
**Land to the North and East of Ware
Hertfordshire**

Report for:
Ptarmigan Land Limited
& Leach Homes

INTRODUCTION

Overview

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned to produce an Ecological Constraints & Opportunities Note for the site known as Land to the North and East of Ware. The aim of this document is to evaluate the ecological constraints on the site, which are summarised below and shown on the attached Constraints Plan (Figure 1), along with providing a range of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures.

This assessment has been based on a walk-over survey of the site and surrounding land, where access was possible (completed on Wednesday 23 April 2014) and a desk-top review of readily available baseline data (the Multi-agency website and National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway). In addition, a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land-uses of the site and surrounding land as well as the first edition OS maps to record any historic hedgerows that may be present (data provided by CgMS).

Site Description and Proposals

The site is divided into two parcels of land, located to the north and east of the town of Ware in Hertfordshire. The land to the north of Ware is centred at National Grid Reference: TL 360158 and is bordered by managed farmland to the north, south and east and by the A10 road to the west. The land to the east of Ware is centred at National Grid Reference: TL 373146 and is bordered by managed farmland to the north and east, the B1004 (Widbury Hill) to the south and the town of Ware to the west.

Both sites are dominated by managed farmland, comprising a series of arable fields, with some boundary hedgerows present. Some areas of woodland are also present on the eastern parcel of land. A review of the Google Earth imagery suggests that the land use has largely been unchanged since at least 2000. The proposals are to develop the site for residential use along with associated infrastructure and Public Open Space (both formal and informal).

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

Desk-top

There are no statutory ecological designated sites on or directly adjacent to the site, according to the Multi-agency website, and there are no records of protected or notable species on the site, according to the NBN Gateway. The nearest ecological statutory designated site is Amwell Quarry, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which forms part of the Lee Valley Ramsar site and Special Protection Area (SPA), and is located approximately 660 m to the south of the site. There are two Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). One is located adjacent to the site boundary, Fanhams Hall Meadow LWS, and the other, Wood Lane, Ware LWS part of which is located on the site. In addition, three areas of woodland present on the eastern parcel of land are designated as Deciduous Woodland, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat, and an area of Traditional Orchard (Ref: HERT0236), also a UKBAP Priority Habitat, is present adjacent to the southern boundary of the eastern parcel of land. There is also an area identified as a 'Conservation Walk', to allow public access and has been managed sympathetically for nature conservation purposes.

A number of hedgerows appear to still be present from the first OS maps (1880s) and, therefore, likely to be important under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, this will need to be confirmed during subsequent visits.

Initial Ecological Walk-over Survey

The site is dominated by intensively farmed arable land, with boundary vegetation. Hedgerows formed the majority of the field boundaries, with small woodland areas present. There were a number of drainage ditches which will remain dry for long periods with a few more established watercourses, although these were restricted in size and overall ecological value. There were also a number of ponds recorded on the site and within adjacent habitat.

Species

Badger

Although no large setts were recorded during the initial walk-over, it is important to note that not all of the site was covered and, as badgers are active, setts could still be found during subsequent visits. The site does provide foraging habitat for badgers.

there are no known records of badgers within 2 km of the site, according to the NBN Gateway.

Barn Owls

There are a number of buildings present within the site, particularly the farm buildings which could provide suitable roosting/nesting opportunities for Barn Owls. Further surveys of any buildings scheduled to be demolished will need to be completed to confirm presence/absence of any Barn Owls. In addition there are a number of mature and over-mature trees that could be used by Barn Owls and again further assessment would be required in order to confirm any roosts.

As the site is dominated by intensively farmed land and lacks wide field margins, therefore it does not provide ideal foraging habitat for Barn Owls. However, there are more unmanaged areas of open grassland that do provide some suitable foraging habitat.

There are records of Barn Owls within and to the north of Ware; however the information provided by the NBN Gateway was only available at a 2 km grid square resolution, therefore an accurate determination of the locations of the records could not be made.

Bats

There are a number of buildings present within the site, none of which were surveyed for evidence of bats. Depending upon the proposals further bat surveys on any buildings scheduled to be demolished will need to be completed to confirm presence/absence of any roosts. In addition there are a number of mature and over-mature trees that do have features, such as rot holes and split bark and limbs, that do provide roosting opportunities for bats and again further assessment would be required in order to confirm any roosts.

The majority of the site is quite exposed and dominated by large fields that are intensively farmed, consequently much of the site does not provide good sheltered foraging habitat ideal for bats. However, there are some areas of good foraging habitat in the form of grassland areas with more established boundary hedgerows and pockets of woodland. Therefore the majority of bat activity is likely to be concentrated in these areas.

There are no records of bats on the site itself, according to the NBN Gateway; however, there are records of common and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*) and whiskered (*Myotis mystacinus*) bats within and to the south of Ware.

Dormice

Limited habitat for dormice due to lack of ideal habitat such as established woodlands, interconnecting hedgerows and areas of dense scrub.

There are no known records of dormice within 2 km of the site, according to the NBN Gateway.

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

There are a number of ponds present on the site and within adjacent land, which may support breeding populations of amphibians (shown on the attached plan). Although the terrestrial habitat is dominated by intensively farmed land and therefore does not provide ideal terrestrial habitat for either amphibians or reptiles, there are some areas of less intensively managed grasslands that do provide suitable habitat for herpetofauna.

There are no known records of great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) within 2 km of the site, according to the NBN Gateway. In addition, there are no known records of reptiles on the site itself; however, there is a record of a grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) directly adjacent to the site (NGR: 3614).

Water Voles

Although there are a series of drainage ditches along a number of the hedgerows, these remain dry for long periods and do not provide any habitat for water voles. There are only a few watercourses that have any running water that could provide suitable habitat, but during the initial survey no obvious signs of water vole were recorded. In addition, the watercourses were quite restricted in width with limited bankside vegetation and consequently do not provide ideal habitat for water voles.

There are no records of water voles on the site itself, according to the NBN Gateway; however, there is a record immediately to the south of the site (NGR: TL 3713).

Other Wildlife

Evidence of fox and deer were recorded, along with areas of giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). Giant hogweed is an invasive non-native species listed on Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. In addition, a few common species of bird, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, including Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone corone*), Magpie (*Pica pica*) and Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), were also recorded.

OPPORTUNITIES

Habitats

Retention and enhancement of existing woodlands and woodland belts with supplementary planting and sympathetic management.

Retention and enhancement of established hedgerows, where possible, and/or replacement (species-rich) hedgerows to compensate for those to be lost.

Retention and enhancement of the watercourses with an appropriate buffer zone provided as part of the development proposals (typically 8 m from top of bank).

A range of new habitats could be created as part of the overall landscape proposals, such as wildflower meadows, hedgerows, buffers for the woodland areas, swales and wildlife ponds (as part of SUDS).

Species

Badger

Retention of any badger setts found and create areas of replacement foraging habitat and provision of corridors to allow movement throughout the site and into the surrounding countryside. May involve badger underpasses with badger-proof fencing to prevent increased risk of RTAs.

Barn Owl

Retention and strengthening of existing hedgerows and any mature standards and/or replacement species-rich hedgerows provided. As part of the informal Public Open Space provision on site, create unmanaged

grassland areas, which will provide enhanced foraging habitat for a range of wildlife. Barn Owl boxes provided, if considered necessary. Introduction of a sensitive lighting scheme, with dark corridors provided.

Bats

Retention and strengthening of existing hedgerows and/or replacement species-rich hedgerows provided. A series of bat boxes could be installed on some of the established vegetation to be retained or incorporated into the new build to provide enhanced roosting opportunities. New planting could include species of known value for wildlife and the retention and enhancement of existing watercourses and provision of new waterbodies on the site would improve foraging opportunities. Introduction of a sensitive lighting scheme, with dark corridors provided.

Licence application and proportionate mitigation if any confirmed roosts are found and are to be lost to the proposals.

Breeding Birds

Retention and enhancement of existing woodlands, woodland belts and hedgerows and/or replacement species-rich hedgerows provided along with new habitats created as part of the overall landscape strategy. A series of bird boxes could be installed on some of the established vegetation to be retained or incorporated into the new build to provide enhanced nesting opportunities.

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

Measures to enhance the site for herpetofauna could include: introduction of suitable waterbodies located adjacent to natural habitats, provision of rough grassland/wildflower type habitat, allowing scrub to establish and constructing of hibernacula.

Water Vole

Limited opportunities available due to the lack of connectivity to suitable habitat which would facilitate colonisation of the site. Retention and enhancement of the existing watercourses.

Giant Hogweed

Suitable management regime introduced to treat and eradicate the areas of giant hogweed.

Other wildlife

A range of further enhancement measures could be incorporated into the scheme, such as:

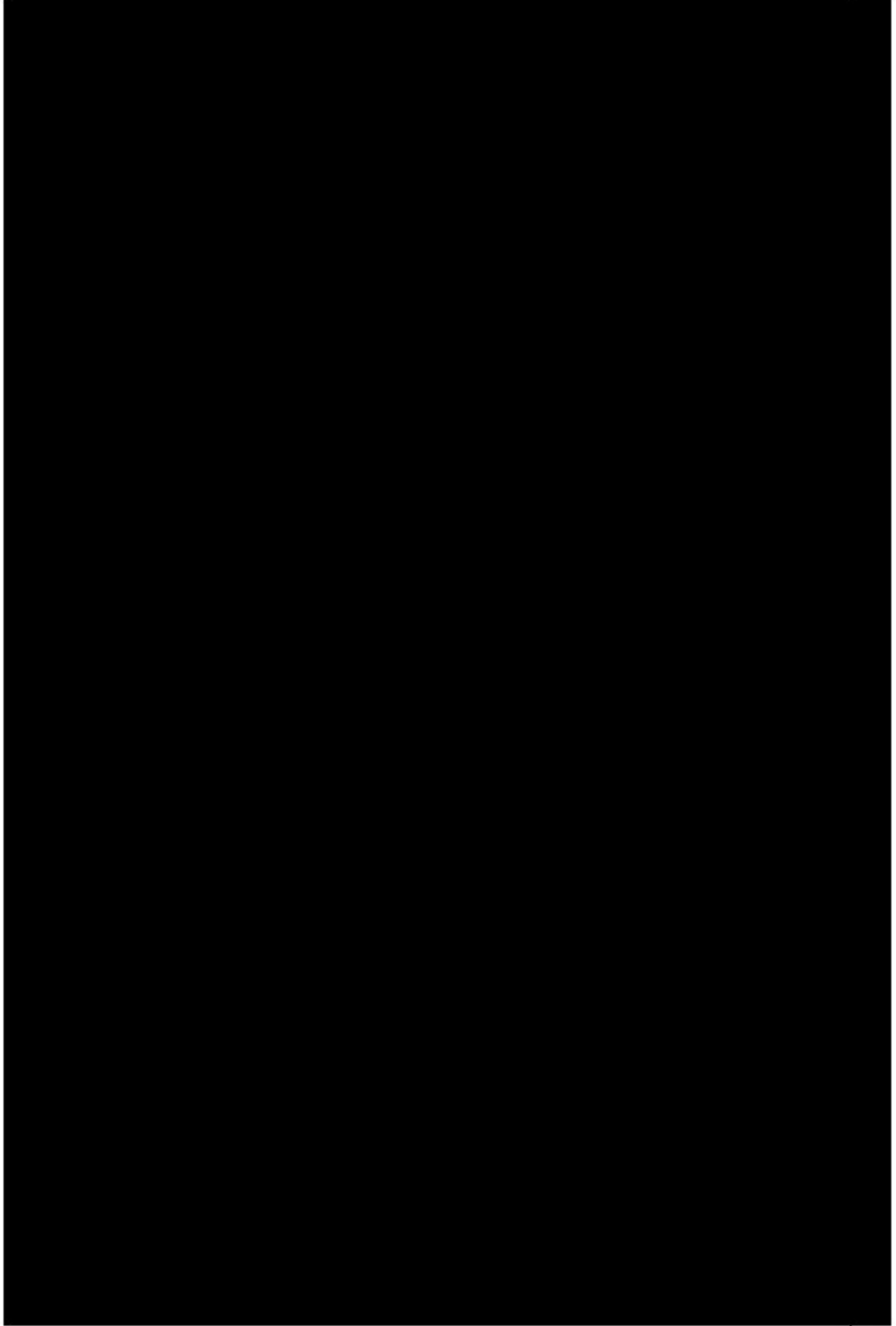
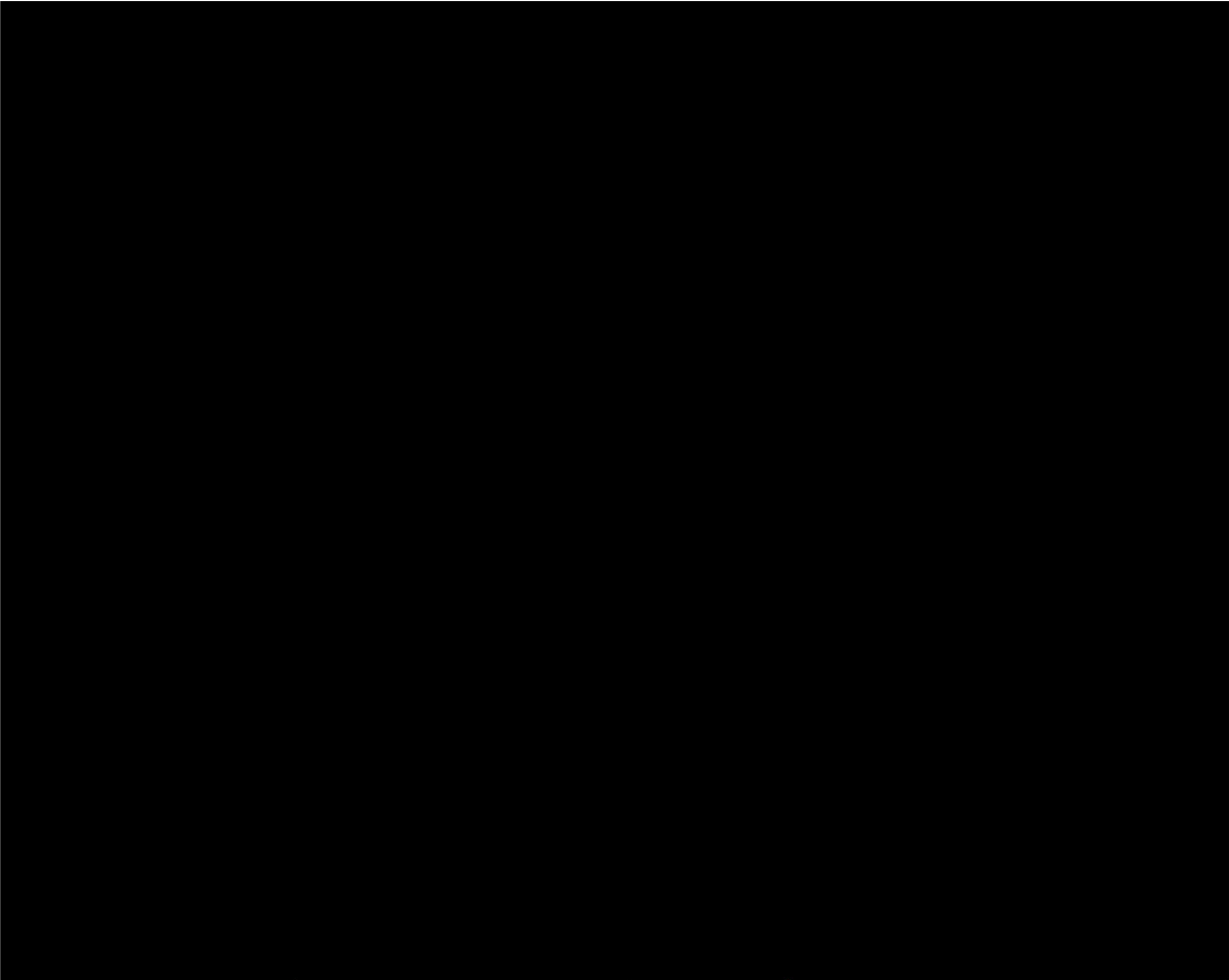
- production of flower-rich verges, headlands and beetle banks;
- roadside fencing, or wildlife tunnels; and
- structured landscape buffers.

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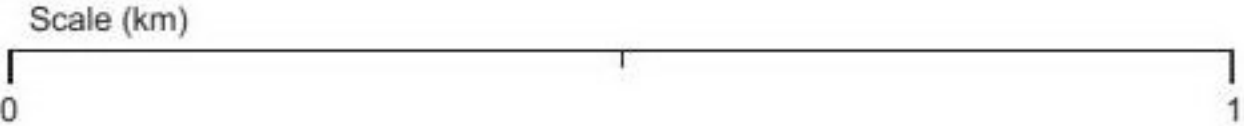
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CONSTRAINTS PLAN



CSS Conservation Walk (Ref: 18/137/0001) Traditional Orchard (Ref: HERT0236) Wood Lane, Ware LWS



Rev.	Details		Drawn	Date
			Chkd.	
PROJECT				
143155 Land to the North and East of Ware				
TITLE				
Constraints Plan				
<div><div><div>Environmental Consultants</div></div><div><div>AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-llp.com www.aae-llp.com</div></div></div>				
Scale	Date	May 2014	Drg No.	Rev.
As shown	Drawn MB	Chkd. ARB	Figure 1	