

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Premier inn Reading Gateway, Gateway Proctor End South, Reading RG2 0GG

Client:

Whitbread Group PLC

Survey date:

1st August 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Reading Borough Council. The proposal is described as:

The conversion of the restaurant into hotel rooms

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

Site Location and Context					
The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 71450 69218 and has an area of approximately 0.15ha. The site comprises one building (B1), located within a retail park which has large areas of developed land; sealed surface, introduced shrubs and small scattered trees. The site is located on the southern side of the town of Reading with both retail and industrial units to the north and east. The surrounding landscape is comprised of the M4 motorway to the south, residential dwellings within the town of Reading to the north and the village of Shinfield to the east and arable fields to the south-west. Water bodies can be found nearby, such as Laguna Park (lake) located ~1.6km to the east. Such features likely enhance the area for a variety of species, including bats, amphibians and reptiles.					
Survey Details					
The site survey was undertaken by Beth Ellison-Perrett BSc (Hons) MSc, MRSB, Consultant Ecologist, an ecologist with four years of experience, and holder of Natural England survey licences for bats [2023-11066-CL17-BAT] and great crested newt [2024-11998-CL08-GCN].					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
01/08/2024	25	63	0	4	None
Survey limitations					
It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the searches of historical biological records. A biological records data search has not been undertaken. However, given the location of the site, the nature of the habitats present and the assessed suitability of the site for protected or notable species, it is not anticipated that the purchase of biological records data will add any significant weight or alter the conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report. There were no specific limitations to the survey.					

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plan in appendix 3 and photos in appendix 4). Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
Summary of Survey Findings (UKHab codes used) - Building (u1b5)	Local notable habitats The site does not contain any habitats listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). Habitats within the site are common and widespread and have low ecological value. Additionally, the adjacent habitats are common and widespread (these include developed land; sealed surface, introduced shrubs and small scattered trees). Notable habitats are present within 2km. These include deciduous woodland (located 300m north-west), woodpasture and parkland (located 575m west), ancient woodland (1195m east) and traditional orchards (located 1225m west). On-site habitat descriptions <u>u1b5 – Building</u> There is one building (B1) onsite. B1 is a detached part five-storey, part six-storey building with a flat roof clad in lead flashing and shingles. The building is in excellent condition and will only be affected internally.
Foreseen Impacts	On-site habitats The proposed development will only result in internal changes to the building. No habitats externally will be affected. This is likely to have a minimal to no impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. Notable habitats No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
Recommendations	On-site habitats

	None. Notable habitats None required. Biodiversity net gain The Environment Act (2021) requires all developments (excluding exemptions) to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity. This is mandatory for larger developments and comes into force for smaller developments on 2nd April 2024. The project is unlikely to trigger the requirement for a biodiversity net gain assessment as it falls under one of the exemptions (state exemption e.g. self-build, less than 25m² of habitat being impacted etc), however the Local Planning Authority may still request a net gain assessment under their own local planning policy.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	On-site designations The site is not subject to any designation. Statutory designated sites (within 2km) There is one statutory site within 2km of the site, as detailed below: Pearman's Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) – located 1910m east Pearmans Copse is a small area of ancient woodland, in Lower Earley, covering 2 hectares. It contains ash, hazel, and oak trees. It contains many classic archaeological features, such as boundary banks and ditches. It is surrounded by community woodland within and it links with Dinton Pastures Country Park. Non-statutory designated sites The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site designations

	No impacts foreseen. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site designations None required. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The site contains no notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the licence

	or will relocate to other known roosts sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There are eight EPSLs within a 2km radius of site, with the closest record located 525m east for the destruction of a breeding site and resting place for common pipistrelles. Foraging and commuting habitat There are no suitable habitats onsite for foraging and commuting bats. However, adjacent habitats include introduced shrubs and small scattered trees which could provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats. Roosting habitat Only internal changes are proposed for B1 and there are no trees onsite. No evidence of roosting bats was identified on or within B1. B1 is a detached part five-storey, part six-storey building with a flat roof clad in lead flashing and shingles. The building is in excellent condition. The flat roof is in very good condition with no gaps in which bats could roost. The doors and windows are metal framed and appear in excellent condition with no suitable bat roosting sites. The brickwork around the building is partially rendered and partially clad with metal panelling, both of which appear in excellent condition with no gaps or cracks in which crevice-dwelling bats could roost. There are metal soffits around the building which are in good condition. The parapet walls are also in good condition with no cracks or gaps in which bats could roost. There is no loft space within the building.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Roosting habitat [Buildings] Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within this building and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats in this location as a result of the proposed development. Foraging and commuting habitat The proposed development will not result in the removal of any habitats which could be used by foraging or commuting bats. However, the proposed development will include the use of lighting which could spill on to bat roosting, foraging or commuting habitat and deter bats from using these areas.

	Artificial lighting No new lighting will be installed as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Roosting habitat [Buildings] In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice. Foraging and commuting habitat No further surveys are required. Artificial lighting None required. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of one bat box at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes will be incorporated onto the fabric of the building. They will be suitable for pipistrelles (which have been identified locally through EPSL data). Suitable bat boxes include a Vivara pro Woodstone bat box or similar alternative brand. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Buildings No evidence of nesting birds was identified on or within B1. B1 is deemed to provide negligible habitat value for nesting birds due to a lack of suitable nesting sites or access points. Barn owls The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls.

	Overwintering birds Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Buildings No impacts are anticipated on nesting birds as a result of the proposed development. Barn owls None foreseen. Overwintering birds None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Buildings/trees Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. Barn owls None required. Overwintering birds None required. Suggested biodiversity enhancements

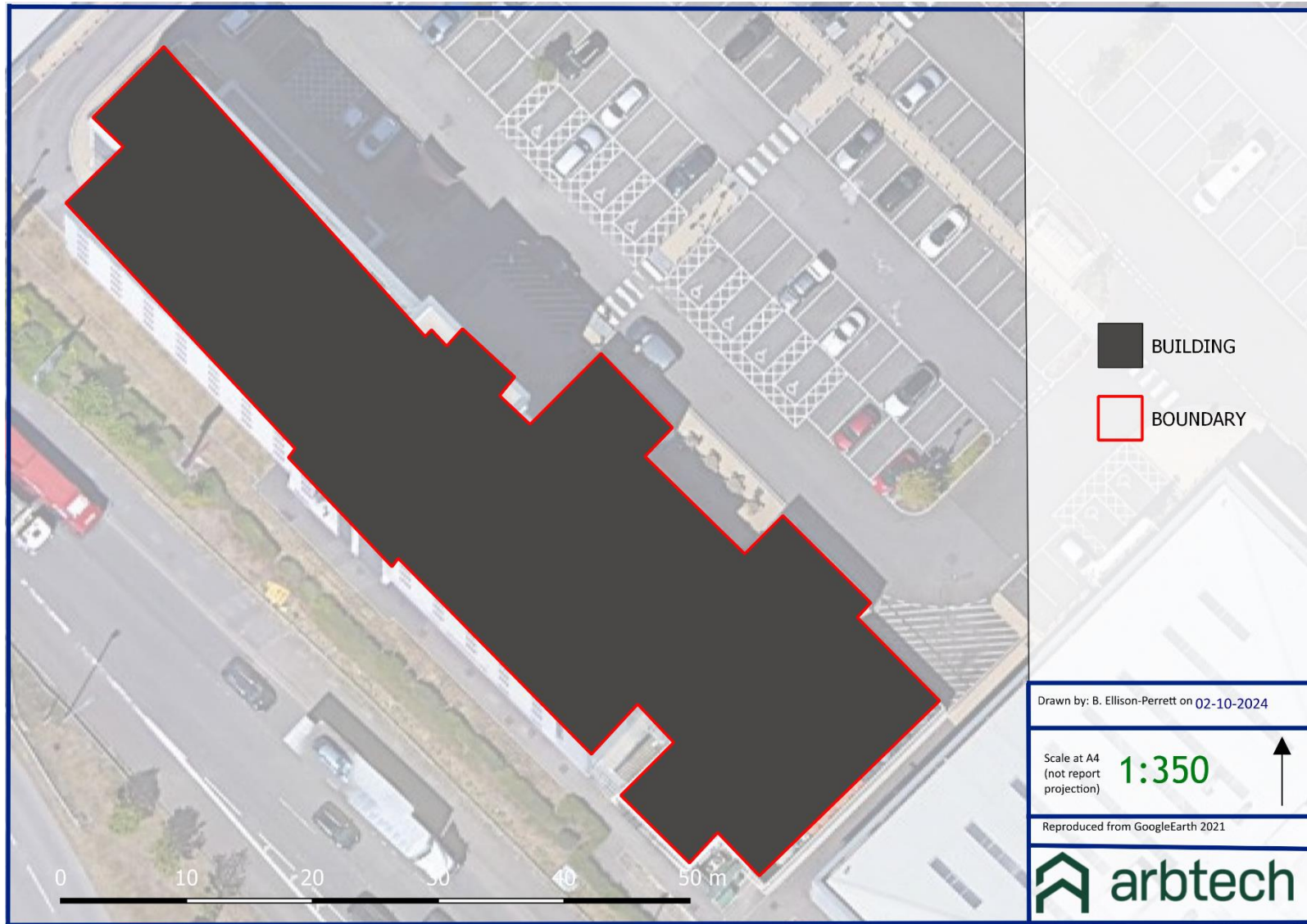
	The installation of a minimum of two bird boxes on retained buildings will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Schwegler No 17 Swift Nest Box, Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace, Woodstone Nest Box or a similar alternative brand. Tree boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole. Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of a building and can be incorporated into the fabric of the building during construction.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data and local records A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability There is no suitable habitat present on site for reptiles due to a lack of habitats such as scrub and rank grassland which would offer refuge for these species. Further, the site is surrounded by urban development (i.e. roads and buildings) which is considered sub-optimal for reptile migration and therefore reptiles are considered unlikely to migrate from any nearby suitable habitats to the development site. As such it is likely that reptiles are absent from the development site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on reptiles as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL and survey data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for great crested newts within 500m of the site. There is, however, one granted EPSL record, located 1.6km north, for the destruction of a resting place for GCN. Great crested newts exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton <i>et al.</i> 2001). As such, the great crested newt metapopulation known to be

	present 1.6km north are not suitably connected to the site. There are no positive class survey licence return or DLL historic survey data (2017 – 2019) were present within 2km of the site. Aquatic habitat suitability (including ponds within 500m) Great crested newts (GCN) exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton et al. 2001). There are no ponds on the site, but a review of aerial imagery (MAGIC and OS Maps) indicates the presence of three ponds within 500m; located 125m south-west (P1), 220m west (P2) and 340m south (P3). All three ponds are located on the opposite side of the A33. This landscape feature is likely to represent a significant barrier to dispersal due to heavy traffic flow and high kerbs along the road, eliminating connectivity to the site for great crested newts. Terrestrial habitat suitability The site provides no suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians given the lack of optimal habitat (i.e. scrub, rank grassland). This is because the site is wholly comprised of a single building and therefore has negligible habitat for amphibians. The adjacent habitats to the site are comprised of hard standing and introduced shrubs within a car park for the adjacent retail park and offer sub-optimal habitat for terrestrial amphibians. Additionally, given the urban nature of the surrounding landscape (i.e. dominated by roads and hard standing which are sub-optimal for amphibians) it is unlikely that amphibians will migrate on to site. Further, there is limited suitable terrestrial habitat across the wider landscape reducing the likelihood of amphibians being present on site and across the surrounding areas.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will only result in internal changes to the building. No habitats externally will be affected. Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds within 500m of the site, the presence of GCN on-site is considered unlikely and therefore impacts to amphibians as a result of the proposed development are deemed to be acceptably low.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No badger setts were noted on site or within a 30m radius of the site. The site is considered unsuitable for badgers given the lack of suitable sett excavation areas/ground. Further, there is limited suitable badger foraging habitat on site given the lack of fruiting trees/scrub. The site

	is also surrounding by urban development (i.e. roads and buildings), which is sub-optimal habitat therefore reducing the likelihood of badgers being present within the surrounding area of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will only result in internal changes to the building. No impacts are anticipated on badgers as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for otters or water voles within 2km of the site. There are no water courses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability No evidence of dormice was found within the site. It is not anticipated that dormice are present on the site due to the lack of suitable habitats present. For isolated habitats in the UK, research indicates that dormice require 20ha of woodland habitat to support a viable population (Bright et al. 1994). There are no areas of woodland on the site that are big enough (20ha) to support a dormouse population.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None foreseen.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The site is comprised wholly of a single building which has negligible habitat value for hedgehogs. The adjacent habitats to the site are comprised of hard standing and introduced shrubs within a car park for the adjacent retail park and offer sub-optimal habitat for hedgehogs.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will only result in internal changes to the building. No impacts are anticipated on hedgehogs as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.

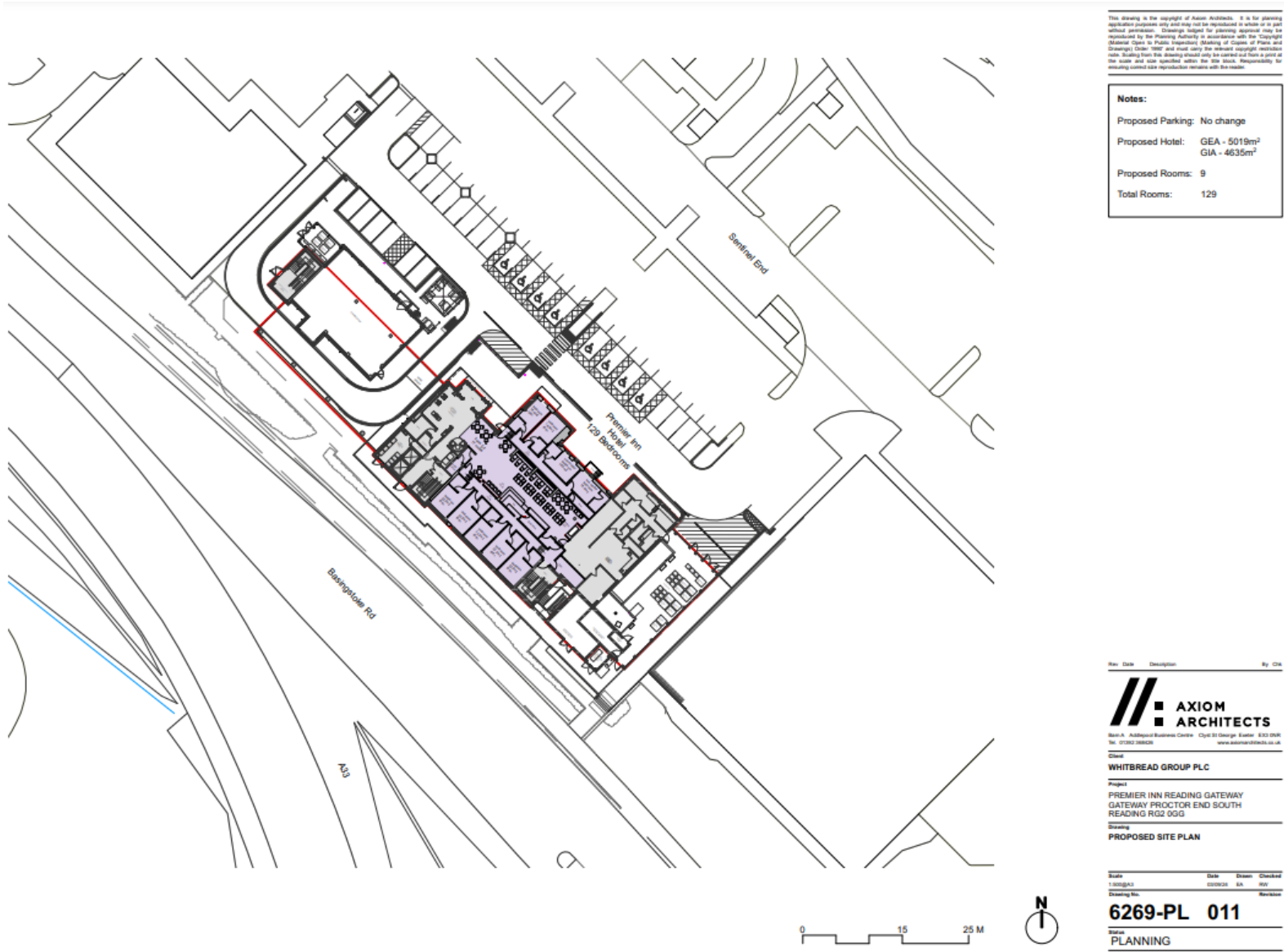
Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map

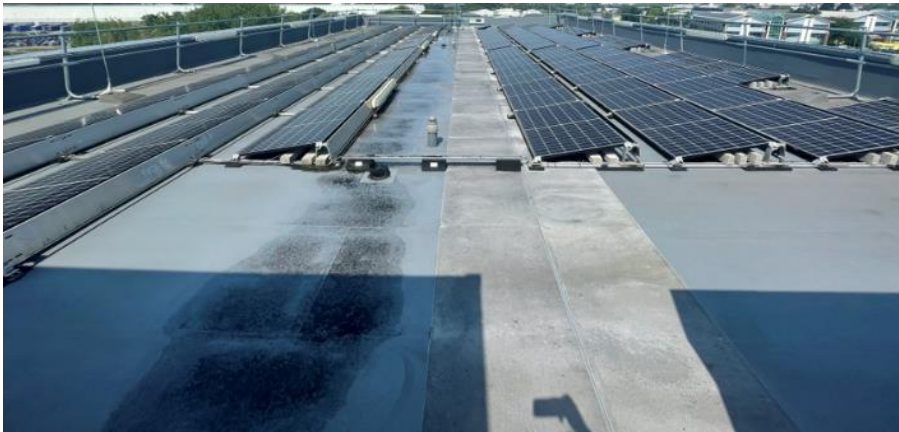


Appendix 3: Proposed plan



Appendix 4: Habitat Photos

Buildings	
Photograph	Description
	Main dwelling (B1) on site. The first picture is the north-eastern and south-eastern elevations. The second picture is the south-eastern and south-western elevations. The third picture is the north-western elevation, and the fourth picture is the roof.



Adjacent habitats	
Photograph	Description



Habitats adjacent to the site, include hard standing, introduced shrubs and small scattered trees within the car park for the adjacent retail park.

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