



JSA PLANNING

LAND OFF HIGHAM WAY,
BANBURY,
OXFORDSHIRE

Reptile Survey Report

COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this document
remains with Ecology Solutions
The contents of this document
therefore must not be copied or
reproduced in whole or in part
for any purpose without the
written consent of Ecology Solutions.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	LEGISLATION AND ECOLOGY	2
3	SURVEY METHODOLOGY	4
4	SURVEY RESULTS	5
5	DISCUSSION	6
6	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	7

PLANS

PLAN ECO1	Site Location
PLAN ECO2	Ecological Features & Reptile Tin Locations

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned in January 2015 by JSA Planning to prepare an Ecological Assessment for submission as part of a planning for the site (see Plan ECO1).
- 1.1.2. Following the completion of the initial ecology site survey several areas of the site were considered to support suitable opportunities to support common reptiles. Whilst it is known that previous populations of common reptiles were present in the immediate area outside the site boundaries. Given the suitability and local presence, to fully identify the intrinsic value and inform the planning application of any legal requirement in respect of this partially protected group Ecology Solutions were instructed to complete target common reptile surveys in May 2015, to ascertain presence or absence, and if p[presence the distribution of any population within the site.
- 1.1.3. The proposals for the site are for residential development with associated hardstanding and landscaping.

1.2. Site Characteristics

- 1.2.1. The site consists largely of hardstanding / recolonising ground with occasional buildings. Additional habitats present include areas of scrub, occasional trees, ruderal vegetation and an ephemeral pool. It is bound to the southwest by railway tracks, whilst to the northwest there is existing residential properties and associated infrastructure. The northeast boundary runs parallel to a ditch which connects to industrial drainage ditches running from the north. At the time of survey this contained water.
- 1.2.2. From the site, reptile fencing can be seen in an area of allotments to the north which reportedly underwent a reptile translocation of Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* in the recent past. This area is separated from the site by small drainage ditches and rough grassland.

1.3. Purpose of this Report

- 1.3.1. This document sets out the results of reptile surveys undertaken between April and June 2015.
- 1.3.2. Where necessary, mitigation measures are recommended so as to safeguard these faunal groups within the site and, where appropriate, potential enhancement measures are put forward and reference made to both National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

2. LEGISLATION AND ECOLOGY

2.1. Legislation

- 2.1.1. All six British reptile species receive a degree of legislative protection that varies depending on their conservation importance.
- 2.1.2. Rare, endangered or declining species receive 'full protection' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as well as protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, which transposed into UK law the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, more commonly known as the Habitats Directive. Species that are fully protected include Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*. Due to the habitat requirements of these species it was considered highly unlikely that these species would be present at Schoolfield Road.
- 2.1.3. Due to their abundance in Britain, Common Lizard, Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* and Adder *Vipera berus* are only 'partially protected' under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and as such only receive protection from:
 - deliberate killing and injuring;
 - being sold or other forms of trading.

As such, although the animals themselves are protected, their habitat does not receive protection. Therefore, the presence of these species is a legal compliance matter rather than a constraint to the principal of development *per se*.

2.2. Ecology

- 2.2.1. There are 6 native reptile species in Britain. They are found in a wide variety of habitats, including woodland edge, heaths and especially rough grassland. Ideally reptiles require a varied habitat structure that provides shelter, a range of sunny and shady spots and frost-free areas to hibernate over winter.
- 2.2.2. Reptile species cannot generate their own body heat and therefore need to raise their body temperatures using external heat sources, especially by basking in the sun, which greatly influences their behaviour.
- 2.2.3. Most reptiles hibernate between October and March, when weather conditions are unsuitable for activity. Even during April to September reptiles are generally only active in warm weather, but avoid prolonged exposure to the sun on very hot days. Reptiles are usually inactive during the night.
- 2.2.4. Snakes occupy fairly large ranges, sometimes covering several kilometres during the course of a year, although they usually return to the same area each year to hibernate. Adders and Smooth Snakes eat mostly reptiles and small mammals, while Grass Snakes prey largely on amphibians.

- 2.2.5. Lizards have smaller ranges than snakes and are often found in close proximity to landscape features such as embankments. Common Lizards and Sand Lizards spend relatively large amounts of time basking, while Slow-worms are often hidden in vegetation or found under refuges. All three species of lizard eat invertebrates.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1. The methodology utilised for the survey work can be split into two areas, namely desk study and faunal survey. These are discussed in more detail below.

3.2. Desk Study Methodology

3.2.1. As part of completing the Ecological Assessment records from the Thames Valley Environmental records Centre (TVERC) were obtained on any protected and notable species in the areas surrounding the site. The search area extended to 3 km from the centre of the site. .

3.3. Reptile Survey Methodology

3.3.1. Specific surveys were undertaken for reptiles at the site during April, May and June 2015. Table 3.1 below details the prevailing weather conditions and specific dates of when the reptile surveys were completed.

3.3.2. Areas of suitable reptile habitat were surveyed for the presence of reptiles during April, May, and June 2015 using artificial refugia ("tins"). Approximately 36 ½m x ½m roofing felt tiles were placed in suitable habitat within the site (see Plan ECO2).

3.3.3. The tins provide shelter and heat up quicker than the surroundings in the morning and can remain warmer than the surroundings in the late afternoon. Being ectothermic (cold blooded), reptiles use them to bask under and raise their body temperature which allows them to forage earlier and later in the day.

3.3.4. To determine presence/absence the tins were checked for reptile activity over seven visits at appropriate times of the day in accordance with Natural England guidance.

Table 3.1: Reptile Survey Conditions

Survey	Cloud Cover (%)	Temp (°C)	Time	Date
1	0	6	10:00	27.04.15
2	25	10	09:00	11.05.15
3	0	11	08:30	21.05.15
4	40	18	14:00	26.05.15

5	90	14.5	10:30	03.06.15
6	20	18	12:30	04.06.15
7	10	18	14:00	10.06.15

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1. Desk Study Exercise

- 4.1.1. The Ecological Assessment conducted by Ecology Solutions, concluded that further surveys of suitable habitat were required to establish whether any reptile species are present within the site.
- 4.1.2. Information from planning applications in the vicinity, specifically to the north-east of the site, identified that this land is referred to as Land off Thorpe Mead, Overthorpe Industrial Estate, Banbury (Planning reference number: MW.015/06). A reptile survey completed in 2008 on this land recorded a small population of Common Lizards; and it is understood that this population was subject to a subsequent translocation exercise.
- 4.1.3. One record for Grass Snake was returned by the data search. This was recorded in 2003 approximately 0.3km to the southwest of site.

4.2. Field Survey

- 4.2.1. Seven specific reptile checks were carried out in April, May and June 2015, during favourable conditions for reptile activity. Optimum weather conditions for reptile surveying are temperatures between 9°C and 18°C, intermittent or hazy sunshine and little or no wind.
- 4.2.2. No common reptile species were found to be present in any of the areas of suitable habitat within the site (see Plan ECO2).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Usage of the Site

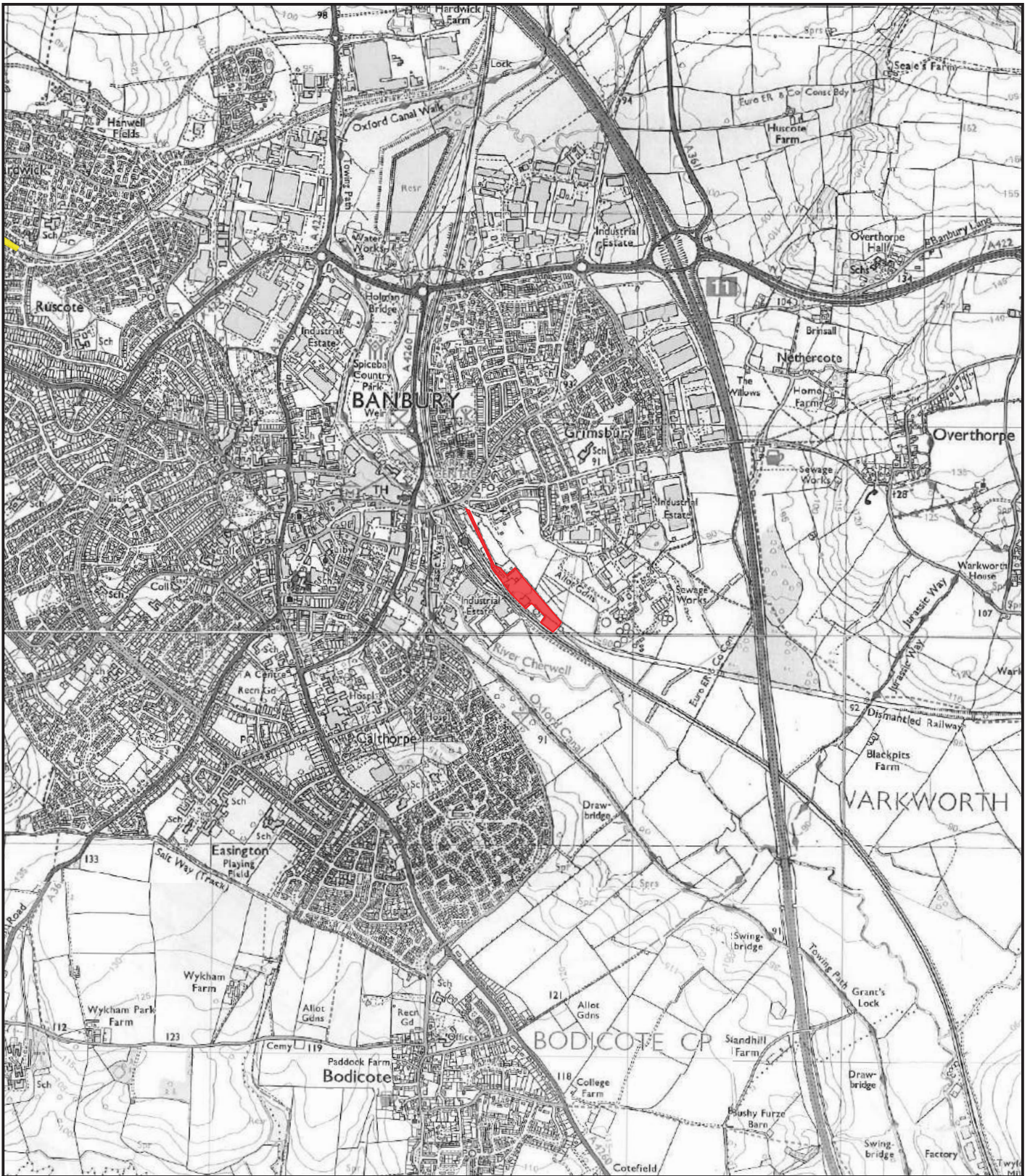
- 5.1.1. The target surveys completed in accordance with current survey guidelines and completed during favourable weather conditions did not identify any reptiles, or evidence of reptiles from within the suitable / sub-optimum habitats within the site. As such the likely absence of this partially protected group has been established.
- 5.1.2. Given the current likely absence there would be no reptile constraint to the removal of the suitable habitats. Should there be a delay in the commencement of any site works it is recommended that the site is appropriately managed to prevent any naturalisation which could encourage the colonisation of the site by reptiles, or other species of conservation concern.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. Ecology Solutions was commissioned in January 2015 by JSA Planning to prepare an Ecological Assessment for submission as part of a planning application for the site.
- 6.2. Ecology Solutions undertook an extended Phase 1 habitat survey of land off Higham Way, Banbury, Oxfordshire, in March 2015. The results of this survey are included in Ecology Solutions Ecological Assessment report 'Land off Higham Way, Banbury, Oxfordshire. Ecological Assessment', dated March 2015.
- 6.3. This document highlights requirements for further specific survey works to be undertaken in relation to protected species, which may be present on the site. In particular the report refers to the potential for the site to support common reptile species, and as such Ecology Solutions were duly instructed to complete the necessary survey work to confirm the presence of absence of this partially protected group.
- 6.4. No evidence of any reptiles was recorded from any of the suitable (and sub-optimal) habitat within the site during target survey completed in April, May and June 2015 in accordance with current survey guidelines.
- 6.5. It is concluded that there is no evidence for the presence of reptiles within the site, and as such the site can be safely cleared without the need for specific mitigation measures in relation to reptiles.
- 6.6. In conclusion, all outstanding ecological issues in relation to reptiles have been addressed and on the evidence of the specific ecological surveys undertaken, there are no overriding ecological constraints to the development of Land off Higham Way, Banbury, Oxfordshire.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1
Site Location



KEY:



SITE LOCATION

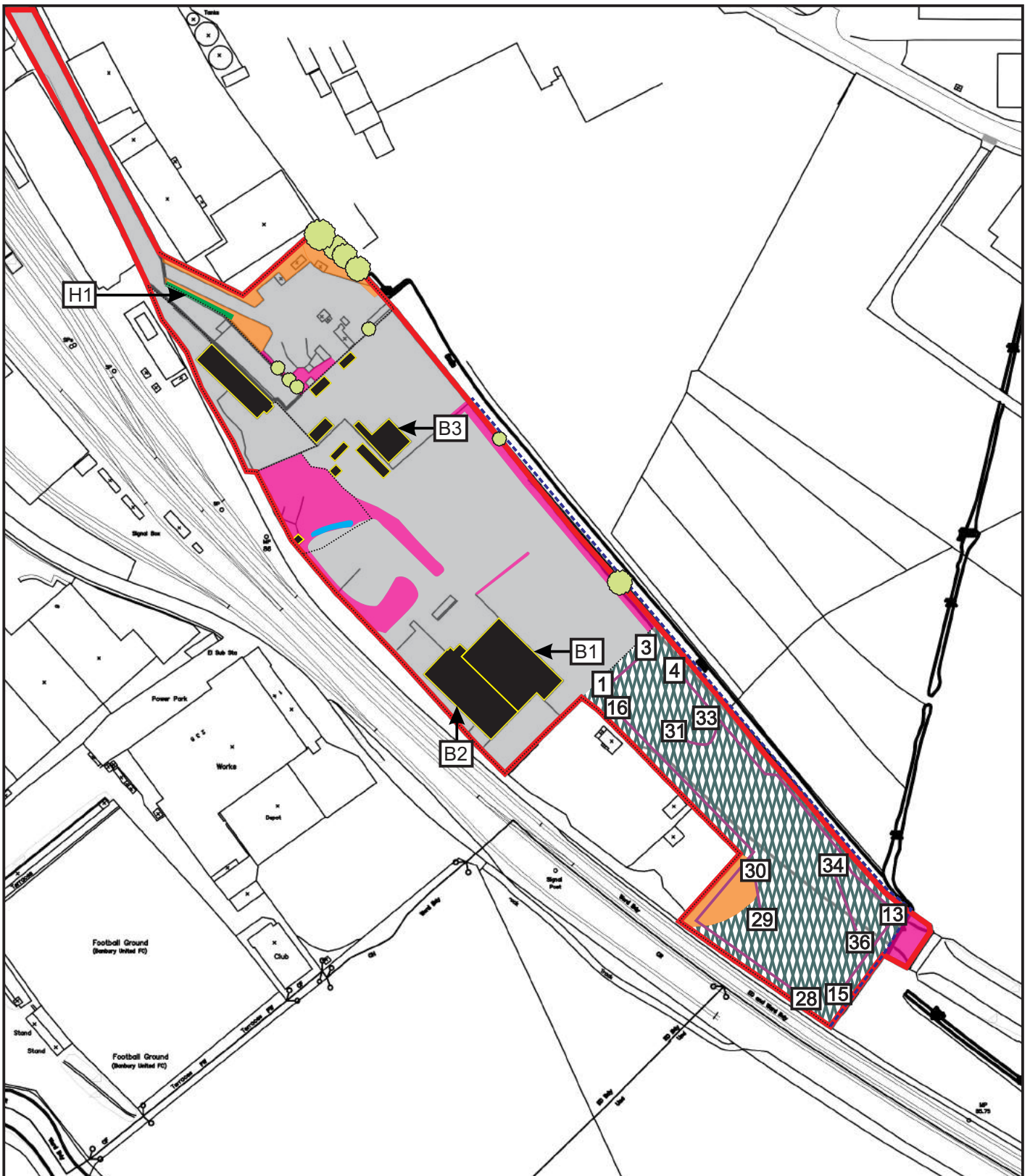


6504: LAND OFF HIGHAM WAY,
BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE













PLAN ECO1:
SITE LOCATION

PLAN ECO2

Ecological Features & Reptile Ton Locations



KEY:

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | SITE BOUNDARY |  | EPHEMERAL POOL |
|  | SCRUB |  | DITCH |
|  | DISTURBED GROUND |  | BUILDINGS (B) |
|  | RUDERAL VEGETATION |  | TREES |
|  | HEDGEROW (H) |  | FENCE |
|  | RECOLONISING GROUND / HARDSTANDING |  | REPTILE TIN LAYOUT |



6504: LAND OFF HIGHAM WAY,
BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE

PLAN ECO2:
ECOLOGICAL FEATURES AND
REPTILE TIN LAYOUT



ecology solutions

ecology solutions (east) ltd • cokenach estate • barkway • royston • hertfordshire • SG8 8DL
t 01763 848084 e info@ecologysolutions.co.uk w www.ecologysolutions.co.uk

e c o l o g y s o l u t i o n s f o r p l a n n e r s a n d d e v e l o p e r s