

Natural Basingstoke

Cufaude Lane: Nature Protection & Enhancement Proposal



INTRODUCTION

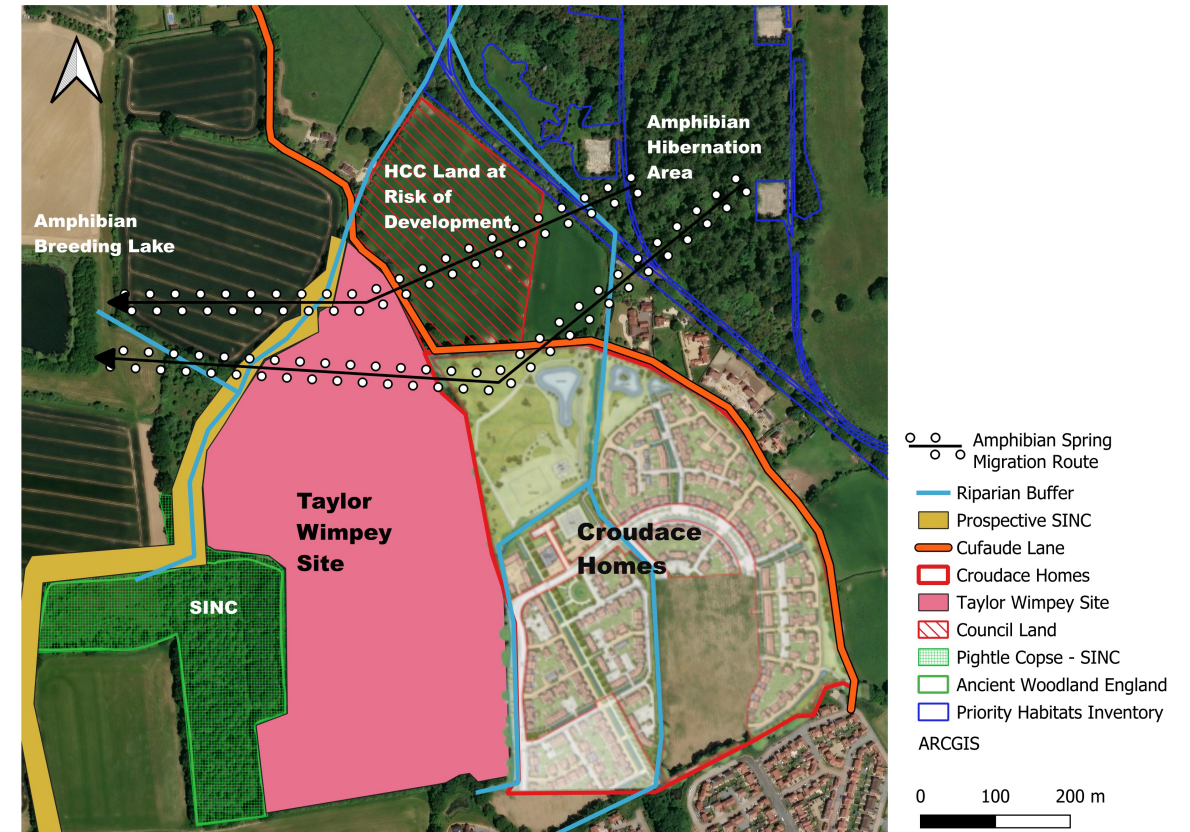
- This presentation provides a high-level conceptual summary of proposals to establish a green corridor, for the benefit of local wildlife, on land adjacent to Cufaude Lane, Bramley.
- Despite historic insensitive land use and recent developments, this area currently remains rich in open countryside wildlife.
- Two housing developments are currently proposed in the area impacting on roughly 42 hectares of open countryside and placing current habitats and resident species at significant risk.
- There is an opportunity to combine development with creation of a nature reserve, linking to adjoining countryside.
- This will provide some protection to existing species resident in the area as well as creating an opportunity to support nature recovery.
- The project has the formal endorsement of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Significant development is currently underway or proposed in the area:

- Proposed developments cover 42 hectares (103 acres) of open countryside
- Croudace Homes Upper Cufaude Farm Development comprises 300+ homes
- Taylor Wimpey Development comprises 265 homes
- The northern portion of these developments is designated as a multi-user green space.
- Land marked as 'HCC Land at Risk of Development' is owned by Hampshire County Council. It has been proposed for development however the LPA does not support this as a suitable location for housing due to access issues.



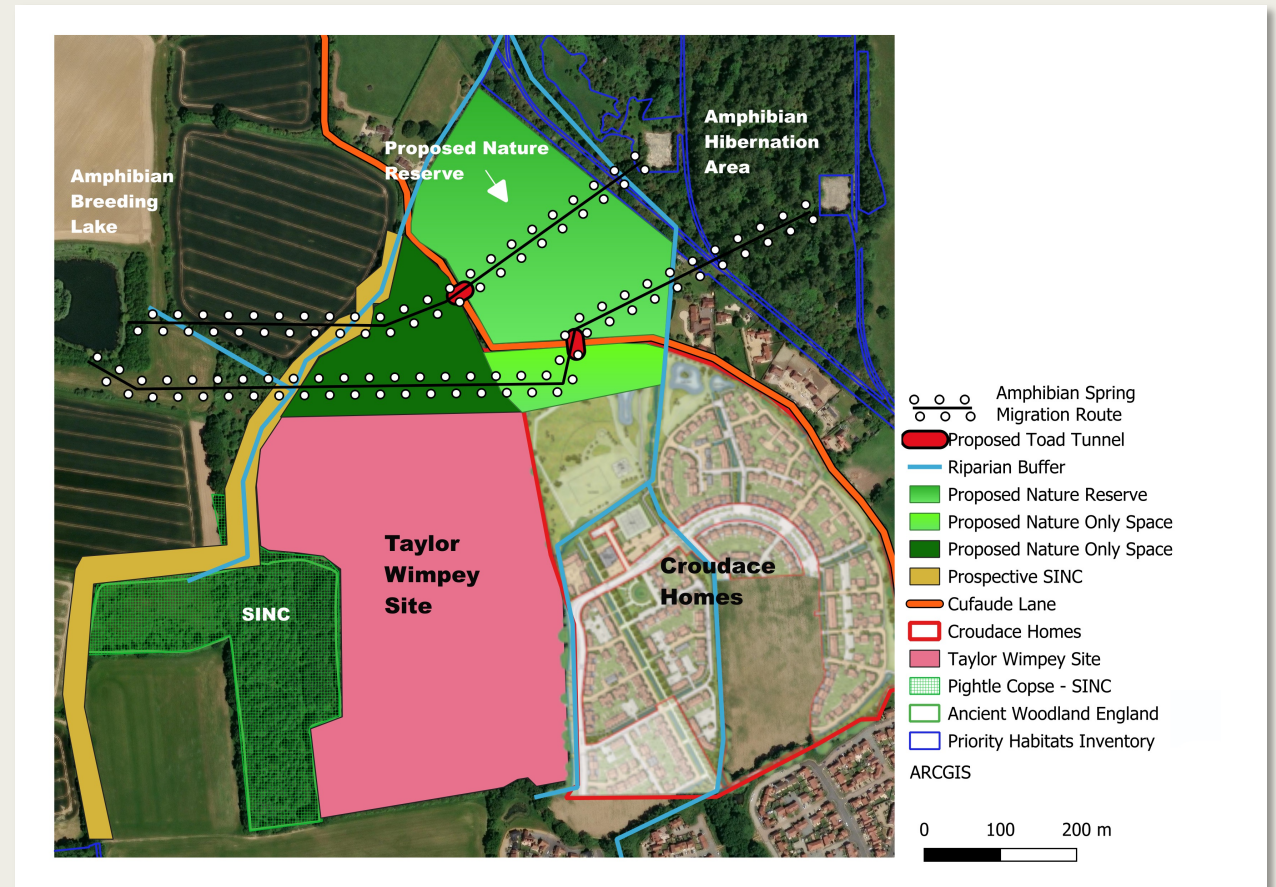
WILDLIFE AT RISK

- Cufaude Lane, an ancient byway long-valued as a haven for nature (see Appendix I), is under threat as housing development encroaches on remaining open countryside.
- Amphibians migrating across Cufaude Lane will be at increased risk due to:
 - higher traffic volumes following local development
 - poorly located toad tunnels, channeling toads into high-risk locations
 - housing estates effectively cutting them off from their traditional breeding ponds
 - disturbance and predation (by humans and their pets) in the proposed multi-user green space.
- Many other open countryside species will be at risk of local extinction, through loss of current habitats, with remaining populations concentrated in isolated pockets of land.



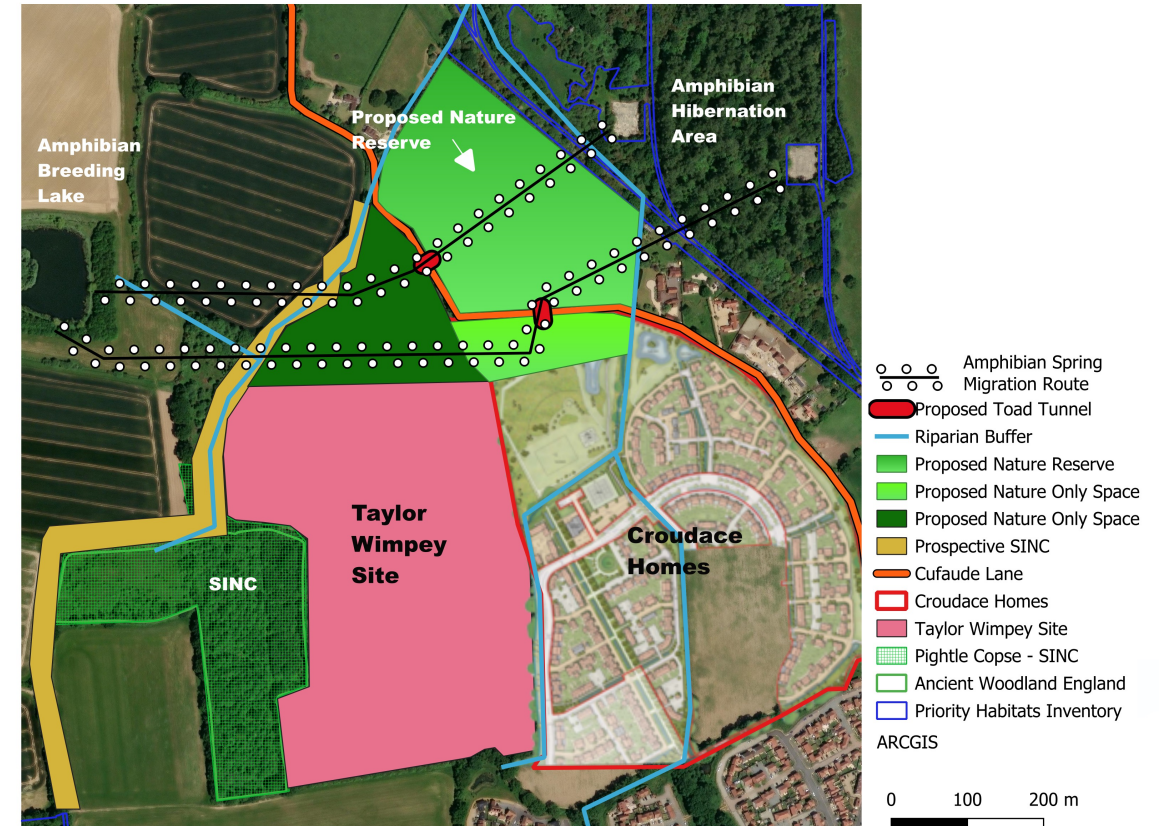
CUFAUDE LANE: NATURE PROTECTION & ENHANCEMENT PROPOSAL (1)

- The 'Proposed Nature Reserve' is on land currently owned by Hampshire County Council.
- The nature reserve would provide offsite compensation for loss of habitat for open countryside species.
- The aim would be to encourage a mosaic of locally-relevant habitats, including seasonally-cut meadows framed by native species hedgerows and scrub.
- The creation of amphibian breeding ponds in the low-lying northern corner of the field aims to establish new breeding colonies of amphibians that are less reliant on migration across Cufau de Lane.



CUFAUDE LANE: NATURE PROTECTION & ENHANCEMENT PROPOSAL (2)

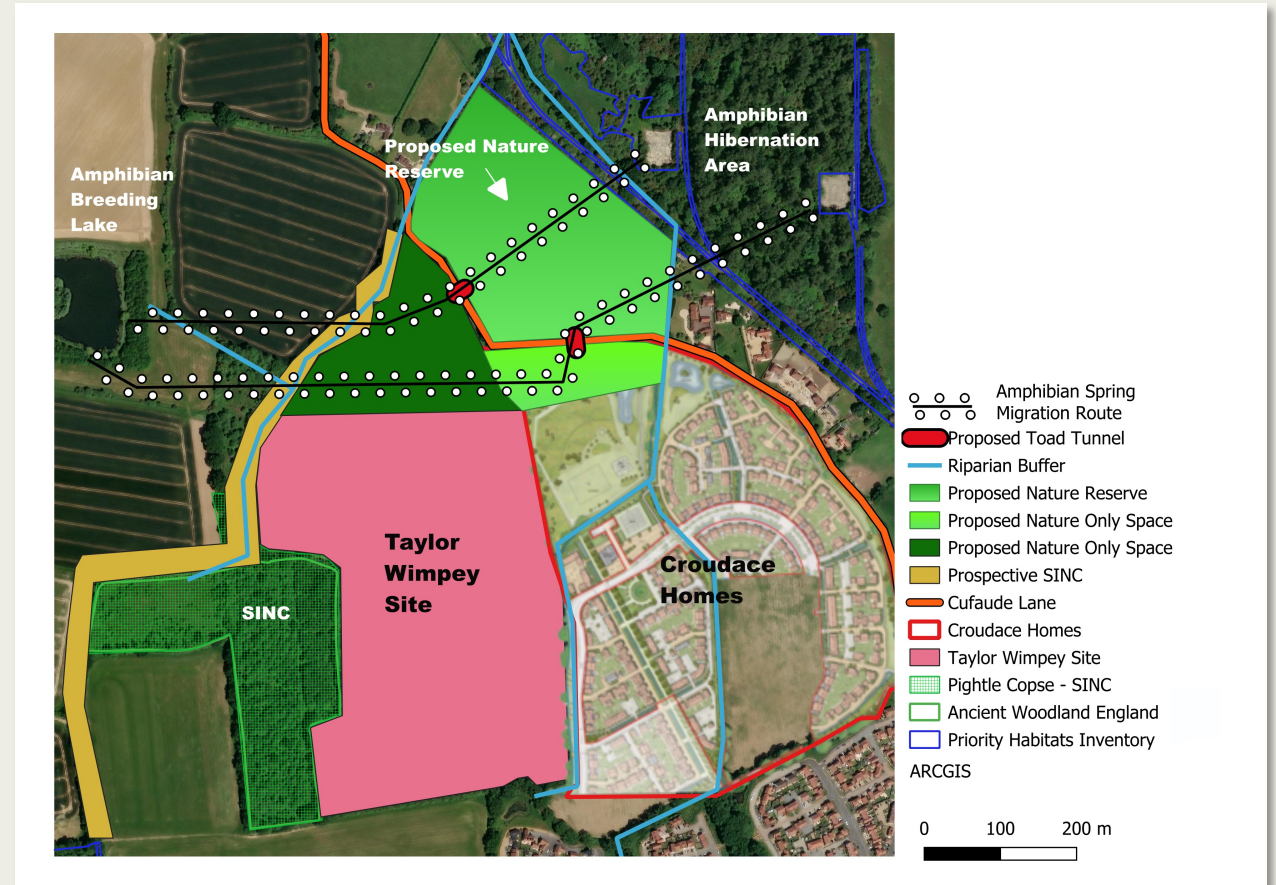
- The two areas marked as *'Proposed Nature Only Space' would be separated from the reminder of the multi-user green spaces, to become part of a dedicated wildlife corridor.
- This would enhance biodiversity by mirroring the habitat provision in the Proposed Nature Reserve and provide additional safeguarding for amphibian migration.
- Amphibians would access the wildlife corridor via toad tunnels from the new nature reserve to the east.
- The sequestration of this land for nature would also provide compensatory benefits for other impacted open-countryside species.



** These areas on the map are indicative. Precise dimensions and angles are subject to survey to optimise the corridor and address the locations for SuDS.*

CUFAUDE LANE: NATURE PROTECTION & ENHANCEMENT PROPOSAL (3)

- Prospective SINC - Cufaude Green Lane, bordering the northwest side of the Taylor Wimpey site, is currently in the process of being assessed for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- Pightle Copse, is an existing SINC to the west of the Taylor Wimpey site.
- Taken together, these features would result in creation of a corridor connecting land owned by MOD (Bramley Camp), an established amphibian hibernation area, with the current 'Amphibian Breeding Lake', via a combination of toad tunnels and spaces dedicated to nature.
- This corridor would also provide a refuge for displaced open countryside species, linking up existing natural green spaces.



STAKEHOLDER BENEFITS

- **Positive public relations** – demonstrates commitment to delivering genuine biodiversity benefits and responsiveness to local communities.
- **Supports the Local Plan update** – provides a basis to reconcile conflicting development/ ecological priorities in the area.
- **Speeds up planning process** – enables *collaboration* between relevant stakeholders.
- **Demonstrates alignment with the Hampshire LNRS** – reflects linkage of identified SINCs/ riparian corridors.
- **Supports delivery of Council's Biodiversity Action Plan** - including targets PL1, and SP2.
- **Makes productive use of surplus land** – achieving sustainable income from an isolated tract of HCC owned land that has been rejected as a site for development.



FAILURE TO ACT: THE CONSEQUENCES

- Catastrophic decline in UK open countryside species over the past decades (see Appendix 3).
- Species at risk locally, due to loss/ degradation of the environment, arising from development of the landscape & house-building. Examples of species at risk:
 - Birds – Skylark, Yellowhammer.....
 - Amphibians – Common Toad, Great Crested Newt.....
 - Mammals – Hazel Dormouse, Brown Hare.....
- Failure to protect this valuable local landscape will lead to predictable (and preventable) extinctions of local populations of open countryside species.
- The Cufau de Lane Nature Protection & Enhancement Proposal aims to support development whilst addressing the key development related factors driving local species decline:
 - ✓ Creating new habitat to compensate for **habitat loss/ degradation**
 - ✓ Providing a network of green/ blue corridors to prevent **fragmentation of habitat/ loss of ecological landscape connectivity**
 - ✓ Design of developments to address the risks of **road mortality and predation by pets**.

NEXT STEPS

- Agreement in principle from key stakeholders, (BDBC, HCC, Croudace Homes and Taylor Wimpey).
- Development of high-level concept to cover key details, in particular in relation to the funding and operation of the proposed Nature Reserve (envisaged as a BNG Habitat Bank)
- Exploration of the opportunity for creation of a wider green corridor in north Basingstoke linking up important tracts of land owned by sympathetic land-owners (see Appendix 2).



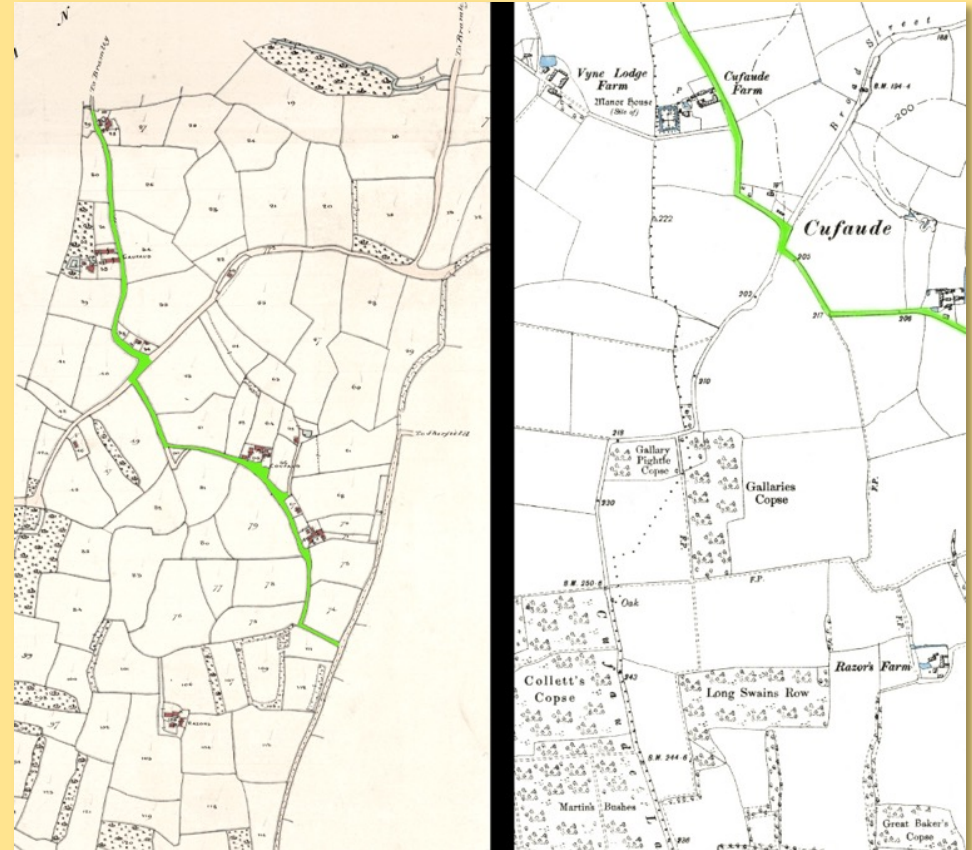
Cufaude Lane: Nature Protection & Enhancement Proposal

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

CUFAUDE LANE LANDSCAPE (1)

- Cufaude Lane is at the heart of a landscape that has a rich heritage and ancestry, one that is reflected in the abundance and diversity of wildlife.
- Historic maps (right) demonstrate evolving land use in the area [*Cufaude Lane is marked in green*].
- Comparing the historical mapping, the combined land area occupied by proposed developments has lost > than 3 kilometres of ancient hedgerows.
- Roughly 0.2 hectares of woodland has also been lost.
- Remnants of this ancient landscape are evident today. Surveying along the road line and remaining hedgerows reveals the presence of Pedunculate Oak, Field Maple, Ash, Norway Maple, Hazel, Blackthorn, Common Hawthorn, Dogwood, Elder and Small-leaved Elm.



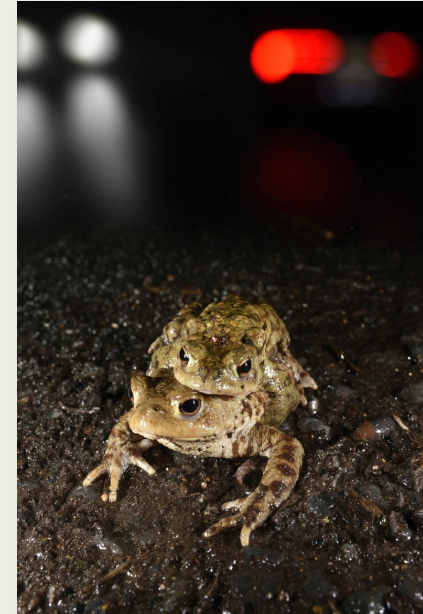
1840 Tithe Map for the parish of Sherborne St John

1871-72 Ordnance Survey map

APPENDIX 1

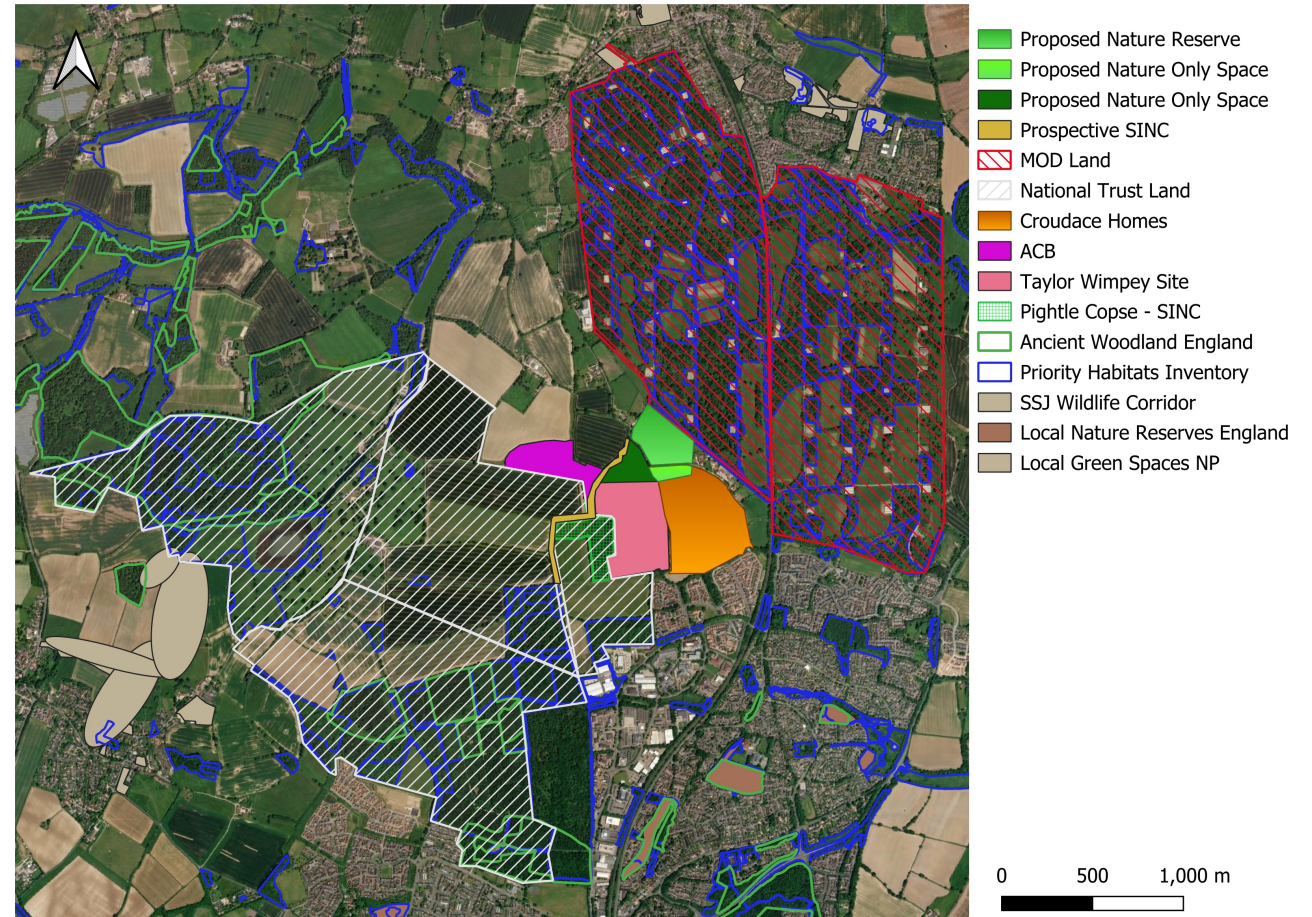
CUFAUDE LANE LANDSCAPE (2)

- Surveys over the last decade demonstrate the ecological richness of the area.
- **Priority Species of Principal Importance (section 41, NERC Act)** include: Skylark, Linnet, Cuckoo, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Spotted Flycatcher, House Sparrow, Grey Partridge, Marsh Tit, Bullfinch, Dunnock, Song Thrush, Starling, Lapwing, Barn Owl, Hedgehog, Brown Hare, Harvest Mouse, Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared Bat, Common Toad, Slow-worm, Grass Snake and Common Lizard.
- Species protected under **schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act** include: Hazel Dormouse and Great Crested Newts, along with a minimum of six species of bats.
- The Cufaude landscape is also home to a **meta-population of Common Toads and amphibians of local and national significance**. Common Toads, and other amphibians, migrate from terrestrial wintering habitats east of Cufaude Lane to breeding sites to the west.



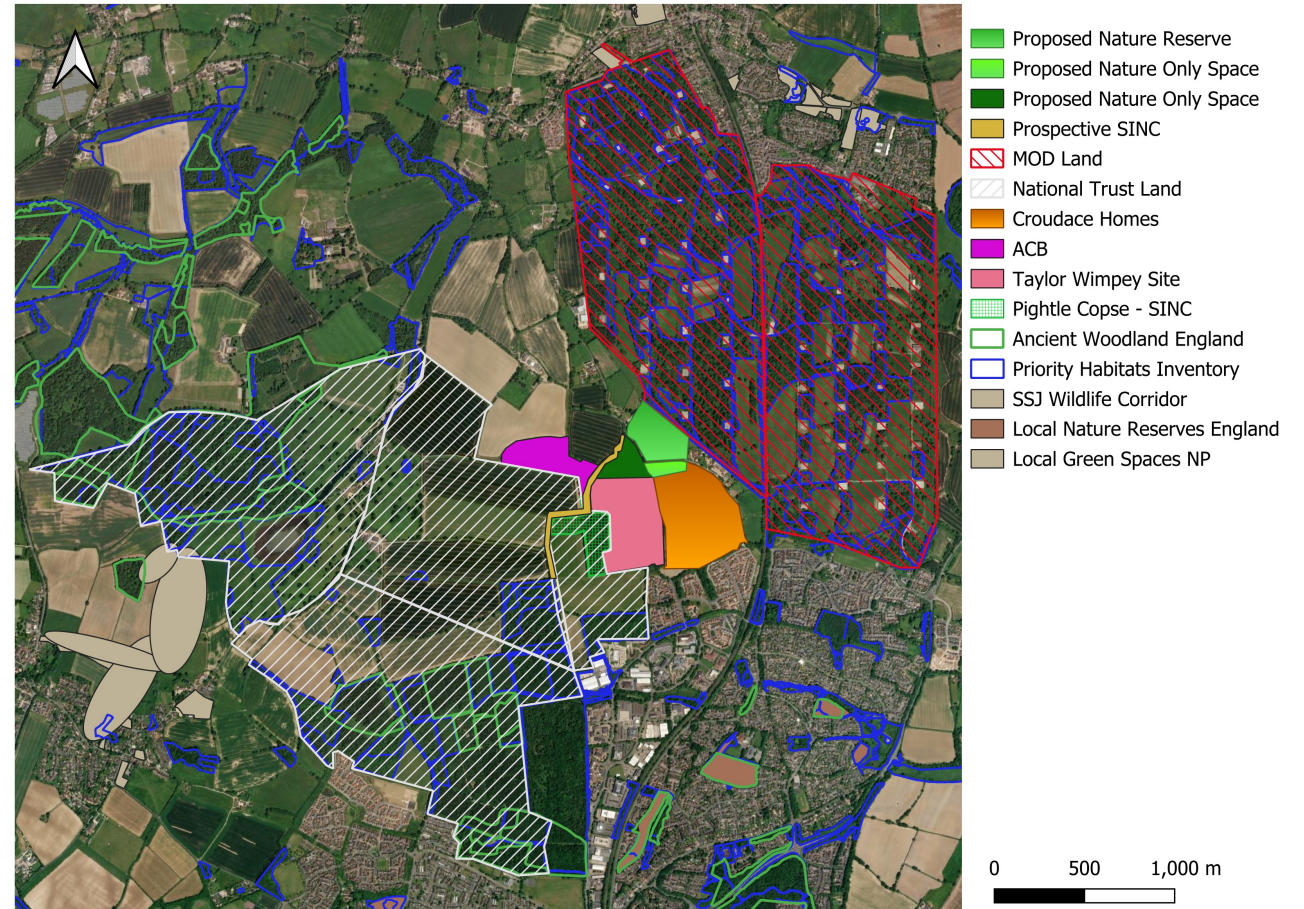
APPENDIX 2: NORTH BASINGSTOKE CORRIDOR (1)

- The Cufaude Lane Nature Enhancement (CLNE) Proposal forms the central portion of a wider potential green corridor.
- Northeast of the site, MOD Bramley camp incorporates Priority Habitat and an established Amphibian Hibernation Area.
- This links, via the CLNE and land designated as an ACB (Area that Could become important for Biodiversity), within the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, to a large tract of National Trust Land.



APPENDIX 2: NORTH BASINGSTOKE CORRIDOR(2)

- To the south this links to Forestry Commission land at Basing wood.
- To the east this links to the SSJ Wildlife Corridor, identified in the Sherbourne St John Neighbourhood Plan.
- The area is associated with a patchwork of Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland, and Riparian Buffers



APPENDIX 3

FAILURE TO ACT: THE CONSEQUENCES (1)

The following examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

Birds (in general)

- According to BTO, UK is home to 73 million fewer birds today than it was in 1970.
- Many of those impacted are open countryside species, and decline is a result of agricultural intensification and the loss/ degradation of feeding & nesting habitats.

Skylark

- A farmland indicator species, whose UK population has declined by 63% since 1967.
- Profoundly impacted in our borough, where loss of habitat due to development and house-building has been a major contributory factor.

Yellowhammer

- UK population has declined by 61% since the 1960s.
- Profoundly impacted in our borough, where loss of habitat due to development and house-building has been a major contributory factor.



APPENDIX 3

FAILURE TO ACT: THE CONSEQUENCES (2)

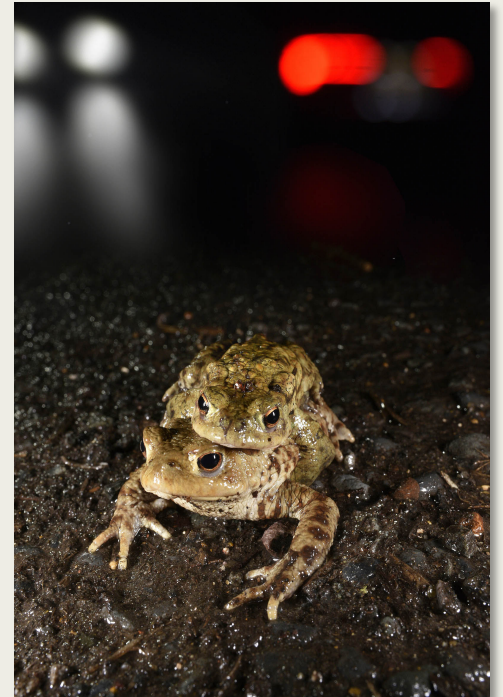
The following examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

Common Toad

- 41% decline in populations nationally over the last 40 years. Profoundly impacted in our borough, Cufaude Lane population is one of just a handful of remaining populations, and the most significant one in north Hampshire.
- Declining populations due to a combination of factors relating to development - habitat loss (terrestrial land and ponds), habitat fragmentation, loss of ecological landscape connectivity, road mortality, predation by pets and pesticide use impacting prey.

Great Crested newt

- Significant and continuing decline across the UK. 5% yearly decline nationally, which is not sustainable long term. Our borough is a hotspot for the species in southern England but the downward trend in numbers continues at pace.
- Contributory factors include loss of terrestrial/ breeding habitats and ecological connectivity. 50% pond breeding habitat lost since 1900 nationwide, significantly greater locally, when old maps and records are compared to the current day.



The following examples are illustrative, not exhaustive.

Hazel Dormouse

- 70% decline in the UK since 2000, locally extinct in 20 English counties. Our borough harbours most significant population in southern England.
- Declining populations due to a combination of factors relating to development - habitat loss (woodland and hedgerows), fragmentation of habitats, loss of ecological landscape connectivity, predation from domestic pets and BEMPs/ protection measures that inadequately safeguard the species.

Brown Hare

- Archetypal open countryside mammal, has declined by more than 80% in the UK over last 100 years. Land surrounding Cufaude Lane, ideally suited to Brown Hares, development will destroy and fragment their environment leading to local extinction
- Declining populations due to a combination of factors relating to development - habitat loss and fragmentation, loss of ecological landscape connectivity, predation from domestic pets.

