

Martin Price (East Coast Planning Services)
Sent by email: eastcoastplanningservices@gmail.com

Date: 13 September 2022

Dear Martin,

Ecological Appraisal of land at Halcyon House, Worlingworth IP13 7NT

I am writing to provide a summary of the findings following a survey of the site by myself on the 6 September 2022, to inform a planning application for the conversion of a small outbuilding (B1) at Halcyon House (TM 23225 68538, Figure 1) to provide ancillary room to an existing cart lodge and workshop with home office/studio (B2) which has approval (Ref: DC/21/05914) for the conversion into a residential annex. A lobby will be constructed to link the two buildings.

Introduction

The purpose of the visit was to identify potential ecological features of relevance to the scheme, to enable an assessment of potential ecological impacts on bats and breeding birds. The desk and field assessment completed were made with reference to the CIEEM Guidelines¹.

Methodology

a) Site inspection

The site was inspected for evidence of nesting birds² and potential bat roosts² by Christian Whiting BSc MSc MCIEEM a licensed bat surveyor (Natural England Level 2 licence 2015-14745-CLS-CLS) following standard methodology³. The potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) was also assessed as two ponds are located within 100m of the existing buildings.

Results

Habitat descriptions

The single storey shed is of brick construction with a pantile roof with bitumen underfelt (Photos 1 to 2), with a 2 storey cart lodge and workshop immediately to the north (Photo 1). An area of hardstanding exists to the east of the buildings. Lawn is the dominant habitat to the west of the shed and the adjacent cart lodge.

Bats

An internal inspection found no evidence of roosting bats with no droppings or feeding remains found. The building has several gaps along the ridge (Photos 4 and 5) allowing water ingress whilst it is heavily cobwebbed indicating no bats have flown inside the building. An inspection of the south gable of the cart lodge where the link will require removal of some cladding and the creation of a doorway found no warped cladding which could allow bats to enter to roost.

Nesting birds

No evidence of nesting birds was found. Hedgehog may forage in the garden.

Amphibians

A pond P1 (Photo 6) exists to the north which is covered in duckweed (*Lemna sp*). It has the potential to support great crested newts and common amphibians. Historical records exist for ponds within Worlingworth for within 1km of the site such that the ponds on site could support the species.

Discussion

Bats: Based on the observations made on site, the proposed works will not impact upon roosting bats.

A bat friendly roofing membrane (e.g., bitumastic Type 1F or a breathable roofing membrane that has passed a bat safety test) recommended to ensure no entanglement issues if bats return to roost under roof tiles.

¹ CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

² All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended), level of protection varies per species.

³ Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition), Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Lighting on the converted cart lodge/workshop should avoid illumination of the nearby pond P1, trees and hedgerows, whilst any lighting to the front should be PIR operated set on a short timer.

Breeding birds: Small passerines could potential nest in the outbuilding prior to works commencing.

If building works are proposed to commence during the bird breeding season (e.g. March to August inclusive for most species) a nesting bird check is required prior to works commencing. If any nests are found, exclusion zones must be established until young have fledged. The builder's compound should be sited on existing gravel hard standing and away from any trees and boundary hedgerows.

GCN impacts are considered to be negligible given the small footprint of the proposed works which can be managed through good working practice as follows:

1. The existing lawn areas should be kept short with regular mowing prior to and during construction.
2. Clearance of any taller vegetation (e.g. hedgerows and shrubs) should be undertaken sensitively during the months of April to September inclusive. Hand tools (e.g. strimmers and hedge trimmers) should be used to take taller vegetation down to ground level using a 2- stage cut as follows:
 - A first cut to be taken to 150mm above ground level with brash raked prior to being removed from site;
 - After at least 1 hour (preferably overnight), a second cut to ground level; and
 - Maintained near to ground level until works commence.
3. Excavations should be filled on the same day they are dug or covered overnight with ply boarding and any gaps filled with damp sharp sand;
4. If this is not feasible access ramps should be created to allow animals to escape and the excavations should be inspected daily and immediately prior to infilling. Any animals (except for GCN) present should be moved into retained hedgerows and/or other boundary habitats (e.g. woodland) providing adequate cover;
5. If GCNs are encountered works must cease immediately, and advice be sought from a suitably experienced. The poster in (Appendix A1) should be erected in the welfare facilities provided for construction staff on site;
6. Footings and concrete slabs should be poured during the morning where possible to ensure it has solidified prior to dusk to reduce the risk of animals coming into contact with wet concrete;
7. Any hand mixing of mortar or concrete should be on ply boarding over a tarpaulin which is folded over the boarding at the end of each day to prevent animals coming into contact;
8. Any excess concrete should be poured into a concrete skip, so it can then set to prevent animals coming into contact;
9. All building materials and waste materials should be stored off the ground on pallets to reduce risk of animals seeking refuge;
10. Downpipes taking water off the roofs should be sealed at ground level by using a leaf and debris screen⁴ to prevent amphibians entering drains; and
11. If gully pots are required, they should use small diameter (6mm) grates where possible. Any installed gully pots should be situated ≥ 100 mm from the roadside, OR a wildlife-kerb⁵ must be installed adjacent to each gully pot AND a gully pot ladder⁶ placed into each gully pot.

Biodiversity enhancements

The following biodiversity enhancements are recommended:

- Two cedar or recycled plastic⁷ sparrow terraces could be erected on the west or north elevations of the cart lodge and workshop; and
- Two hole-entrance bird nest boxes⁸ could be mounted on suitable trees or outbuildings in the garden.

Good practice advice⁹ should be followed in relation to the positioning of boxes.

⁴ <https://www.drainagepipe.co.uk/leaf-and-debris-gully-110mm-p-D94G/>

⁵ e.g. <https://www.aco.co.uk/products/wildlife-kerb>

⁶ <https://www.thebhs.org/the-bhs-amphibian-gully-pot-ladder>

⁷ <https://www.nhbs.com/1sp-schwegler-sparrow-terrace?bkfno=185100>

⁸ E.g. <https://www.nhbs.com/vivara-pro-seville-32mm-woodstone-nest-box> or <https://www.nhbs.com/1b-schwegler-nest-box>

⁹ <https://www.nhbs.com/blog/nhbs-guide-where-to-hang-and-how-to-maintain-your-bat-box> and <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/nestboxes-for-small-birds/making-and-placing-a-bird-box>

It is generally advised that subject to no significant change in site management regimes, and dependent on the species present, baseline survey results typically remain valid for approximately 12 – 18 months (CIEEM, 2019).

Kind regards,

Christian Whiting BSc (Hons) MSc
Ecologist, MHE Consulting Ltd

Figures



Legend

Project: Halcyon House, Worlingworth, Suffolk

Drawn:	Date:	Drawing Ref:
CW	14/09/22	HALCYONHOUSE/ECO/01

Figure 1 Site location plan

Image taken from Ashenden Architecture Ltd Drawing 0573-001 Site Location Plan

Photos



Photo 1 East elevation of outbuilding and cart lodge



Photo 2 South and west elevations



Photo 3 Tight fitting boards on south gable of cart lodge



Photo 4 Cobwebby ridge and holes in roof



Photo 5 Holes in the ridge



Photo 6 Pond P1