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**MORNINGSIDE  
8 UXBRIDGE ROAD  
RICKMANSWORTH  
HERTS  
WD3 7AL**

**2008 ECOLOGY REPORT**



**Report July 2008  
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## **Introduction**

An ecological survey was carried out by Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd at Morningside, 8 Uxbridge Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 7AL. The site is situated at central Ordnance Survey grid reference TQ 05475 94360.

The survey was undertaken at the request of Penny Rawson of Hightown Praetorian & Churches Housing Association Ltd based at White Lion House, 70 Queensway, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 5HD, the owners of the property.

Redevelopment of the site is planned and both bats and badgers have been reported to be foraging around the site.

Since the development site may support important habitats, species protected by law or other species of conservation concern, an ecological assessment is necessary to highlight any areas of potential interest to ensure that the proposed works would not have an adverse impact on any important wildlife in the area.

Any impact identified would require mitigation proposals to be put forward to ensure that species of conservation concern in the area are safeguarded and maintained at a favourable conservation status.

Without this information, the potential developer would be unable to demonstrate due diligence in their responsibility with reference both to legal protection and information required in support of a planning application.

The survey included a phase one habitat survey and general assessment for protected species with a detailed daytime survey for any presence of badgers and bats.

The main objectives of the survey at Morningside, 8 Uxbridge Road Rickmansworth were therefore to:

- Assess the habitats and ecology of the area and evaluate the ecological importance of the site within the local area.
- Assess the potential of the site generally to support protected species or any other species that may act as a constraint on development.
- Determine any use of the building by bats
- Determine any use of the grounds by badgers
- Evaluate any impact of the development on the habitats and protected species within the local area.
- Produce a strategy for avoiding, mitigating and compensating for any potential impacts identified.



## Planning and Legislative Context

The Town and Country Planning (Applications) Regulations 1988 require that sufficient information is provided with the submission of a planning application to enable the application to be determined (Regulation 3).

The National nature conservation policy relevant to development is Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005. PPS9 details national policies regarding how biodiversity and geological features of conservation interest are to be protected through the planning system. One of the key principles of PPS9 is that all plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, with the intention that harm to important ecological resources must be prevented.

PPS9 pays particular attention to the protection of any designated sites, stating that development will not normally be granted on land within or outside a SSSI (Site of Special or Scientific Interest) which is considered likely to have an adverse impact on that site's features of interest.

Section 99 of the ODPM Circular 06/2005, which accompanies PPS9, also states that: *'it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by a proposed development, is established before planning permission is granted otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision'*.

The main piece of wildlife legislation in the UK is the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended). This Act was significantly strengthened by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) introduced in 2000. The CROW Act introduces a statutory duty for government to promote steps to further the conservation of habitats and species listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

All wild birds in the UK, their nest and eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended). Under this legislation, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird or egg, or take, damage / destroy the nest while in use or being built.

Reptiles such as, grass snake, common lizard and slow worms (the reptile species found in Hertfordshire) are protected under Section 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) as amended. The legislation makes it illegal to deliberately or recklessly kill or injure any native reptile. This protection therefore requires that reasonable effort be made to avoid harm to reptiles during developments to land occupied by reptiles.

Badgers and their setts are protected mainly for welfare reasons under The Protection of Badgers Act (1992). This legislation makes it an offence to disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a sett, obstruct access to a sett or damage a badger sett. A badger sett is defined as "any structure that displays signs indicating current use by a badger".



Other wildlife legislation relevant to the survey site is the European Habitats and species Directive (1994) that is implemented by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). European protected species include all species of bats.

All bats and their roost sites are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5, Section 9. All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. In summary taken together the legislation makes it illegal to: intentionally, deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats; deliberately or recklessly disturb bats while they are occupying a structure used for shelter or protection; deliberately or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to areas used by bats for shelter or protection. Structures used by bats for shelter are commonly known as bat roosts. Because bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that, the roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time.

Developments/ Activities that would contravene the protection afforded to bats under the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994 require a Habitat Regulations Licence to be granted by Natural England before any works to the bat roost can commence. Three tests must be satisfied before Natural England can issue a licence to permit otherwise prohibited acts.

These are:

1. That the development is "in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment" (Regulation 44 (2)(e)).
2. That there is no satisfactory alternative (Regulation 44(3)(a)).
3. That the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range (Regulation 44(3)(b)).

The legislation means that the developer will need to have a clearly documented compensation strategy to maintain the numbers of bats in the local area.



## Methodology

Research was undertaken of records for any known protected habitats and legally protected species within the local area. This involved consultation with the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Bat Group, the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Badger Group and the County Recorder for amphibian, reptile and mammals. Information on statutory sites and other sites of wildlife importance was obtained from the Phase One Habitat Survey for Hertfordshire (1997) and the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Internet site.

Two ecologists from Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd, with Natural England licences to survey and disturb bats in all counties of England, undertook the surveys. This included Dr Jenny Jones MIEEM (Natural England bat licence 20080526) and Sarah Postlethwaite MIEEM (Natural England bat licence 20081072). Dr Jenny Jones is also licensed as a Natural England Trainer of other bat workers. Both ecologists are members of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) and both also have considerable experience of badger surveying.

A walk over of the site was undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to provide a general broad-brush habitat survey of the site to Phase 1 standards. These habitats were mapped.

The habitat survey included taking account of the suitability of the habitat for protected species such as nesting birds, bats, reptiles and badgers (*Meles meles*).

Photographs were also taken of the habitats to aid visual interpretation.

During the walk over any signs of badger activity were recorded. Signs searched for include:

- Mammal paths across the site. A mammal path was assumed to be used by badgers if the characteristics of the path were appropriate and if other signs of badger activity were present in close proximity.
- Badger Hair found in hole entrances, fences or on the vegetation.
- Footprints along paths and by hole entrances
- Evidence of foraging such as snuffle holes or destroyed wasp nests
- Latrines. Latrine sites are shallow pits containing badger dung; these can be found close to an active badger sett or used to establish territory boundaries.
- Rolled up bedding close to holes or along pathways.
- Mammal Holes. Holes found within the survey site were assessed for any use by badgers (suitable dimensions, badger hair, footprints, bedding outside the holes). An active sett will show fresh large mounds of spoil at the entrances and show evidence of cleaning out bedding and gathering in new material.

The initial habitat survey included an assessment of the habitat potential to support a range of insects favourable for foraging bats and to identify features on the site that could be important as flyways for bats travelling from their roosts to their foraging



grounds. The building was inspected in detail for any roosting bats, signs of bat use and any potential to support roosting sites for bats.

The building was examined externally and internally, facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders and bright torches. A dark red light was also used to search for the bats themselves since bats avoid white light. Bats may roost in a variety of situations including behind wooden boarding, within gaps between bricks, within wooden beams or under roof tiles. Buildings can be considered as potential roosts if cracks or holes in excess of 8mm x 12mm are present. Such gaps are large enough to allow the smallest species of bat to gain access. In the summer, bats often prefer to roost high up in a building where the temperature is warmer. It is usual for bats to select roosting areas that are sheltered and warm, avoiding exposed draughty conditions. Pitched roofed buildings are frequently favoured. The inspection included looking for bat droppings on walls, windows and the detailed examination of the loft void floors. Where suitable gaps were located, the holes were examined in detail for any signs of oil staining from the bats fur, urine streaks or accumulation of droppings. The floor area was systematically searched for any bat droppings or insect wings. All bats are insectivorous and parts of bitten insects such as moth wings are frequently found below where a bat has been feeding.

Suitability criteria include the following features: stability of the temperature regime within the building, protection from the elements, light levels, construction details, potential roosting locations and potential bat access points. The category assigned to the buildings are given below:

- **Confirmed bat roost:** Bats observed roosting in building. No bats observed but signs of roosting bats found such as staining and droppings by a favourable roost entrance.
- **High probability:** Buildings with suitable bat access points providing potential roosts with dark, stable temperatures and highly favourable roosting features such as: holes suitable for bat access leading to internal cavities, favourable timber ridge (cobweb free) in pitched roof void. Buildings located adjacent to favourable bat habitats. Bats flying inside building or bats flying within the close vicinity of the building with favourable roosting features. Bat droppings may be found although not directly below or within roost location that would suggest a confirmed roost.
- **Medium probability:** Buildings with favourable roosting features and bat access points but not all criteria for high probability met. No obvious signs of any bat use. May have less stable temperature/light regime and may not be within a highly favourable bat habitat.
- **Low probability:** Buildings generally considered unfavourable for roosting bats but with some features providing some potential to provide roosting sites such as a cobweb free timber ridge, enclosed roof void or tiles lined with felt/sarking with crevices between. Buildings with limited access points.



- **Unsuitable:** Buildings can be classified as unsuitable (no roosting potential) if they are for example open buildings of metal/ concrete construction with no crevices. Buildings with no bat access.

## **Constraints**

The survey was undertaken in June; a suitable time of year to conduct habitat and protected species surveys. Badgers would be active above ground and June is also the time when bats form nursery colonies and bat signs would generally be obvious.

There were no major constraints although it should also be recognised that the survey represents a 'snap shot' in time; animal requirements change throughout the year; bat roosts can be of a transient nature and bats may move from roost to roost. A single bat may use a large number and wide variety of roosts during a year. This behaviour may result in some roosting sites not being encountered during the dates of the survey.



## Results of the Data Search

There are no previously known sites of ecological interest recorded within the survey site itself.

### Habitats

The habitat site data search around the survey area found:

- There are no sites of international or national importance (such as SSSI s) within 1km of the survey site. The nearest SSSI is Croxley Common Moor at a distance of 1.8km.
- Wildlife Sites (sites of at least district ecological importance) recorded within 1km of the survey area are:
  - Rickmansworth Aquadrome including Batchworth lake (TQ056940), Bury Lake (TQ053940) and Stockers Lake (TQ049935). Rickmansworth Aquadrome is 50 metres from the survey site being on the opposite side of the road.
  - Stockers farm Meadow (TQ055935) on the south side of the Aquadrome.
  - West Hempstead Anglers Associate Lake (TQ064942), 850 metres to the east.

### Badgers

There are no recorded badger setts on the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Badger Group database within 1km of the search area around Morningside. It is however thought highly probable that badgers are present within Rickmansworth Aquadrome. The nearest recorded badger sett is to the south of the lakes (TQ 05407 93252) at a distance of 1.1km from Morningside. Near to this sett, in High Wood (1.2km distance from Morningside) badger setts have been recorded at TQ 05040 93172, TQ 04943 93219, TQ 04880 93185, and TQ04779 93164. To the north of Morningside, the nearest known sett is near Loudwater at a distance of 1.7km.

### Great Crested Newts

There are no records for great crested newts (a European Protected Species) within 1km of Morningside.

### Reptiles

Grass snakes have been recorded at Rickmansworth Aquadrome, at Bury lake and Stockers Lake. They have also been recorded in Riverside Drive Allotments 230 metres to the southeast of Morningside.



## Dormouse

There are no records for dormice (a European Protected Species) within 1km of Morningside.

## Bats

Within 2km of Morningside the data search of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Bat Group dataset found 8 species of bat recorded. These records include both roosts and bat detector flight records. The bats are: Common 45kHz pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano 55kHz pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Nathusius's pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*), Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) Serotine bat *Eptesicus serotinus* and Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*).

Roost records are listed below:

- Common Pipistrelle bat. Bat roosts are present to the east of Ebury Roundabout. The nearest roosting site is at Rectory Lane just 160 metres to the east and Ebury Road 200 metres to the east. Bury Meadows and Skidmore Way in this area also supports pipistrelle bat roosting sites. Other roosting sites to the south and east include Thames Valley water building and a nursery colony at Rusmore Close (800 metres to the southeast). Roosts are also present along Uxbridge Road to the west at a distance of c. 700 metres. The species is relatively common and widespread within the region.
- Soprano 55kHz pipistrelle bat. -Roosts have been recorded along Ebury Road (200 metres east), Norfolk Road (630 metres east) and Mead Place (700 metres to the west). This is a species that particularly favours aquatic habitats. The species is relatively common and widespread within the region.
- Brown long-eared bat. Roost at 1km to the southwest at Stockers Farm with further roost recorded at Lynwood House, Rickmansworth 1.3km to the north north. Hibernacula for this species are present within 2km. This is a species dependant on woodland habitats and, although relatively common, is vulnerable to change.
- Noctule Bat -Roost recorded in Croxley Hall Wood 1.9km northeast. This is a bat that primarily roosts in trees. It is declining in Hertfordshire.
- Daubenton's bat - An adult casualty bat was recorded along the High Street Rickmansworth 720 metres to the east. Flight records generally over the nearby waterways with roost recorded at the River Chess bridge (986 metres to the east). This is a widespread species of bat that typically forages over waterways. It also roosts in trees particularly trees by water. There are few summer bat roosting sites known in Hertfordshire.



## Results of the Site Survey

Morningside is a residential care home located in an urban area of southwest Hertfordshire close to Rickmansworth town centre at Ordnance Survey grid reference TQ 05475 94360.

A location plan is shown in Figs 1 and 2.

Photograph 1: Nightingale Road view north from Morningside



The site is bordered by Uxbridge Road (A412) to the southeast in the vicinity of Ebury Roundabout, Nightingale Road to the southwest, residential dwellings with gardens to the northwest and the Police Station to the northeast.

Car Park to Morningside

Photograph 2: View from Morningside south towards Rickmansworth Aquadrome



Although the site is located within a busy urban area, the land within the wider area includes extensive water habitats (River Colne, Grand Union Canal, River Chess and flooded gravel pits). The River Colne lies within Rickmansworth Aquadrome just 90 metres to the south and the Aquadrome, to the south of Uxbridge Road, includes a linking series of large lakes (Batchworth Lake, Bury Lake and Stockers Lake). Although the terrestrial habitats within

Rickmansworth Aquadrome support mainly amenity grassland, there are also patches of woodland around the lake margins. Habitats with water, mature trees and woodland are capable of supporting high concentrations of insects of benefit to a variety of bat species.

The only entrance to Morningside is off Nightingale road, a relatively quiet residential street off the busy Uxbridge road. The habitat along Nightingale Road includes established gardens with boundary hedgerows and the occasional mature tree. The habitats extending northwards have the potential to provide a linking flight corridor for any bats within the survey site. The quality of the habitats however within Morningside itself provides limited potential for foraging bats.



Photograph 3: Building from car park



Photograph 4: Southeast elevation



There is an extensive car park to the west of the building, patios adjacent to the building, a short brick wall (c.1 metre in height) and wooden fences bordering and crossing the site. The surrounding lawns support strips of mown short amenity grass with low-level shrub borders. Between Morningside and the Police Station is a bordering hedge approx 2 metres in height. No trees of any significance were recorded within the survey site. The habitats are illustrated in Fig 3.

Photograph 5: Rear garden view south



Photograph 6: Rear garden view north



Photograph 7: Roof tiles with no gaps suitable for bat access



The two-storey building, dating from the late 1970's, is constructed of breezeblocks and bricks, with a shallow pitched tiled roof.

The roof tiles are generally in good condition with no missing or loose tiles observed that would be suitable for bats to gain access to the crevices behind the tiles.

Gaps suitable for bat access however were noted behind some of the timber fascia boarding and between the soffit boards and the wall.



Photograph 8: Gap along soffit boards



Photograph 9: Fascia board gap



Internally, the building has four separate roof voids, each of which were examined for evidence of use by bats. Bat access to the roof voids is possible through the eaves of the building. All of the lofts are of the same construction, with pre-formed trusses and bitumastic felt lining the roof tiles. The traditional roofing felt provides a potentially favourable surface for any roosting bats. The four lofts vary in size. The loft over the warden's flat and separate loft over the adjacent room are relatively small with a rise to the ridge of approximately 1.8m. The adjacent third loft is wider and longer but with a similar rise to the ridge of c. 1.8 metres. Due to the King posts attached to the ridge and pre-formed trusses the three smaller loft voids provide a cluttered flight area below the ridge and are therefore less favourable for bat species that like to fly within roof voids such as the brown long-eared bat.

Photograph 10: Loft 1



No signs of any current or past use by bats were found inside the lofts.

Photograph 11: Long short loft (Loft 3)



Photograph 12: Southern long tall loft



Running southwest to northeast is a long taller loft that supports dimensions of 50 metres x 10 metres with a rise to the ridge of approximately 3m. There are no king posts in this loft and the large relatively uncluttered space is favourable for roosting bats. However, despite a thorough search no evidence of any bat use was found.

The building is assessed as providing low potential to provide roosting sites for bats due to the fact that the structure and immediate surrounding habitat adjacent to the building is generally unfavourable for bats. The only suitable roosting locations identified are within the roof voids, between the tiles and felt and in the soffit boxes.

Photograph 13 - 15: Holes under fence used in the past by badgers



Of ecological significance within the site is the report of the presence of badgers by the warden of the site. The site warden reported that a badger had been observed in the garden, during the night, three years previously. The current survey identified two holes under the fences (see plan 3) suitable for badgers to pass under the fence. It was reported that these were more obvious routeways during the last winter. There were no reports of badgers digging into the lawn or garden itself. No badger hair was found on the soil surface of the hole that would have suggested current use by a badger. A hedgehog dropping was found near the fence and it is likely that hedgehogs also pass under the fence.



Hole under fence to the east of the warden's flat viewed from the north and south



The surrounding habitat does not support optimal foraging habitat for badgers.

## **Evaluation, Impact Assessment and Recommendations**

The data search found no habitats or species of importance had previously been recorded at Morningside itself although the survey site is within the near vicinity of Rickmansworth Aquadrome a site with records for a range of bat species, grass snakes and potentially badgers.

No evidence for any current presence of protected species was found during the 2008 survey at Morningside although past use by badgers was reported.

The habitats identified within the Morningside area include: buildings, concrete, walls, improved amenity grassland, ornamental shrubs and managed hedgerows. These are of limited value to wildlife, although the hedgerows are of local neighbourhood value due to the favourable wildlife corridor they provide along the site boundary.

It is concluded that the development of the land will have an overall negligible impact on the wildlife within the area.

The building at Morningside was assessed as providing overall low potential for roosting bats. Taking account of the habitat within the immediate vicinity of the building and the external structure of the building, the building was assessed as generally being unsuitable. Some features such as the existence of roof voids, potential crevices between the tiles and roofing felt and gaps under the soffit boards providing favourable roosting opportunities. The detailed search however inside the roof void found no signs of any current or past bat use. It is therefore concluded that the demolition of the building will not damage a currently used bat roosting site and will have no impact on bats.

The survey found holes under the fences suitable for use by badgers although no current use by badgers was found. Badgers had been reported to cross the site in the past. The data search found no known records for badgers within the area and the site does not support optimal badger foraging habitat. Urban badgers however are increasing in Hertfordshire and it is possible that badgers are foraging within the established gardens along Nightingale Road. The garden of Morningside may be part of a badger's territory used as an occasional foraging area but it is unlikely that it forms part of a regularly used pathway. The current survey would suggest that the development would have no adverse impact on badgers. Due to the fact however that badgers can be unpredictable, it is recommended that any presence of badgers be monitored for any future use of the site.

Hedgehogs currently use the garden and therefore any use of garden chemicals to control pests should be avoided. Hedgehogs feed on invertebrates (worms, beetles, slugs and snails) and can be poisoned themselves by consuming poisoned prey.

The trees in the boundary hedgerows have some potential (although limited) for nesting birds. It is therefore recommended that any pruning of the more mature trees be undertaken outside of the main nesting season (March to August). If pruning is required during the summer months, checks for nesting birds will be required



beforehand. If nesting birds are identified, any pruning will need to be delayed until the fledglings have left the nest. Any provision of bird boxes within the future development would be of wildlife benefit.

Bats have been recorded in the wider area and the boundary tree-lines, particularly those extending north from Morningside are considered favourable for commuting and foraging bats. White light is known to disturb bats. Therefore when considering the positioning of external lighting it is important to avoid any light spillage into the boundary hedgerows.

Since bats are declining in numbers any measures that can be implemented to encourage the enhancement of bat populations is recommended. The incorporation of bat boxes within new buildings can help to increase roosting opportunities for bats and be of biodiversity benefit.

It is recommended that a thick hedgerow along the east boundary be retained. Consideration should also be given to the use of native climbing plants on building walls and the planting of additional trees. Preferably any new trees planted should be native trees that support fruits and flowers of biodiversity benefit.

Further guidance on ecological enhancements can be found in the publication by Corteen et al (2004) Biodiversity by design: a guide for sustainable communities.



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## Site Location Plans

Figure 1: Location of Morningside

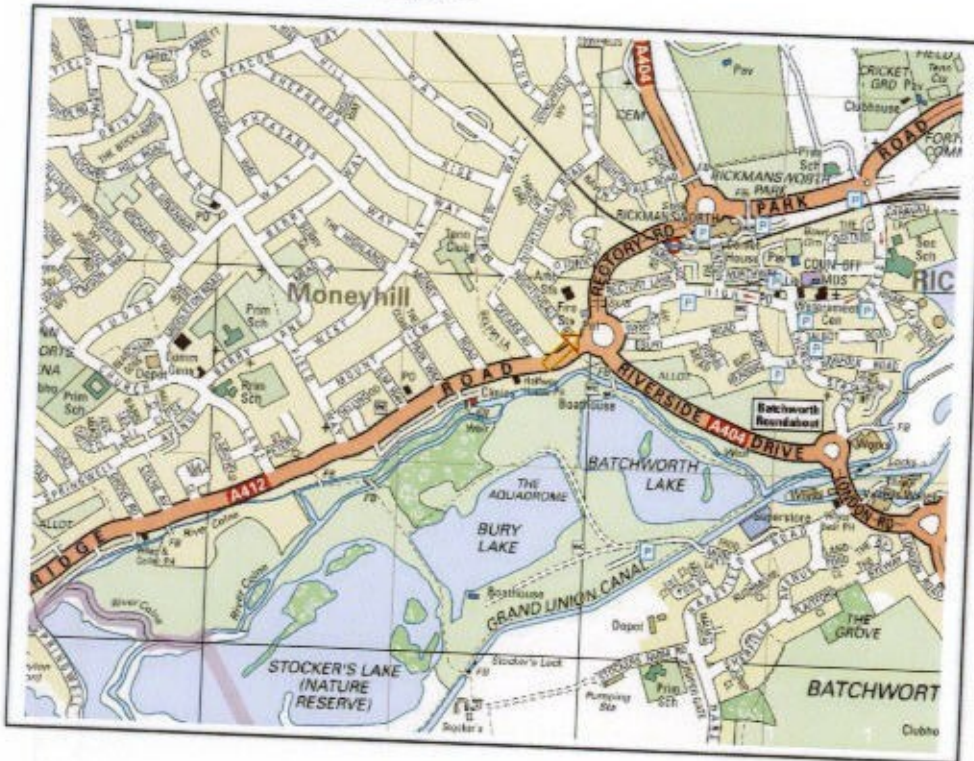


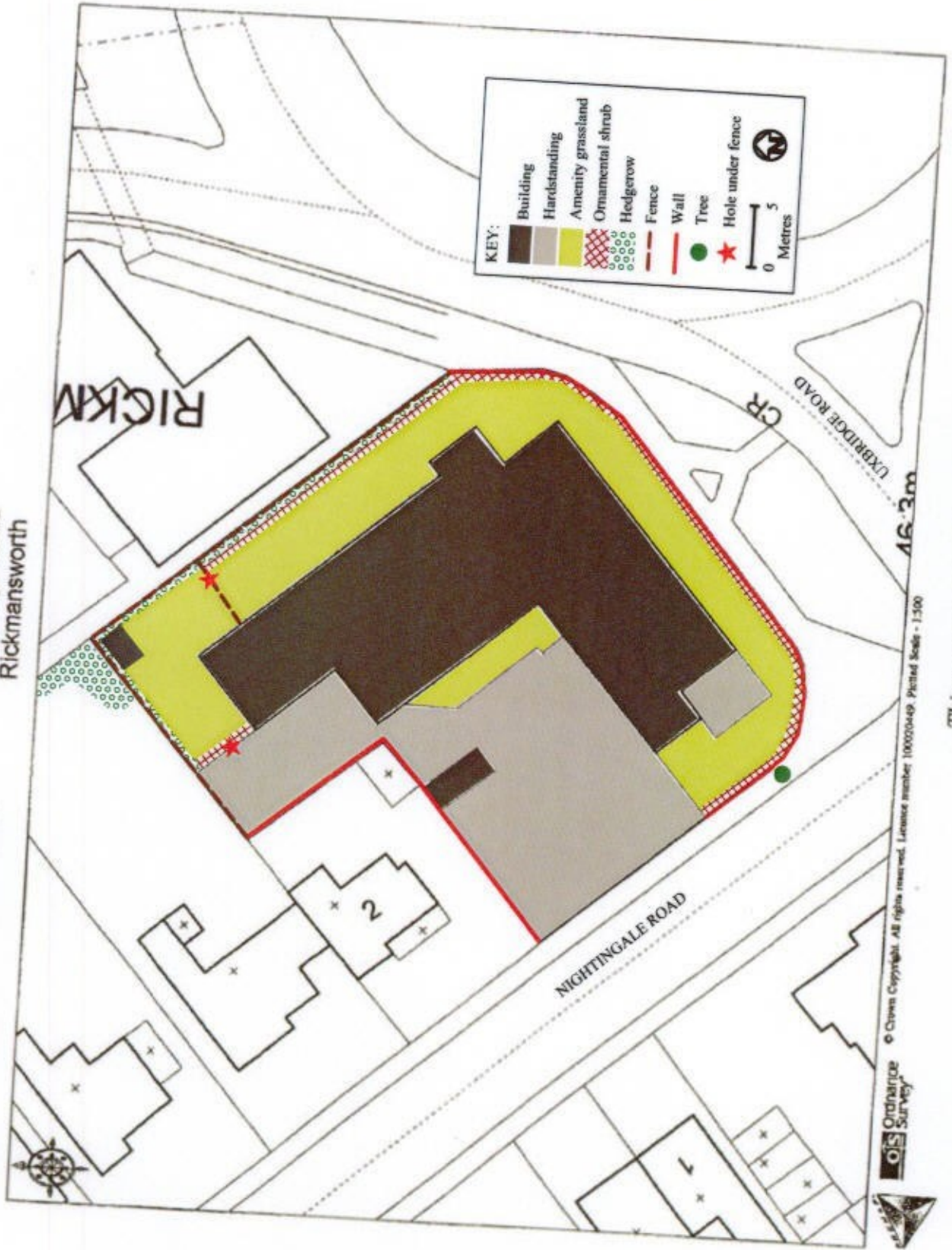
Fig 2: View of Morningside and surroundings



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**Figure 3: Phase 1 Habitat Map**

Morningside  
8 Uxbridge Road  
Rickmansworth



*This map was created with Promap*

Ordnance Survey  
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