

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGY SURVEY

For

LAND AT HONEY POT FARM

WORTHAM, SUFFOLK

ON BEHALF OF

PHIL COBBOLD PLANNING LLD

FOR

MR C FEENEY

FEBRUARY 10 TH 2022

TCW/FE/ 896022

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A Member of the Suffolk Bat Group

and C M Vickers BSc Hons

FRAMLINGHAM ENVIRONMENTAL

The Glebe Framlingham Road Dennington Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 8AD

Tel 01728 638 392 07470 937763 tim@framlinghamenvironmental.co.uk

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1. INSTRUCTION BY

PHIL COBBOLD

Phil Cobbold Planning Ltd

42 Beatrice Avenue

Felixstowe

IP11 9HB

Tel 01394 275431

www.philcobboldplanning.co.uk

info@philcobboldplanning.co.uk

JOB REFERENCE Email 20th January 2022

For Client : MR C Feeney

PROPOSAL - Stationary Holiday Lodges.

Planning reference PC

Site --- Land ranger grid reference TM 085 769

2 SUMMARY

2.1. A preliminary survey was carried out at land at Honey Pot Farm Wortham Suffolk, this covering species as mentioned in section 4 of the report which have specific relevance to sites geographical location.

2.2. The site has merit to local / Common garden bird species. Any works / demolition on buildings should not be carried out until a bird nest survey is carried out, a maximum of fourteen days prior to the works.

2.3 The site contains areas of scrub consisting of Black thorn – *prunus spinosa*, Dog Rose- *rosa canina*, Hawthorn – *crataegus monogyna* and Bramble- *rubus fruticosus*. These areas provide nest sites and feeding habitat for common / garden bird species. Any future management / clearance should be done outside the bird nesting season 1st March to 1st September - inclusive.

2.4 The site contains mature trees of Ash – *fraxinus excelsior*, Beech *fagus sylvatica*, Silver Birch -*betula pendula*, Bird Cherry – *prunus padus*, Oak – *quercus robur*, Scotts Pine – *pinus sylvestris*, and Larch – *larix decidua*. These trees provide potential nesting and roosting areas for Birds and Bats.

Any felling would require future survey work.

2.5 There is no evidence of Badger activity – earth works or breaches in hedge lines or tracks in undergrowth.

2.6 The site has some merit regarding reptile habitat. However its isolation within an area surrounded by recent residential development and intensive arable farmland make any population unlikely.

2.7 The site contains three buildings as detailed. A survey provided no evidence of Bat activity and the structures provided no quality roosting features.

PRA appraisal found - Negligible potential to support roosting Bats.

2.8 The sites grasslands, hedge, tree line margins and aquatic areas provide areas of merit to feeding bats.

2.9 The site contains terrestrial habitat connection to three bodies of water with regard to potential amphibian breeding habitat .

These waters were assessed using standard HSI data with regard to their specific suitability of Great Crested Newts.

2.10 HSI results - are enclosed in section 7 of the report and found prospects Poor / below average mainly due to the overriding factor of fish densities of Rudd – *scardinius erthrophthalmus* and Carp - *cyprinid carpio* - which have denuded some of the ponds of aquatic flora and predated amphibian species.

2.11 The site has potential habitats for Hedgehogs - a species identified in SIBS data and of local conservation concern. Recommendations should be followed regarding maintaining habitat and protected corridors of movement.

2.12 Elements of the site have ecological value to local species wildlife and some of conservation concern and protection. Recommendation and details contained in recommendations - pages 21 - 22

3 SITE VISIT - OBJECTIVES

An inspection of the buildings ,surrounding land area and ponds were made by Tim Watts - an independent, qualified and experienced ecologist on the 9th February 2022.

Conditions would be sub optimal for certain species- observation, however this was not considered to be a barrier to the appraisal of habitat and any future survey recommendations.

Objective to establish the possible presence and habitat suitability of protected species within the area of impact. Consideration was given to the land area of physical development and that of surrounding landmass – within viable / relevant distance with regard to particular species mobility / access and any change of use created over development proposals .

An inspection was made of buildings and surrounding habitats following the Bat Conservation Trust - Good practise Guidelines (3rd edition) and impact of the proposed works of developing of the site.

The buildings were inspected for evidence of bird residence / nesting that would be affected by any development plans

The land area was evaluated regarding small mammal, reptile and amphibian habitats, and it's connectivity to viable / breeding wetland habitats.

Aquatic habitats were evaluated reference their suitability to amphibians and specifically the Great Crested Newt.

4 OBJECTIVE – LEGISLATION / CONSIDERATIONS

The objective was to investigate for species which have specific protection within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, European Habitats Directive on Conservation of Natural Habitats of Wild fauna and Flora 1994 and subsequent amendments to Conservation of Habitats and species regulations 2010

Consideration of National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraphs 174 – 188 .

The Conservation of Habitats and Species regulation 2017 articles 1(b) and 1(h) of the habitats directive ' Priority Natural Habitat Type' and ' Priority Species' – ENGLAND'S BIODIVERSITY 2020 : A Strategy for Wildlife and Ecosystem Services.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of that species. However it is to be noted that the existing offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended which cover obstruction of places used for shelter or protection (for example bat roost-badger set) ,disturbance and sale – still apply to European protected species.

Survey consideration given to:

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates previous badger legislation by providing comprehensive protection for badgers and their setts, with requirement that any authorised sett disturbance or destruction be carried out under NE licence.

The European Community Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) sets out general rules for the conservation of all naturally occurring wild birds, their eggs and habitats. It requires a member states to designate Special Protected areas (SPAs) for protection of certain species.

The Survey was carried out with consideration of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 " Crow Act " and amendments to the species protection measures provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. With particular reference to Great crested newts.

The Hedgerows Regulation 1997 aim to protect important hedgerows in the countryside. They make it illegal to remove most countryside hedges without first notifying the local planning authority, and provide protection for ' important hedgerows'. Particular seasonal reference to bird nesting regarding hedgerow management works.

In addition to investigate local species listed in the UK Biodiversity action plan for Suffolk/Essex - 'Species of Conservation Concern' to build up a reliable and responsible picture of localised populations where present.

In consideration of the latter any requirement for future survey work.

5 SPECIES OF LEGAL PROTECTION

The species below have particular conservation status as mentioned within both local and European relevance, red/amber listed or covered by general protection within life cycle, migration, or habitat that may be considered and surveyed within an ecology statement.

Species covered by Statutory Instrument – Schedule 2EHD

Great Crested Newt (*triturus cristatus*)

Otter (*lutra lutra*)

Bats (all species *rhinolophidea* and *vespertilionidae*)

Dormouse (*muscardinus avellanarius*)

SPECIES COVERED BY LOCAL ACTION PLANS AND THE
WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 ---- SPECIALIST
CONSERVATION / PRIORITY SPECIES.

Barn Owl (*tyto alba*)

Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

Water vole (*arvicola terrestris*)

Hazel Dormouse (*muscardinus avellanarius*)

Hedgehog (*erinaceus europaeus*)

Badger (*meles meles*) covered by the Badgers Act 1992

Polecat (*mustela putorius*)

All amphibians - Great crested, Smooth, and Palmate newts. Common and Natterjack Toad, and Common Frog.

All reptiles.

All wild birds nests and eggs

Specimen and specialist flora

Note and record non Native / invasive alien species such as Japanese knotweed / Signal Crayfish

IMPLICATIONS OF LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

With legal responsibilities and planning implications, it is essential that any ecological assessment of potential development site, including the area of this report, must determine the possible presence or absence of any protected species as part of any planning development consideration. Or make recommendations for further survey work to conclude presence of protected species.

Without this assessment the potential developer would be unable to demonstrate due diligence in his/her responsibilities. Further more the local planning authority would not have been provided with sufficient information for a planning decision to be made. This could result in the application being designated incomplete and not determined, or simply refused.

Paragraph 99 of the ODPM Circular 2005 highlights that " It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development , is established before the planning permission is granted , otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision"

Where mitigation or compensation measures are required to ensure that no significant impacts will result on biodiversity from the development , the proposed measures may be secured through planning conditions or by EPS Mitigation Licences from Natural England.

6 BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION

Consideration was given to the sites habitat suitability to local protected species with reference to the NDB and Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service SBIS data. 2 km radius.

Three County Wildlife Sites were found, only one Wortham Long Green was considered to have relevant connectivity to Honey Pot Farm. Impacts upon the conservation value of this CWS was considered minimal.

7 EUROPEAN AND UK DESIGNATED SITES.

Consideration of European and UK designated sites within 7 km of the site boundary using Magic (Multi Agency Geographical information for the countryside) on line data resource.

Identified Redgrave and Lopham Fen Ramsar Site.

The site does form part of any area of Local or UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats.

8 LOCAL SPECIES RECORDINGS 2KM

Approximately 290 recordings have been made of some 107 species. These species include amphibians, birds, flora, invertebrates, reptile -grass Snake, Water vole, Polecat, Bats and Hedgehog.

9 SITE DETAIL AND DESCRIPTION

9.1 The site is located at TM 085 769

9.2 The site comprises of some 20,063 square metres of previously active amenity grassland and established pond. The pond TM0860376912 known as A was investigated to produce an HSI ref Great Crested Newt presence.

9.3 The site is bordered by historical hedging to the South and East, with a neighbouring pond TM 0866876870 known as C adjoining the South East corner of the site.

9.4 The western boundary of the proposed development area consists of an ephemeral ditch line and mature trees.

9.5 More recently (from historic caravan use) unmanaged amenity grassland has developed to form tussock grass - Cock's foot grass -dactylis glomerata on the west of the site, with occasion mature trees.

9.6 The immediately adjoining northern boundary and perimeter of the site has a pond TM 0860377052 known as B, on which an HSI was created in section 10. The pond area is backed by residential housing and mown lawns of Honey Pot Farm.

9.7 Adjacent to the sites Northern access point are two buildings surrounded by tall ruderals..

9.8 These buildings TM0852377066 known as A and building TM0853177071 known as B were surveyed and their relevance to wildlife detailed within section 10 LPS / EPS.

9.9 A mature line of Leylandii – cypressus leylandii stand to a height of some twelve metres and span the Northern access to the old caravan park area. These provide roost, refuge and nest sites to bird species. Any management / removal should be done outside the bird nesting season. See note 11.3 recommendations.

9.10 A third building stands just inside the Leylandii TM 0856677050.

A foot print twenty square metres consisting of rendered block details as per section 10 LPS / EPS

10 APPRAISAL of Local and European Protected Species and Methodologies

10.1 Birds

Birds identified on the site.

Great Tit – *parus major*

Blue Tit - *parus caeruleus*

Longtailed tit – *aegithalos caudatus*

Blackbird- *turdus merula*

Robin - *erithacus rubecula*

Wood Pigeon - *columba palumbus*

Pheasant - *phasianus colchicus*

Buzzard - *buteo buteo*

Collard Dove - *streptopelia decaocto*

Birds nest habitat – all active birds nests have legal protection.

The sites areas that create habitat for birds nests are the pond reed / sedge margin, mature trees ,hedges , tussock grass, and buildings.

See recommendations regarding birds nest protection Recommendations 11.1 /11.4

10.2 Badgers.

No evidence was found of earth works that could be attributed to badgers –i.e Sett, no breaches in hedge lines, discarder hair or prints , no latrines found.

10.3 Otters

Although Otters may well visit the site to predate waterfowl and fish no evidence of layups / holts were found.

10.4 Water Vole

The sites pond A has good habitat for Water vole however no evidence of burrows, feeding lawns, runs or latrines were found to signify their presence.

10.5 Barn Owls.

Buildings are not of sufficient quality to provide refuge or nest sites.

Trees of the site are not of sufficient size to provide roost features.

A dilapidated Owl box sits in trees to the NE .

No pellets, features or excreta were found that would signify the species presence.

10.6 Reptiles.

A walk over of the site was made to assess the suitable habitats for reptiles which would include areas of a variety of grassland / sward heights, natural areas of secure / undisturbed refuge which may consist of natural timber deposits, concrete / brick / stone, tin sheet or discarded plastic or rubber (that will often retain heat for the species) and bare ground.

The lack of potential refuge, historic mowing management, and lack of adjoining wild habitats make the site largely unsuitable to the species.

No requirement for further survey.

10.7 Bats.

The buildings were examined with regard to possible bat roost. Details of structure were investigated with reference to Preliminary roost assessment PRA guidelines - and facts found.

Building A

No features were present capable of supporting roosting Bats, roof and wall structures do not providing cracks, crevasses or insulation that would provide secure dark roost areas. The building was single skinned sheet 'nissen hut' and aluminated high interior with full open access.

10.71 No evidence was found of droppings, urine staining, uneaten insect debris, roof area contained cobwebs, an indication that no activity had taken place within the roof upper areas. There was no evidence of mammalian 'oiling' of access / departure points where bats have regularly brushed their fur against stone /brick or asbestos. There were no live or dead animals within the structure or on floor that would indicate the regular or historic presence of bats.

Conclusion – Negligible potential and no further survey required.

Building B

Preformed concrete panel walls, roller door access, with corrugated sheet roof was sound / well sealed with no signs of access.

Building checked for 10.71 evidence / PRA criteria and proved of negligible potential.

No need for further survey work.

Building C

Toilet Block - rendered block and brick in masonry painted, in good condition, Corrugated sheet roof - eve render. Building securely closed sound / sealed apart from mid electric supply section – gap above door.

All floors clear of debris –no bat evidence.

The building has an adjoining lean-to of cladded timber with a collapsed roof which has fully exposed the structure, creating full aluminated

Building assessed via 10.71 criteria.

Proved Negligible Potential.

The buildings were categorised using the criteria below.

Assessment of Potential to Support Roosting Bats - Categories for Buildings

Negligible Potential Buildings with no features capable of supporting roosting Bats. Often these buildings are of a 'sound' well sealed nature, or have a single skin and no roof void. They tend to have high interior light levels, and little or no insulation. Buildings without any roof s fall into this category.

Low Potential Buildings with limited features for roosting Bats (e.g shallow crevices where mortar is missing between bricks / blocks)

They may have open locations which may be subject to large temperature fluctuations and bat access points may be constrained.

No evidence of Bats found (e.g droppings/staining)

Buildings may be surrounded by poor or sub-optimal bat foraging habitat.

No evidence of Bats found.

Moderate Potential Buildings with some features for roosting bats. Buildings usually of brick or stone construction with a small number of features of potential value to roosting bats e.g loose roof tiles / ridge tiles, gaps in brick work, gaps under fascia boards, and or warm sealed roof spaces with under felt. Evidence of bats found a small scattering of droppings or urine staining.

Could be suitable for summer day roost.

High Potential Buildings with a large number of features or extensive areas of obvious potential for roosting bats. Generally they have sheltered locations, with a stable temperature regime, and suitable bat access points. Evidence of bats found droppings urine staining . Could be suitable for a maternity roost or summer day roost.

Confirmed Roost Bats discovered roosting within the building , or recorded emerging / entering the building at dusk/ dawn. A confirmed record (as supplied by an established bat group) would also apply to this category.

10.8 Great Crested Newts.

The three ponds on and on the site perimeter were surveyed for evidence of GCN and potential habitat.

The evidence found and researched were used to provide an HSI calculation to establish the necessity or otherwise of further survey work- Oldham R.S.. 2000

HSI DATA SHEET

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX TABLE

HSI Criteria	Pond A	Pond B	Pond C
SI1 Location			
Field Score	1	1	1
SI2 Pond Area			
Field Score	0.8	0.8	0.6
SI3 Pond Drying Field Score	0.9	0.9	0.5
SI4 Water Quality Field Score	0.33	0.33	0.33
SI5 Shade			
Field Score	1	1	1
SI6 Fowl			
Field Score	0.01	0.01	0.67
SI7 fish Category	0.33	0.01	0.67
SI8 Ponds			
Field Score	1	1	1
SI9 Terrestrial habitat			
Field score	1	0.33	0.67
SI10 Macrophytes			
Field score	0.7	0.5	0.5
TOTAL	0.47	0.45	0.65

Scores to the 10th root

Lee Brady evaluation to define suitability for GCN's on a categorical scale.

< 0.5 = Poor
1.5 – 0.59 = Below average
1.6 - 0.69 = average
0.7 - 0.79 = good
> 8 = Excellent.

The ponds score poor to average. In consideration of personal knowledge of the past 25 years management of the site specifically regarding high stocking densities of fish. The sites lack of connectivity to any ponds of merit to amphibians, I consider the site will not support GCN.

There is no need for further survey work

10.9 Hedgehog.

The site has connectivity to hedge line corridor and habitats which are of sufficient distance from local road hazards to provide for a sustainable population.

The site has suitable grasslands for nocturnal feeding and connection of a diversity of habitats within local gardens.

There is no need for further survey works

11.1 Any demolition of buildings should not take place in any season before a bird nest survey is undertaken.

This in view of evidence of bird nesting and ability of the species to nest outside the recommended seasons due to shelter of structures.

11.2 Site clearance of ground / tussock grass should not be done after 1st April to 1st September, inclusive.

This due to presence of ground nesting birds.

11.3 Any clearance of scrub areas / tree felling should not take place 1st March to 1st September inclusive.

To ensure no active birds nest are damaged.

11.4 Any loss of bird nest sites should be addressed via the installation of boxes. The number and diversity decided by an experienced ecologist once proposals of a site plan has been finalised

11.5 Bat boxes should be installed on mature trees in secluded parts of the site. This done on completion on final plan design.

This to enhance roosting areas for Bats within the locality.

Advice on positioning sort from an experienced ecologist.

11. 6 The site lighting plan should be designed not to illuminate the margins and canopy of the sites trees and hedges. This should be achieved by hoods and cowls.

This to ensure disturbance to nocturnal activity of local wildlife is minimised.

11. 7 There should be full preservation of the sites margins / boundary hedge lines and a buffer zone established via post and rail .

This to maintain habitat features of the site and preserve the existing wildlife corridor.

11. 8 Where possible areas of existing scrub, historic tree planting and tussock grass should be preserved to retain habitat and the enjoyment of wildlife for future visitors to the site.

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