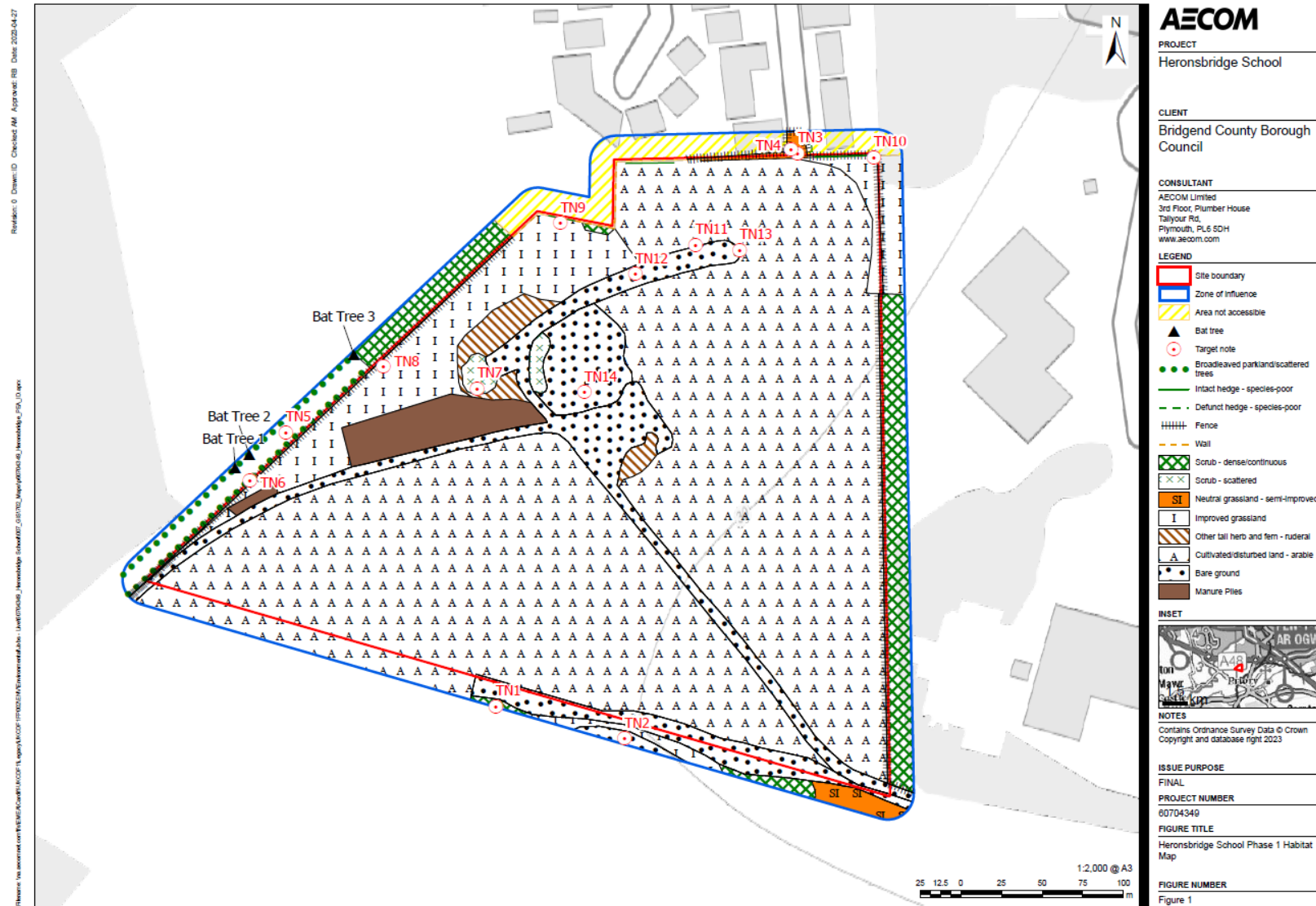
- 2.3 The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey identified that the site comprises of arable land, bare ground, improved grassland, neutral semi-improved grassland, line of trees, dense/continuous scrub and defunct species-poor hedgerow. Of which, hedgerows are listed as priority habitat under Section 7 of the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. A summary of the habitat descriptions is included in Table 2.1 below, with the Phase 1 Habitat Plan shown in Figure 2.1.

Table 2.1: Phase 1 Habitats and Descriptions

Habitat	Description	Priority Habitat
A3.1 - Line of trees	Demarcating the western boundary of the site was a line of trees dominated by coppiced hazel with occasional hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> and elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> . The field layer below the lines of trees consisted of frequent lesser celandine <i>Ficaria verna</i> , primrose <i>Primula vulgaris</i> common bluebell, and occasional hart's-tongue fern <i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i> , soft-shield fern <i>Polystichum setiferum</i> and lords and ladies <i>Arum maculatum</i> .	No
A2.1 - Dense/ continuous scrub	A small strip of bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> dominated scrub south of the cinder block wall in the northwest of the site.	No
A2.2 - Scattered scrub	Two small areas of buddleia <i>Buddleja davidii</i> dominated scattered scrub lie to the west of the site, separated from each other by a farm track.	No
B2.2 - Neutral semi- improved grassland	A thin strip of neutral semi-improved grassland, approximately 2 m wide, bordered part of the northern boundary of the site. The grassland consists of abundant cock's foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> and false oat grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> .	No

B4 - Improved grassland	Improved grassland lay to the northwest of the site, adjacent to the line of trees and to the northeast corner of the site. Species within the northwest improved grassland included abundant creeping bent <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> and perennial rye <i>Lolium perenne</i>; frequent Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>, broadleaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>, and creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>; occasional white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>; and rare soft rush <i>Juncus effusus</i>. Growing over the northwest margins of the northwest improved grassland (varying between 2 x 4 m wide from the line of trees) was ruderal vegetation (for species see 'Tall Ruderal' below). Species in the northeast improved grassland included abundant creeping bent, perennial rye, red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>; frequent Yorkshire fog; and occasional creeping buttercup, common ragwort <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i> and lesser burdock <i>Arctium minus</i>.	No
C1.3 - Tall ruderal	Two areas of tall ruderal vegetation were present in the centre and the northwest of the site. The area in the centre was growing on rocky substrate and was adjacent to bare rocky ground to the north, arable land to the east and south, and the farm track to the west. The area in the northwest of the site was growing on a banded area of soil adjacent to the farm track and partially enclosed an area of scattered scrub. Species within both areas, ranging from occasional to frequent, included common nettle, creeping thistle, bristly ox-tongue <i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>, stinking iris <i>Iris fortidissima</i>, broadleaved dock, common ragwort, curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>, and rosebay willowherb <i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>.	No
J1.1 - Arable	Arable land dominated the site and consisted of planted rows of Italian rye <i>Lolium multiflorum</i>.	No
J2.1.2 - Intact species-poor hedgerow	There are three intact hedges (species poor) on the boundaries of the site. The first hedge demarcates part of the northwest of the Site from a private garden and is dominated by hazel and beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>. The second hedge demarcates part of the north of the site from a private garden and contains frequent western red cedar <i>Thuja plicata</i>, beech and a <i>Lonicera</i> species. The third hedge demarcates part of the northeast of the site, in conjunction with a wooden fence, from a private garden and is dominated by firethorn <i>Pyracantha</i> sp.	Yes
J4 - Bare ground	A farm track, approximately 3 m wide, ran from the southwest corner of the site to its centre and then split to run to the southeast corner and towards the northeast corner. The track had a base of gravel rich concrete, the majority of which was coated with a layer of thick mud. The section of the track running to the northeast corner had scattered perennial ephemeral vegetation over it. Perennial ephemeral species, all occasional to frequent, included self-heal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>, common field speedwell <i>Veronica persica</i>, wild carrot <i>Daucus carota</i>, curled dock, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>, a willow herb species <i>Epilobium</i> sp., a forget-me-not species <i>Myosotis</i> sp, a knapweed species <i>Centaurea</i> sp, perennial rye grass, dwarf thistle <i>Cirsium acaule</i>, common ragwort, Yorkshire fog, common nettle, broadleaved dock, cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i>, smooth sowthistle <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>, bristly ox tongue, and a burdock species <i>Arctium</i> sp.. Moss was abundant. North of the centre of the track was bare soil with perennial ephemeral vegetation scattered across it. Perennial ephemeral species included occasional willowherb species, common ragwort, curled dock, common chickweed <i>Stellaria media</i>, wild carrot, annual meadow grass <i>Poa annua</i> and spear thistle. Vehicle tracks were present. Towards the south of this area, the ground substrate became rockier.	No

Figure 2.1: Phase 1 Habitat Plan (AECOM, 2023)



3.0 BADGER

Methodology

- 3.1 A walkover survey for badger activity was undertaken by AECOM on 29th April 2025 by a suitably experienced ecologist during suitable weather conditions. The walkover survey included a search for any evidence of badger presence at the site and within a 30m buffer of the site boundary. Potential badger evidence includes; setts, latrines, footprints, guard hairs, claw marks, snuffle-holes and well-used mammals paths.
- 3.2 Where setts were located the level of activity was noted and entrances were classified as either well-used (WU), partially-used (PU) or dis-used (DU) as described by Harris *et al.* (1989) where:
- Well-used holes (active) = these are clear from any debris or vegetation, are obviously in regular use and may or may not have been recently excavated;
 - Partially-used holes = these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have moss and/or other plants growing in and around the entrance. Partially used holes could be in regular use after a minimal amount of clearance;
 - Dis-used holes = these have not been in use for some time, are partially or completely blocked and cannot be used without a considerable amount of clearance.
- 3.3 The observations at each sett were used to classify the type of sett present, based on the systematic approach as described by Andrews (2013) as set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sett classification criteria (Andrews, 2013)

	Main	Subsidiary	Annexe	Outlier
Conclusive evidence*	Breeding activity apparent (e.g. bedding and play areas) Feb-June; <i>and</i> Permanent occupation (esp. apparent through winter).	Within 15 to 150m of main sett; <i>and</i> Obvious, well-worn paths connected to main sett.	Beyond 50m from main sett; <i>and</i> No obvious, well-worn paths connected to main sett; <i>and</i> Multiple entrances with spoil heaps.	One or two entrances; <i>and</i> Small or absent spoil heaps; <i>and</i> No obvious, well-used paths connected to main sett.
Substantiating evidence	Multiple entrances with large spoil heaps. Central within its territory (normally more than 300m from another group's main sett).		Intermittent (seasonal) use.	Beyond 50m from main sett. Lacking signs of use in winter.

*Conclusive only in combination, otherwise substantiating

- 3.4 An updated badger walkover survey was undertaken by SBE on 17th April 2026 by a suitably experienced ecologist¹. The walkover survey followed the same methodology as set out in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3.

Results

- 3.5 No evidence to indicate the use of the site by badger was found during the April 2025 survey. No setts or other badger field signs were recorded at the site or within a 30m buffer.
- 3.6 Similarly to above, no evidence to indicate the use of the site by badger was found during the updated walkover survey in April 2026. As such, badger are considered likely to be absent from the site. Field signs for other small mammals (e.g., rabbit) were recorded within the site and 30m buffer such as rabbit burrows.

¹ Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)

4.0 BATS

Methodology

Ground-Level Tree Assessment

- 4.1 A ground-level tree assessment (GLTA) was undertaken by AECOM on 14th April 2025. The survey aimed to assess trees located within the site boundary, and within a 15m buffer, for their potential to support roosting bats. The GLTA survey followed best practice bat survey guidelines (BCT, 2023).
- 4.2 Trees within the survey area were inspected from the ground for potential roost features (PRFs) that could be utilised by roosting bats (e.g., dense ivy cover, knot-holes, desiccation fissures). Trees were classified for their suitability to support roosting bats, based on the criteria set out in Table 4.1 and 4.2. In the event that trees could not be assigned a roost suitability category these were recorded as Further Assessment Required (FAR) – these trees would likely require an additional GLTA or tree climbing/aerial PRF inspection to determine the roost suitability and/or likely presence/absence of roosting bats. The location of trees assessed is included in Figure 4.1
- 4.3 An updated GLTA of trees T01 and T02 was undertaken by SBE during the site walkover on 17th April 2026. As above, this comprised of a ground-level inspection of the trees aided by the use of binoculars to identify any PRFs. Trees were assigned categories as described in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1: Roost Suitability Categories (GLTA)

Roost Suitability	Description
None	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present.

Table 4.2: Roost Suitability Categories (Trees)

Roost Suitability	Description
None	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
PRF-I	PRF-I is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF-M is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used as a maternity colony.

Activity Surveys

- 4.4 To establish the bat species present and level of use of the site by foraging/commuting bats, a combination of night-time bat walkover survey (NBW) and automated bat detector surveys were undertaken at the site by AECOM between April – October 2025.

Automated bat detector survey

4.5 The day-time inspection of the site assessed the habitats present as Moderate suitability for foraging/commuting bats (BCT, 2023). As such, automated bat surveys were undertaken at the site once per month between April – October 2025 (see Table 4.3 for deployment dates). A total of 4no. static bat detectors (Anabat Swift units) were deployed at the site for a minimum of 5 consecutive nights per survey session. The location of the static bat detectors are shown on Figure 4.2.

4.6 Bat calls recorded by both automated bat detectors and handheld bat detectors during the field surveys were analysed using Kaleidoscope Pro software. Automatic species identification software was utilised, and 10% of pipistrelle bat calls and noise was subsequently checked by a suitably experienced ecologist. All calls of other species, and calls assigned “no ID”, were manually checked by the ecologist. Following this, 10% of all species checked were subject to a second check by an appropriately experienced ecologist for quality assurance purposes.

Night-time bat walkover survey

4.7 NBW surveys were undertaken once per season (i.e., single transect in spring, summer and autumn). Each survey was undertaken by a team of two surveyors and commenced at sunset and lasted for at least three hours due to the presence of a known lesser horseshoe bat roost in the wider landscape. The NBW survey followed a walked transect around the site boundary with the route designed to ensure all represent habitats at the site were surveyed. A handheld bat detector (Elekon Batlogger M unit) was used to record bat calls during the NBW surveys. Surveyors also made a note of the species present, activity observed, flight direction and height with a time stamp and GPS location where possible. A summary of the survey dates are included in Table 4.3 – a full description of the environmental conditions and limitations are included in the full bat activity report (AECOM, 2025d).

Table 4.3: Bat Survey Schedule

Date	Survey
25 th – 30 th April 2025	Automated bat detector survey
1 st – 6 th May 2025	
18 th – 23 rd June 2025	
7 th – 12 th July 2025	
12 th – 16 th August 2025	
15 th – 19 th September 2025	
9 th – 14 th October 2025	
28 th April 2025	NBW survey (spring)
7 th July 2025	NBW survey (summer)
24 th September 2025	NBW survey (autumn)

Figure 4.1: GLTA Survey Plan (AECOM, 2025)

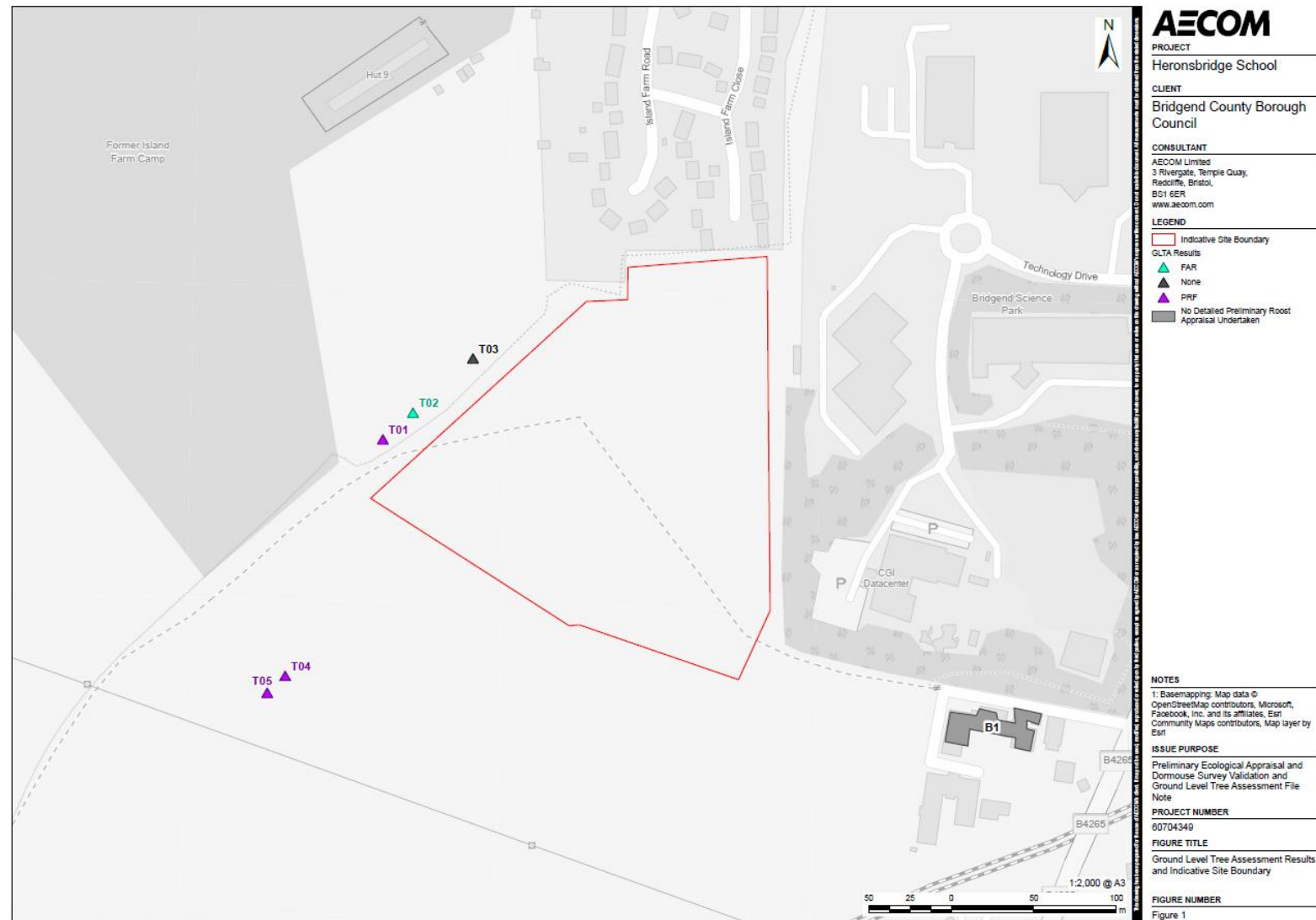


Figure 4.2: Location of automated bat detectors (AECOM, 2025)



Results

Ground-Level Tree Assessment

4.8 The GLTA survey undertaken in April 2025 identified trees T01 and T02 as PRF and FAR, respectively. Trees T04 and T05 are located outside of the site boundary (>30m buffer) and were not considered of ecological relevance to the current proposals. Table 4.4 includes a summary of the tree descriptions.

Table 4.4: GLTA results

Tree #	Tree species	DBH (cm)	Approx. tree height	Description of features	GLTA result (2025)	GLTA result (2026)
T01	Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	200	17	A veteran, potentially ancient, multi-stem ash with significant basal spread and rot features that is located adjacent to the site boundary. At least six woodpecker holes are present on the stems, and there is a large knothole at approximately 10 m that appears to extend into a cavity. The features on this tree are potentially suitable for hibernation, subject to further assessment.	PRF	PRF-M
T02	Oak <i>Quercus sp.</i>	100	15	An oak located adjacent to the site boundary. with no identified suitable PRFs. However, the west face could not be reached to thoroughly look for suitable features due to a barbed wire fence and the lack of agreed access to neighbouring land ownership. Further survey of T02 has therefore been recommended to help address this limitation. Updated GLTA survey in 2026 identified presence of a number of woodpecker holes on the southern elevation.	FAR	PRF-M

4.9 The findings of the additional GLTA survey undertaken in April 2026 were consistent with those described above. However, T02 now supports a number of woodpecker holes on the southern elevation (not previously recorded). Both trees (T01 and T02) were assessed to be of PRF-M potential to support roosting bats.

4.10 Tree T01 shows significant signs of ash dieback disease. In the event that further bat surveys were required to establish the likely presence/absence of roosting bats T01 would not be considered safe for any tree climbing/aerial PRF inspection and would need to be subject to a dusk emergence survey with the use of night-vision aids.

Activity Surveys

Automated bat detector survey

- 4.11 The automated bat detector surveys identified the use of the site by at least 10 different bat species (including two Annex II species). This included Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano Pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*, Nathusius' Pipistrelle *P. nathusii*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Leisler's bat *N. leisleri*, Serotine *Cnephaeus serotinus*, Myotis sp., Brown Long-Eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Lesser Horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and Greater Horseshoe bat *R. ferrumequinum*. The latter of which are both listed as Annex II species.
- 4.12 Overall, passes by Common and Soprano pipistrelle accounted for 84.7% of all bat calls recorded during the automated detector surveys. In addition, 5.6% of passes were identified as Lesser Horseshoe with 0.01% of passes identified as Greater Horseshoe (three passes in total). 'Big bat' species accounted for 5.9% of all passes (4.9% noctule, 0.8% serotine and 0.2% Leisler's). Myotis sp. and brown long-eared accounted for 1.74% and 1.91% of all passes, respectively and Nathusius' pipistrelle accounted for 0.08% of all passes. A summary of the automated bat detector survey results are included in Table 4.5.
- 4.13 Bat survey data was standardised to bat passes per hour to allow for a comparison of the spatial and temporal distribution of bat activity at the site. Bat activity was highest at Static C (located on the western boundary), where an average 44.71 passes/hour were recorded. On average, Static C also recorded the highest passes/hour for Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Serotine, Lesser Horseshoe bat, and Myotis sp. Static A (eastern boundary) recorded the highest passes/hour for Nathusius' Pipistrelle, Greater Horseshoe and Brown Long-Eared bat. Noctule was recorded most frequently at Static B (in the north-west), and Leisler's bat was recorded most frequently at Static D (southeast corner).

Table 4.5: Summary of automated bat detector survey results (2025).

Deployment Month	Total Bat Passes/Species										Total Passes	Species Count
	CPIP	SPIP	NPIP	NOC	LEI	SER	LHS	GHS	BLE	MYO		
April	4,697	1,065	0	57	1	11	230	1	180	86	6,318	9
May	3,367	1170	0	68	6	56	212	0	30	67	4,976	8
June	1,489	339	18	410	5	36	74	0	32	4	2,407	9
July	2,672	1,955	1	126	9	54	346	1	57	39	5,260	10
August	1,216	870	0	165	16	46	193	0	40	99	2,645	8
September	736	2,014	1	478	6	10	385	1	39	131	3,801	10
October	1,006	476	3	41	1	4	94	0	95	93	1,813	9
Total Passes	15,173	7,889	23	1,345	44	217	1,534	3	473	519	27,220	-
Percentage %	56	29	<1	5	<1	1	6	<1	2	2	-	-

Night-time bat walkover survey

- 4.14 The NBW surveys identified the use of the site by at least 5 different bat species including Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown Long-Eared Bat, Myotis sp. and Lesser Horseshoe bat. Overall, Common and Soprano pipistrelle species accounted for 91.2% of all passes identified during the NBW surveys with Lesser Horseshoe bat accounting for 7.4%, Brown Long-Eared bat (0.7%), Noctule (0.5%) and Myotis sp. (0.2%). See Table 4.6 for summary of results.
- 4.15 Detailed plans illustrating the location of bat activity observed is included in the full Bat Activity Report (AECOM, 2025d). In general greater levels of bat activity (commuting and foraging bats) was associated with the treeline attached to the woodland on the western boundary, mature hedgerows, and lines of trees with limited activity associated with the central areas of the site (arable land), scattered scrub and the southern boundary of the site.

Table 4.5: NBW survey results (2025).

Season	Total Bat Passes/Species						Total Passes	Species Count
	CPIP	SPIP	MYO	NOC	BLE	LHS		
Spring	234	115	0	1	3	5	358	5
Summer	82	70	1	2	1	37	193	6
Autumn	12	29	0	0	0	2	43	3
Total Passes	328	214	1	3	4	44	594	-
Percentage %	55	36	<1	<1	<1	7	-	-

Assessing the importance of bat assemblage

- 4.16 As per the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Reason & Wray, 2025), as assessment was undertaken to establish the importance of the bat assemblage recorded at the site. Based on the scoring system in table 3.3 of the Bat Mitigation Guidelines, the site was assessed to be of Regional Importance for commuting and foraging bats (score of 25 out of 41).

5.0 HAZEL DORMOUSE

Methodology

- 5.1 Dormouse presence/absence surveys were conducted by AECOM between June – November 2023 (AECOM, 2025a). A total of 50no. nest survey tubes were deployed on 1st June 2023. Tubes were installed in suitable areas of habitat for dormouse and spaced approx. 10m apart. A plan showing the location of dormouse tubes and survey findings is included in Figure 5.1.
- 5.2 Nest tubes were checked on four occasions between June – November 2023 (see Table 5.1.). The inspection of each tube was undertaken by an NRW dormouse licenced ecologist and assistant. Surveyors noted the presence of any hazel dormouse or field signs (e.g., live sightings, nests) as well as any evidence of other species using the nest tubes, such as wood mouse. The surveys were undertaken as per the standard best practice guidelines at the time of the survey (Bright *et al.*, 2006; Chanin and Woods, 2003).
- 5.3 The survey effort achieved an Index of Probability score of 22, above the minimum recommended score of 20. As such the survey was considered to provide a robust assessment of presence or likely absence of hazel dormouse within the site.

Table 5.1: Dormouse Survey Dates and Index of Probability.

Visit Number	Date	Baseline of Index of Probability
Tubes installed	1 st June 2023	4
1	27 th July 2023	2
No survey visit	August	5
2	28 th September 2023	7
3	26 th October 2023	2
4	23 rd November	2
Total		22

Results

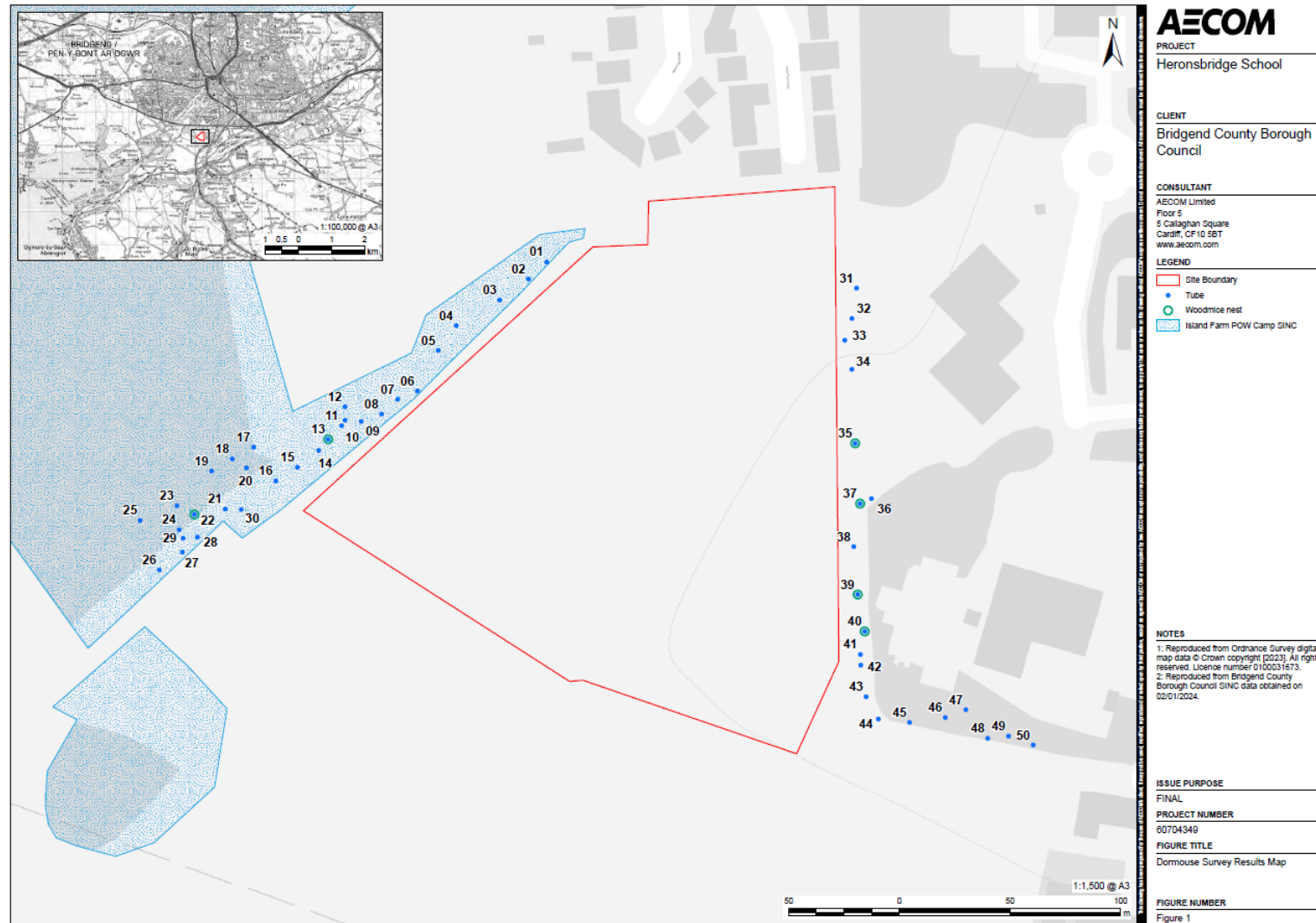
- 5.4 No evidence of hazel dormouse was recorded at the site during the field survey – dormouse is considered likely to be absent from the site.
- 5.5 The survey did identify the use of the nest tubes by other small mammals such as wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*. In addition, two inconclusive mammal nests were noted within the tubes during the visits on 26th October and 23rd November, however, after peer review these were considered unlikely to be dormouse due to the structure of the nest material.

5.6 A summary of the field survey findings are provided in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Hazel dormouse survey results (AECOM, 2023).

Visit Number	Date	Tube number	Results
1	27/07/2023	NIL	NIL
2	28/09/2023	NIL	NIL
3	26/10/2023	B39	Inconclusive small mammal nest
4	23/11/2023	B22	Wood mice nest
4	23/11/2023	B13	Wood mice nest
4	23/11/2023	B35	5 wood mice in nest
4	23/11/2023	B37	4 wood mice in nest
4	23/11/2023	B39	Old wood mice nest
4	23/11/2023	B40	Inconclusive small mammal nest

Figure 5.1: Hazel Dormouse Survey Plan (AECOM, 2023)



6.0 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Methodology

6.1 A site walkover was undertaken by AECOM on 29th April 2025 by an appropriately experienced ecologist and assistant. The aim of the survey visit was to record all invasive non-native plant species (INNPS) within and immediately adjacent to the site (to a 10 m buffer), where accessible. The focus of the assessment was INNPS listed on the following legislation:

- Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Schedule 2 of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019; and
- Invasive Alien Species of Special Concern listed under the Invasive Non-Native Species (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

6.2 Any instances of undesirable INNPS, not-listed above, were also recorded (e.g., Butterfly-Bush *Buddleja davidii*). The location of INNPS were recorded as well as the level of establishment (see Figure 6.1).

Results

6.3 The site visit identified multiple stands of Himalayan Balsam within the site boundary and within a 10m buffer of the red-line – the locations of which are shown on Figure 6.1. The species is listed as an invasive non-native plant species on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) meaning it is an offence to grow or otherwise cause the spread of the species in the wild. A description of each stand is included in Table 6.1 below.

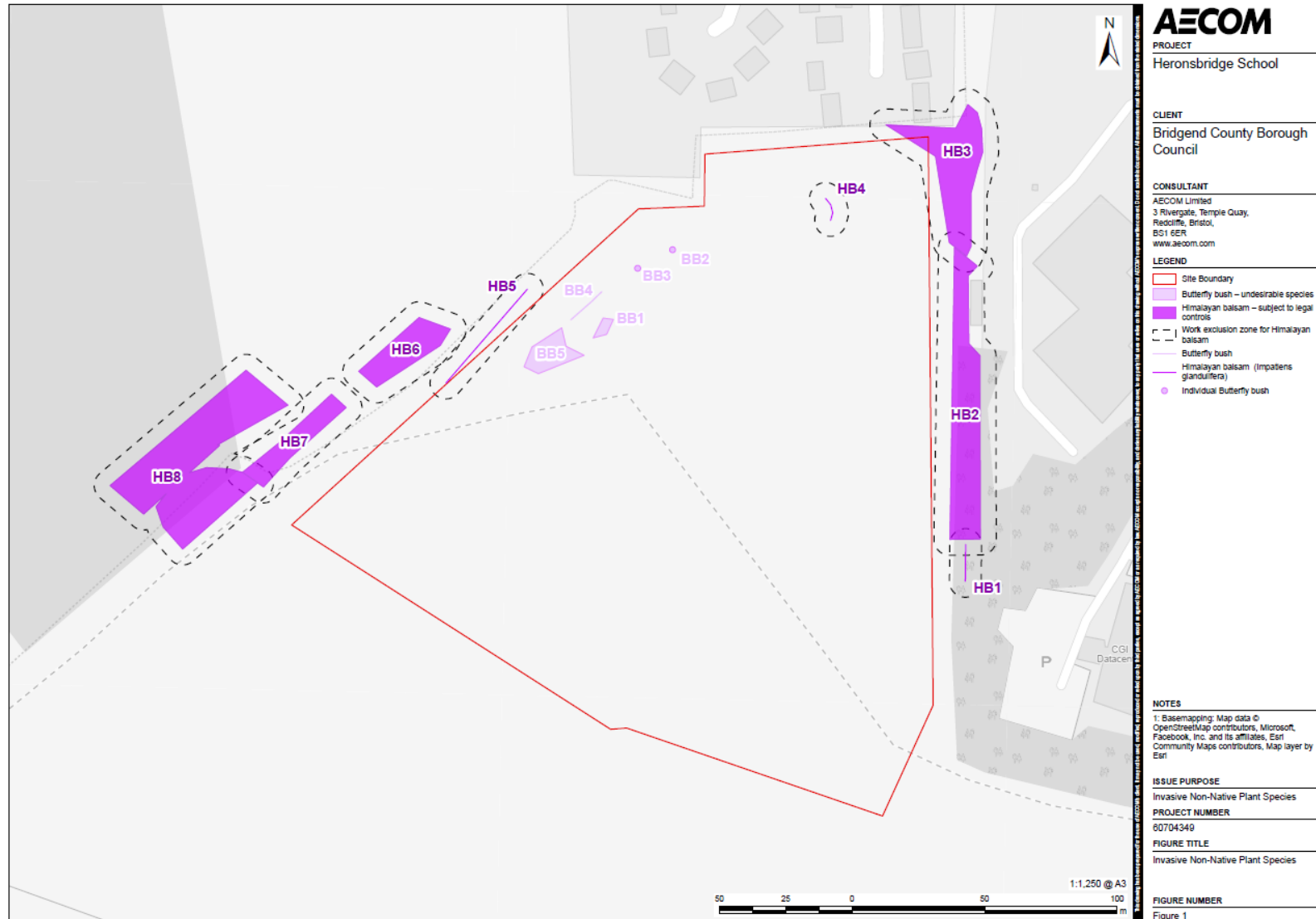
6.4 Other non-native species such as Butterfly-Bush were also recorded at the site, as shown as BB1 – BB4 on the plan in Figure 6.1.

Table 6.1: INNS summary.

INNPS reference (see Figure 6.1)	Description
HB1	Scattered Himalayan balsam approximately one plant recorded every 80-100 cm under hedgerow within nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> and bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.
HB2	Continuous Himalayan balsam located up to 10 m outside of the site, along fence line forming eastern boundary of the site. Plants are dense in places, with more than 50 plants/m ² present. Occasional seedlings are present within the site, on the west of the fence line.
HB3	Very dense area of Himalayan balsam within the arable field margin.
HB4	Several Himalayan balsam plants scattered over an area approximately 1 x 5 m under bramble scrub.

HB5	Scattered Himalayan balsam plants present within the arable field margin in the west of the site.
HB6	Dense Himalayan balsam growing beneath broadleaved trees within 10 m of the Site, forming the west boundary of the site.
HB7	A continuous stand of Himalayan balsam beneath broadleaved trees forming the west site boundary. Approximately 10 plants/m ² .
HB8	A dense carpet of Himalayan balsam within broadleaved woodland adjacent to the west site boundary.

Figure 6.1: Invasive Non-Native Plant Species Plan (AECOM, 2025).



7.0 OTHER DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 7.1 The construction of the access road, included within the eastern boundary of the current application red-line boundary, has been approved as part of the consented development adjacent to the site (Planning Reference: P/20/995/FUL). The development, approved in January 2023, includes the construction of ‘*indoor and outdoor tennis centre, outdoor swimming pool, landscaping, car parking, new access and Active Travel route, new car park and amenity area for the adjacent care home*’. The application was accompanied by targeted survey work for bats (including automated and activity surveys) with the findings used to inform a lighting strategy and soft landscape plan.
- 7.2 The ecological survey work (Ethos, 2022) identified the use of the site by at least 10 different bats species, including both Horseshoe species, consistent with the AECOM survey results (2025d). Mitigation measures to minimise impacts to foraging/commuting bats and maintain existing habitat connectivity/flight paths along the eastern boundary included the retention of this boundary as a dark corridor for bats. The Lighting Plan (Drawing Number: 2002_DLA_XX_ZZ_DR_16_P02 – *Island Farm Tennis Centre - General Lighting - Lux Level Plan*) illustrates that this boundary can be retained as a dark corridor with horizontal lux levels <0.5 lux. The plan is included in Appendix III.
- 7.3 In addition, the Soft Landscape Plan (Drawing Number: 2002_DLA_L_12_P04 – *Island Farm Tennis Centre – Soft Landscape Proposals*) includes proposed buffer planting, grassland seeding (Emorsgate EG22 Strong Lawn Mix) and tree planting (27no. Lime *Tilia cordata*) along the eastern boundary. The buffer plan specification includes a mixture of shrub species such as Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and other native shrubs. A copy of the Soft Landscape Proposals is included in Appendix IV.
- 7.4 The ecological report concluded that based on the measures above (i.e., the retention of the eastern hedgerow as a dark corridor and enhancement of the eastern boundary vegetation) ‘*it is considered that a suitable avoidance strategy will be delivered to avoid any impacts on bats using the site*’ (Ethos, 2022).
- 7.5 The current application does not include any plans to amend the mitigation/enhancement measures for ecological features previously approved/conditioned by application P/20/995/FUL.

8.0 AVOIDANCE, MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

8.1 The following section provides a summary of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures for each ecological feature associated with the proposed site. For a full description of the recommended measures the respective AECOM documents listed in paragraph 1.2 should be consulted.

Badgers

8.2 The site walkover surveys undertaken by AECOM in April 2025 (AECOM, 2025a) and SBE in April 2026 did not identify any evidence to indicate the current use of the site by badger. As such, badger are considered absent from the site.

8.3 However, pre-cautionary measures to minimise impacts to badgers and other small mammals during the construction phase of any future development would still be recommended. This would include the covering of any deep excavations overnight (or a means of escape provided) to minimise the risk of any badger or other mammals becoming traps. Building materials (e.g., pipes) should be stored appropriately overnight in locked containers to prevent access by badgers and other animals. In the event a badger sett was discovered during the proposed works, any works within 30m of the sett should be stopped immediately and NRW or the project ecologist contacted for advice on how to proceed.

Bats

8.4 The combination of automated bat detector survey and night-time bat walkover survey identified the use of the site by at least 10no. different bat species including rarer species such as Leisler's Bat, Serotine and Greater Horseshoe bat. As per the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (2025) the bat assemblage recorded at the site was assessed to be of Regional Importance.

8.5 The bat activity report (AECOM, 2025d) recommends that any permanent or temporary loss of semi-natural habitats at the site should be minimised as far as practicable. It is recommended that the final design of the proposed development should incorporate buffers to existing commuting bat corridors. A 15m no built development buffer to the north-western boundary hedgerow and woodland within Island Farm SINC is proposed. Areas requiring additional lighting should be sited as far away from commuting corridors as possible, to ensure the maintenance of the existing dark corridors.

8.6 A summary of the avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures incorporated into the scheme design include:

- Planting of new native hedgerow along southern boundary to allow continued habitat connectivity to the wider landscape;

- The strengthening of existing retained vegetated boundaries (e.g., north-western woodland boundary to Island Farm SINC) with supplementary native hedgerow planting or a management regime to improve existing habitat connectivity;
- Landscaping within and immediately adjacent to the 15m buffer will incorporate a range of habitats for bats (the soft landscape plans include areas of wildflower grassland, woodland ground cover planting, swale planting, native hedgerow and trees along the north-western boundary);
- No built development is proposed within the 15m bat corridor buffer located along the north-western boundary, which includes the existing hedgerow, mature trees and adjacent woodland at Island Farm SINC. This buffer will be maintained along the entirety of the north-western corridor;
- The lighting scheme of the features in close proximity to the 15m bat corridor buffer (e.g., MUGA, 4G sports pitch, retention basin, residential block) should be designed in such a way that the corridor and boundary does not become functionally fragmented, and the use of additional planting to provide screening should be explored;
- No night-time working proposed during the construction phase of the proposed development;
- If light spill onto the retained linear habitats cannot be avoided this must be limited to low levels due to the presence of horseshoe bats and other light sensitive species. The external lighting plan (floodlighting off) (Drawing Number: *HER-MCP-ZZ-XX-D-E-009002*) indicates that light spill will be minimised to <1 lux (horizontal) along the majority of the buffer, excluding two sections where the horizontal lux will reach 1.01 and 1.21;
- In addition to above, the timing of floodlighting will be controlled during the operational phase of the development. Information received from the school indicates that floodlighting will not be lit past 8pm i.e., outside of the times when bats are likely to be active (foraging/commuting);
- Design of any SuDS features to benefit biodiversity and foraging bats. The storm basin design will feature native wetland grassland seeding to provide habitat for invertebrate prey.

8.7 There are no proposals to amend the mitigation/enhancement measures for bats previously approved/conditioned by application P/20/995/FUL (see Section 7.0).

Hazel Dormouse

8.8 The field surveys did not identify any evidence of Hazel Dormouse at the site, and establish the likely absence of the species from the site. However, there remains a low risk that dormouse could be present within the site boundary in the future due to the continued presence of sub-optimal habitat and historical records within the wider area. As such as precautionary working method statement (PWMS) is recommended during the construction phase of any proposed development to minimise risks of mortality and injury to dormouse (AECOM, 2024).

- 8.9 In the first instance it is recommended that suitable habitat for dormouse is retained, as far as practicable, such as the native tree line and woodland boundary for the north-west boundary of the site.
- 8.10 A precautionary approach to vegetation removal is recommended. Measures included in the PWMS would include:
- Sensitive timing of vegetation works – removal of suitable dormouse habitat should avoid hazel dormice breeding season (June to August). Precautionary approach to works during the hazel dormouse hibernation period (November-March, inclusive).
 - Tool-box talk to be provided to site operatives prior to the proposed works detailing the ecological constraints, legislation, potential impacts to dormouse and methodology to be adopted during the works;
 - Appointment of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) – a licenced dormouse ecologist should be present on site to conduct a hand-search of the vegetation proposed for removal (prior to works) for signs of hazel dormice including hand searches for hibernating dormice and their nests on the ground. The ecologist will remain on site to supervise the removal of all suitable dormouse habitat, or until the risk is perceived to be negligible.
 - A two-step phased process of vegetation removal will be adopted to minimise potential disturbance and injury to hazel dormouse during their hibernation period (November-March, inclusive) during October and November in which they nest within vegetation on the ground.
 - Phase 1: vegetation will be cleared to no lower than 300 mm above ground in winter. No vegetation will be cut to ground level during winter. The remaining vegetation will be hand-search by an ecologist, if previous ground checks were limited by the taller vegetation.
 - Phase 2: the remaining areas of ground- can be cleared, and soil stripping (where required) when hazel dormice are active (March-November, inclusive). Dormouse will be disused from the area by the previous clearance and will be nesting and active within the retained or surrounding scrub/tree canopy off the ground, reducing the risk of injury to dormouse during ground level clearance;
 - In the event a dormouse or dormouse nest is found during the works, all vegetation removal works will be stopped immediately and the appointed ECoW and NRW contacted for advice on how to proceed. In this scenario a licence application to NRW would likely be required to permit the works.
- 8.11 Enhancement measures recommended within the report include the design of green infrastructure to maintain and strengthen connectivity to suitable dormouse habitats at the off-site Island Farm POW SINC, located to the north-west, through new hedgerow creation and supplementary native shrub planting within retained hedgerows and lines of trees. Other measures include the provision (3no.) of dormouse nest boxes within suitable retained habitats (away from disturbance and light spill).

Invasive Species

8.12 The site walkovers identified that Himalayan Balsam is present within the site and within a 10m buffer of the site boundary (locations shown on Figure 6.1). The species is listed as an invasive non-native plant species on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) meaning it is an offence to grow or otherwise cause the spread of the species in the wild. The proposed development will need to control the spread of the species through an appropriate management plan which would include measures² such as contractor exclusion zones, hand/mechanical removal, herbicide treatment and off-site disposal – a summary of the measures recommended within the INNPS report (AECOM, 2025c) are included below:

- Prior to the start of works, site personnel who might come into contact with INNPS should be informed (via a tool-box talk by the appointed ECoW) of their locations and measures to prevent their spread during the construction phase;
- Where stands of Himalayan balsam are present within 6 m of the required works, the stand must be fenced off with signage erected to reduce the risk of further spread. If the Proposed Development will infringe upon the fenced area, control measures will be required through a combination of removal, treatment and biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of spread;
- If ground-breaking works are required within 6 m of Himalayan balsam, any soil down to 30 cm should be treated as contaminated to prevent further spread;
- To reduce the risk of spread, it is recommended that Himalayan balsam is controlled through hand pulling, particularly where stands are located closest to the footprint of the Proposed Development. Where large stands are present, herbicides may be utilised though these should only be supplied and applied by suitably qualified individuals or organisations;
- Developers have a duty of care to ensure that plant material is disposed of appropriately. Where a licensed disposal facility is required, the waste facility should supply evidence of the correct licence. All Himalayan balsam plant material should be disposed of as controlled waste at an appropriately licensed facility. All soil within 6 m of Himalayan balsam, to a depth of 30 cm, should also be treated as controlled waste;
- Cleaning stations must be set up at designated entry/exit points to INNPS demarcated areas. A jet wash should be available for vehicles and brushes and buckets of water should be available for clothing and equipment;
- Any vehicles, equipment, footwear and clothing that may have come into contact with potentially contaminated soils should be inspected and thoroughly cleaned prior to leaving the infested area.

Net-benefit for Biodiversity

² Measures to control INNPS should be informed by a specialised invasive species contractor.

- 8.13 As per the latest Planning Policy for Wales (Edition 12) ‘*all development must deliver a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience from the baseline state (proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed)*’. The Phase 1 habitat survey (AECOM, 2023) identified that the site mainly comprises of arable land and bare ground, considered to be of low ecological importance, with the features of greatest ecological importance such as hedgerows, woodland edge and line of trees located along the site boundaries.
- 8.14 The Proposed Site Plan (Drawing number: *HER-HLM-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-000002*) indicates that the majority of boundary features will be retained with the proposed development focused within the central areas of the site (of lower ecological importance). The Soft Landscape Strategy (Drawing number: *HER-HLM-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-450001*) illustrates new areas of native hedgerow planting along the western and southern site boundary as well as areas of wildflower meadow, swale and tree planting. Given the low ecological importance of the baseline conditions (arable and bare ground) it is anticipated that with the implementation of these habitat features the proposed development will deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. Other localised biodiversity enhancements that will be implemented as part of the design will include bird and bat boxes, insect hotels and reptile hibernaculum/log piles.

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AECOM (2025a) *Heronsbridge School – File Note: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Dormouse Survey Validation and Ground Level Tree Assessment*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 July 2025

AECOM (2025b) *Heronsbridge School – Badger Survey File Note*. Project Number: 60704349 V1.0 July 2025

AECOM (2025c) *Heronsbridge School – Invasive Non-Native Plant Species (INNPS) Survey Report and Management Plan*. 60704349 V1.0 August 2025

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010) *Handbook for Phase I Habitat Survey. A technique for environmental audit*. JNCC, Peterborough.

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APPENDIX I PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT



SITE RED LINE BOUNDARY

IDENTIFIED BAT CORRIDOR - 15M WIDE BUFFER

EXISTING TREES WITH RPA

To be retained and protected

EXISTING TREES GROUP

To be retained and protected

SOFT LANDSCAPE

SPECIMEN TREES

SPECIMEN SHRUB

EXISTING SCRUB

HEDGE

NATIVE HEDGE

ORNAMENTAL HERBACEOUS PLANTING MIX 2

ORNAMENTAL HERBACEOUS PLANTING MIX 1

SWALE/ RAIN GARDEN PLANTING

WILDFLOWER MEADOW PLANTING

AMENITY GRASS

HARD LANDSCAPE

PERMEABLE ASPHALT PAVING - VEHICULAR GRADE

Design by Civil Engineer

NON PERMEABLE ASPHALT PAVING - VEHICULAR GRADE

For residential area - Design by Civil Engineer

PERMEABLE ASPHALT PAVING - SHARED SURFACE

PERMEABLE CONCRETE BLOCK PAVING - CAR PARKING BAYS

Final design by Civil Engineer.

PERMEABLE CONCRETE BLOCK PAVING - FEATURE PAVING

PERMEABLE CONCRETE BLOCK PAVING - SHARED SURFACE

NON PERMEABLE CONCRETE BLOCK PAVING - SHARED SURFACE

POROUS ASPHALT - MUGA

WET POUR SURFACE - EXTERNAL CLASSROOM

RESIN BOUND GRAVEL - LOOP WALK

NO DIG RESIN BOUND GRAVEL - LOOP WALK

PROPOSED RUBBER MULCH

4G SPORTS PITCH

TACTILE PAVING

Tactile Blister

TACTILE PAVING

Corduroy Warning

CONCRETE SURFACE - EXTERNAL STRUCTURES

Design by Engineer

PROPOSED REINFORCED GRASS

STREET FURNITURE

PROPOSED LINEAR BENCH

timber top benches

PROPOSED CURVED BENCH

timber top benches

PICNIC TABLE

Powder coated steel support with timber top

DOOR BARRIERS

door barriers, stainless steel

CYCLE SHELTERS WITH CYCLE STANDS

Fully enclosed bike shelter

RAISED PLANTERS FOR ALLOTMENT

RAISED METAL PLANTER WITH SEATS - ENTRANCE AREA

EXTERNAL STEP SYSTEM

SQUARE PERIMETER BEAM SHADE SAIL

SHADING STRUCTURE - HORTICULTURE AREA

WOODEN WAYMAKER POST SIGNS - LOOP WALK

POSSIBLE MEMORIAL FEATURE LOCATIONS

ELECTRIC CHARGING POINT

Details and Specification to MEP specialist

EXTERNAL BIN

(Location to be confirmed)

NOTES

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PLAY FEATURE

Note:

All play features and play surface to play equipment to comply with BSEN 1176-1177 standard.

PLAY BOULDERS

Smooth glacial boulders to natural play areas

STEPPING LOG

BALANCING BEAMS

FALLEN LOG

de-barked log

GRASS MOUND

P01

PAC APPLICATION

Rev

Description

17/08/2026

BM

DW

By

Chk

Revisions

Suitability

S4

Project

HERONSBRIDGE ALN

Client

HERONSBRIDGE ALN SCHOOL / KIER CONSTRUCTION

Title

PLANNING-PROPOSED SITE PLAN

Drawing No.

HER-HLM-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-050004

Revision

P01

Scale

1 : 500 @A1

Drawn

BM

Date

17/08/2026

Checked

DW

HLM Architects

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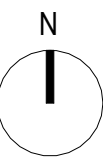
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APPENDIX II LANDSCAPE PLAN



- EXISTING TREES WITH RPA**
To be retained and protected
- EXISTING TREES GROUP**
To be retained and protected
- EXISTING SCRUB/HEDGE**
- SOFT LANDSCAPE**
- SPECIMEN TREES**
- S01 NATIVE HEDGEROW**
- S02a FORMAL HEDGE**
Carpinus betulus
- S02b FORMAL HEDGE**
Sarcococca confusa
- S03 ORNAMENTAL PLANTING MIX A - SHADE MIX**
- S04 ORNAMENTAL PLANTING MIX B - SUNNY MIX**
- S05 ORNAMENTAL PLANTING MIX C - RAIN GARDEN MIX**
- S06 WOODLAND GROUND COVER MIX**
- S07 WILDFLOWER MEADOW**
- S08 SWALE PLANTING**
- S09 AMENITY GRASS**



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Rev	Description	Date	By	Chk
Revisions				Suitability
Project				S4

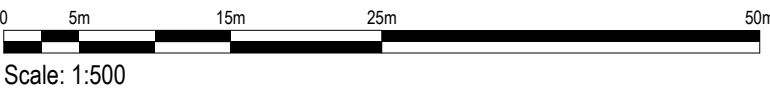
HERONSBRIDGE ALN

Client
**HERONSBRIDGE ALN
SCHOOL / KIER
CONSTRUCTION**

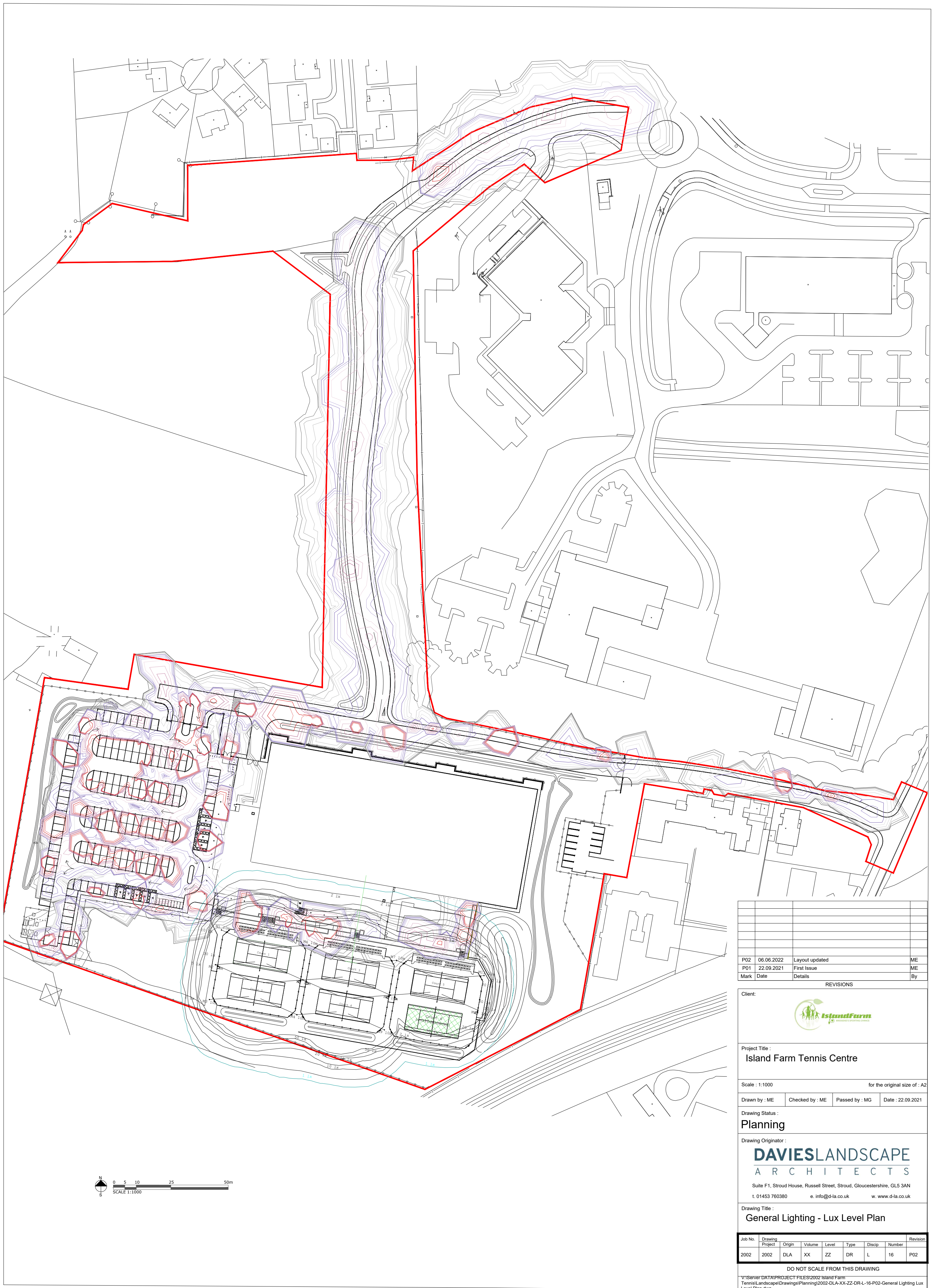
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**PLANNING-SOFT LANDSCAPE
STRATEGY**

Drawing No.	Revision
HER-HLM-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-050030	P01

Scale	Drawn
1 : 500 @A1	EB
Date	Checked
17/08/2026	DW



APPENDIX III ISLAND FARM TENNIS CENTRE – LIGHTING PLAN



P02	06.06.2022	Layout updated	ME
P01	22.09.2021	First Issue	ME
Mark	Date	Details	By

Client:



Project Title :
Island Farm Tennis Centre

Scale : 1:1000 for the original size of : A2

Drawn by : ME	Checked by : ME	Passed by : MG	Date : 22.09.2021
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Drawing Status :

Planning

Drawing Originator :

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Drawing Title :
General Lighting - Lux Level Plan

Job No.	Drawing							Revision
	Project	Origin	Volume	Level	Type	Discip	Number	
2002	2002	DLA	XX	ZZ	DR	L	16	P02

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Level Plan.dwg

APPENDIX IV ISLAND FARM TENNIS CENTRE – SOFT LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS



REVISIONS

Client: _____



Project Title :
Island Farm Tennis Centre

Scale : 1:500 for the original size of : A1

Drawn by : NW	Checked by : MG	Passed by : MG	Date : 19.05.2022
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Consensus Statement:

Planning

Drawing Originator :

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Drawing Title :
Soft Landscape proposals - Sheet 1 of 2

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Job No.	Drawing						Revision	
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