Ecological Compliance& Best Practice

ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT SCHEME

THE OLD POST OFFICE, TOYS HILL, KENT, TN16 1QG.

For

MR SAM BRECKMAN

NB. Information on legally protected, rare or vulnerable species may appear in ecological reports. In such cases it is recommended that appropriate caution be used when circulating copies.

April 2021

6931 - J001448

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CONTROL SHEET

General Document Information	
Client	Mr Sam Breckman
Title	Ecological Enhancement Scheme
Location	The Old Post Office, Toys Hill, Kent, TN16 1QG.
Planning Application Number	20/01843/HOUSE
Lead ecologist	Lizzie Breakwell
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Contract Manager	N L Loben Technical and Operations Director

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(Please ensure you have the latest version.)

Version	Date	Author	Description
1.0	12 April 2021	Lizzie Breakwell	Document created.
1.0	13 April 2021	Lizzie Breakwell	Document completed

INTRODUCTION

This site has Full Planning Consent (Ref. 20/01843/HOUSE) for the demolition of the existing garage, alterations and extension to the dwelling and revised parking provision. This specification has been produced to discharge Condition 3 of planning consent Ref 20/01843/HOUSE, detailed below:

Condition 3
No development shall be carried out above the damp proof course of the hereby approved development until a scheme to promote ecological enhancement has been submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority with a scheme of implementation. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained thereafter.

Reason: To enhance biodiversity as supported by Policy SP11 of Sevenoaks District Councils Core Strategy.

This document will support clients in ensuring compliance with current legislation, official policy, due diligence and agreed[1] standards of best practice relating to development of the site.

[1] In particular the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and British Standard BS 42020: 2013 *Code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development*.

BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The Old Post Office is a residential property and associated gardens located to the north of the village of Toys Hill, Kent. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, in the 'Westerham and Brasted Chart' Landscape Character Area (LCA) in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The property sits in a prominent position in the village of Toys Hill within the green belt, whilst looking down over the Low Weald designation.

The site itself comprises the house itself set within mature gardens bound by hedgerow. The general area is heavily wooded.

Permission has been granted for demolition of the existing garage, alterations and extension to the dwelling and revised parking provision.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this Ecological Enhancement Plan have been drawn together based on the habitat types present on site and in conjunction with landscaping plans (please see Specification for the Hard and Soft Landscaping and Landscape Design (Sheila Hassock Garden Design, November 2020). This Plan provides recommendations for ecological enhancements incorporated into the site development to comply with national and local planning policy and legislation, namely; Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, National Planning Policy Framework 2012, and BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

RETAINED FEATURES AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

Boundary hedgerows and trees

The site is bound by mixed hedgerow, which will be retained and protected as part of the proposals.

A mature walnut tree (*Juglans regia*) is also present on site and will be retained and protected as part of the proposals.

A mix of shrubs, climbers and herbaceous plants are to be planted around the site with species appropriate to their location, and a species-rich native hedgerow comprising 50% hawthorn and 50% mix of field maple, plum cherry, hazel, blackthorn, crab apple, privet, dogwood, rowan, holly and spindle.

There will be an opportunity to enhance the species-richness of all other hedgerows around the site perimeters and by managing the hedgerows in the future for the benefit of wildlife. The simple measure of filling in any gaps with additional native species (such as wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare* and guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*) and only trimming the hedgerow every two to three years will help to ensure "no net losses, but rather net gains for biodiversity". Future management to maximise the benefit for local biodiversity will mean avoiding annual cutting along the entire length of any sections of new or existing hedgerow and cutting approximately half of each length on a two to three year rotational basis to allow species such as hawthorn that flower on previous year's growth to produce fruit. This will maximise the quantity and quality of flowers and fruit/seed made available to a wide range of species, improve the density and complexity of each section of hedgerow to provide ideal bird nesting habitat, allow the development of ground flora species-richness at the base of each hedge, and provide food for the developing larvae of a wide range of invertebrates. Hedgerow bases should not be cut short and not at all during the growing, flowering and seeding seasons, or sprayed, as a varied ground flora is of vital importance for biodiversity.

Flower-rich grasslands

Opportunity exists on site for the planting of areas of flower-rich grassland, with a seed mix such as those provided by Emorsgate, appropriate for the underlying soil type. These areas should only be cut twice annually; once to a height of 10—15 cm in mid to late March, then once again to the same height at the end of the flowering season in early October. All the cuttings should be removed to avoid excess soil nitrification. The areas planted with wildflower seed mixtures will provide a valuable resource for pollinating insects, breeding invertebrates and small mammals. Invertebrate larvae provide a vital source of protein for the successful development of fledgling birds. Adult invertebrates that undergo nocturnal dispersal flights following emergence (such as moths and dung-beetles) provide food for foraging bats. Flower-rich grasslands also provide a source of food and cover for reptiles and amphibians, and sources of food for larger mammals such as badgers and hedgehogs.

PROTECTED SPECIES ENHANCEMENTS

Bats

All bats are protected species, and all are listed as species of principal importance under the NERC Act. All retained and enhanced sections of hedgerow surrounding the site managed appropriately (as described above) will provide good connectivity, commuting and foraging habitat for bats in the local area. Additionally, any areas of (appropriately managed) flower-rich grassland will also provide good foraging habitat for bats. It will be important to reduce levels of artificial nocturnal lighting, preferably avoiding it completely, in the vicinity of the surrounding hedgerows. Where lighting is unavoidable, use the lowest lux possible. Since 2018 there have been changes made by the Bat Conservation Trust to the use of bat-friendly exterior lighting; several previously recommended types of lighting have been phased out during 2020 and should no longer be used. The type of bat-friendly light source (luminaires) now preferred by local authorities are light emitting diodes (LEDs). This is because the light emitted is a narrow beam able to be accurately controlled; this avoids unnecessary light pollution affected areas where light is not needed.

Lighting can have a significantly detrimental impact on the foraging and commuting activities of bats when directed towards corridors of connectivity such as hedgerows or directed towards foraging opportunities in flower-rich meadows. It is also detrimental to other wildlife, including flora.

Other species

The establishment, enhancement and appropriate management of hedgerows and flower-rich grassland will provide suitable corridors of connectivity, cover and foraging opportunities for a range of species, and nesting habitat for birds. The hedgerows will produce larger quantities of fruit and seeds for over-wintering birds when managed according to the prescription (above) and only cut rotationally every two to three years. This practice will also help to give the hedgerows greater structural variety and density, therefore providing improved nesting habitat. Ecologically well-managed hedgerows and flower-rich grasslands for biodiversity also provide a wider range of niche habitats for breeding invertebrates, which become a valuable and vital source of protein for the successful development of fledgling birds. In addition to common species such as blackbird, robin, chaffinch and wren, all hedgerows around the site boundaries could provide nesting habitat for declining farmland species such as yellowhammer and linnet.

Provision of bird, bat and invertebrate boxes will enhance the biodiversity value of the site. The lists of recommended boxes are detailed below.

BIRD, BAT & INVERTEBRATE BOXES

Birds

Three bird boxes are to be installed on south-facing aspects of mature trees, such as the walnut, and/or on the exterior walls of the property (see Plan below). They are best positioned at a height of at least three metres. Two boxes will be **Schwegler 1B nest boxes (32mm hole), or similar,** and will attract great tit, blue tit, coal tit, nuthatch, house sparrow and bats. The remaining nest box should be **Schwegler 1B**

nest box (26mm hole), or similar, designed to attract small hole-nesting passerines generally, including blue tits, great tits and coal tits, although they will also attract other small birds as roosting places during cold weather, and bats.

The chances of occupation are higher if there is good hedge cover nearby as these will provide a good source of insect food for the nestlings when they hatch. Bird boxes require one annual clean in autumn (*i.e.* outside the bird breeding season, which is March to end of August in the UK). Please see plan below for bird box locations.

Bats

Three bat boxes are to be installed south, south-west and south-east facing aspects of mature trees, such as the walnut, and/or on the exterior walls of the property (see Plan below). They are best positioned at a height of at least three metres. These boxes will be **Schwegler 2F general purpose bat boxes (or similar)** suitable for all smaller British bat species.

Invertebrates

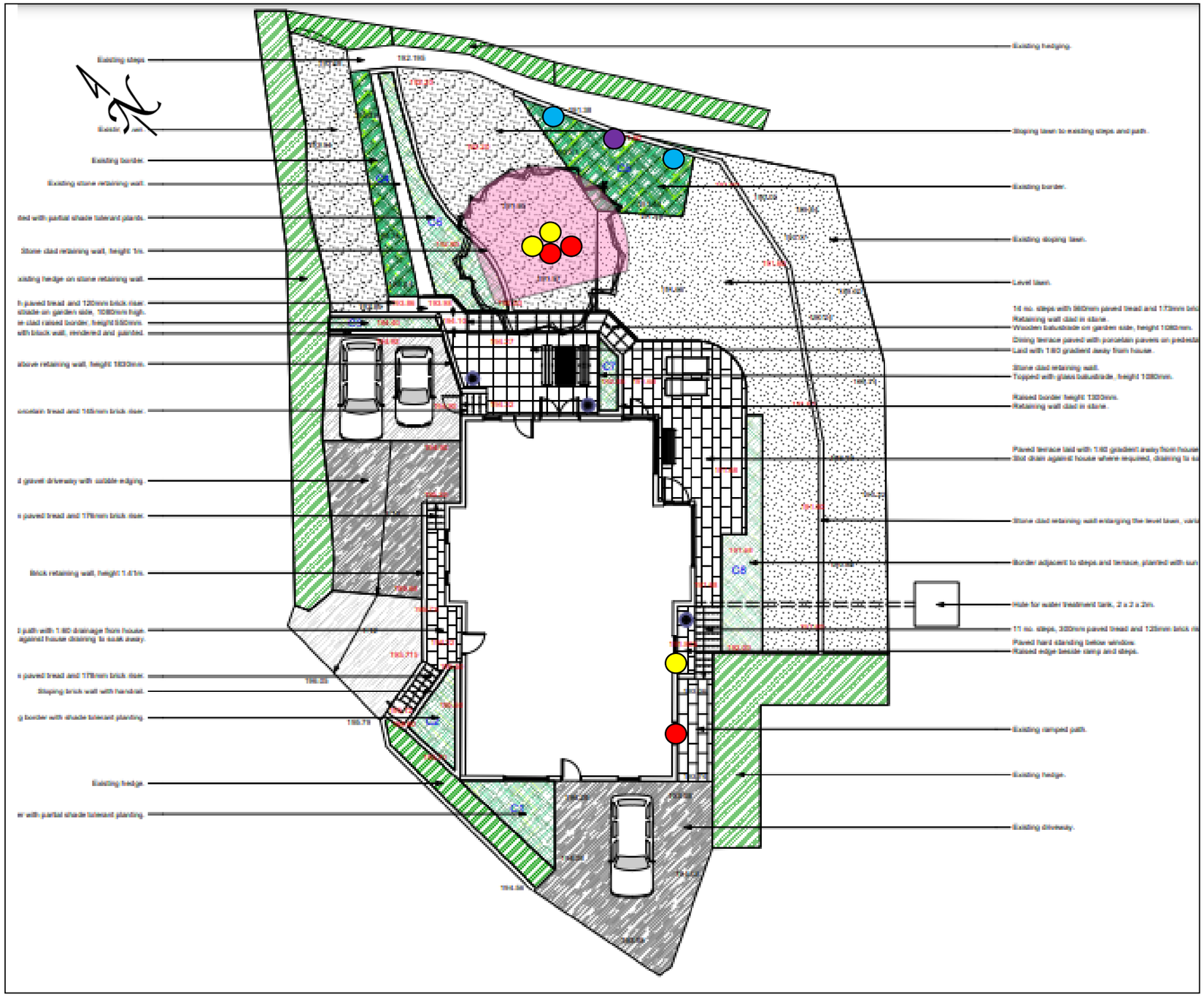
Two **Schwegler clay and reed insect blocks (or similar)** are to be installed on south-facing walls within the gardens (see Plan below). These are best positioned at a height of 1.5—2.0m.

Hedgehogs

The development plans for the site should include the provision of 'hedgehog gates' at the bases of any boundary fencing to allow free movement of hedgehogs through the landscape. Furthermore, one 'Eco Hedgehog Nesting Box' should be located in a secluded spot on the site, such as in the northern shrub border (see Plan below).

IMPORTANT. It is essential that the measures outlined in this report are strictly and permanently monitored and managed under the control of qualified ecological scientists or similar competent and formally appointed persons whose reporting is available to the Planning Authority.

Site plan



Key:

- Bird Boxes x 3
- Bat Boxes x 3
- Invertebrate Boxes x 2
- Hedgehog House x 1

Location of site

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Ref: S: 6931 / J001448
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Please note: this plan is intended only to indicate the approximate location of features and should therefore, not be treated as an accurate scale plan.

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Elizabeth Breakwell BSc(Hons) MSc DIC FBNA MRSB ACIEEM — Science Manager & Senior Ecologist
Lizzie has a 2:1 science degree with honours in zoology from Southampton University (evolution, behavioural ecology, genetics, quantitative biological methods, biodiversity & conservation, and experimental & field biology). She also holds a master's degree with Merit in Advanced Methods in Taxonomy & Biodiversity from Imperial College, London, based at the Natural History Museum and is a Fellow of the British Naturalists' Association as well as a Member of the Royal Society of Biology. Lizzie's general ecological knowledge and experience extends to field survey, bat (Class 2 licence-holder), badger, reptile, water vole, dormouse (Class licence holder) and newt (GCN Class licence holder) studies, report writing and presentation, EIA and consultancy, planning and wildlife legislation. Complementing her ecological field and laboratory work, Lizzie also has a background in business, the media (working for the BBC), presentations and administration.

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