

**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

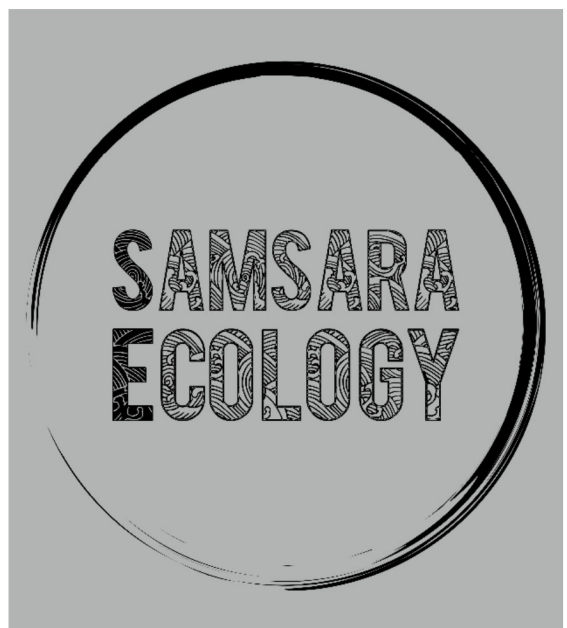
**Poplars Farm**

**Nick Horn**

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| Project Information |   |
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| Client              | Nick Horn   |
| Project Type        | Preliminary Ecological Appraisal                    |
| Project Name        | Poplars Farm  |
| Project Location    | Broad Bridge Road, Aythorpe Roding, Dunmow, CM6 1RY |

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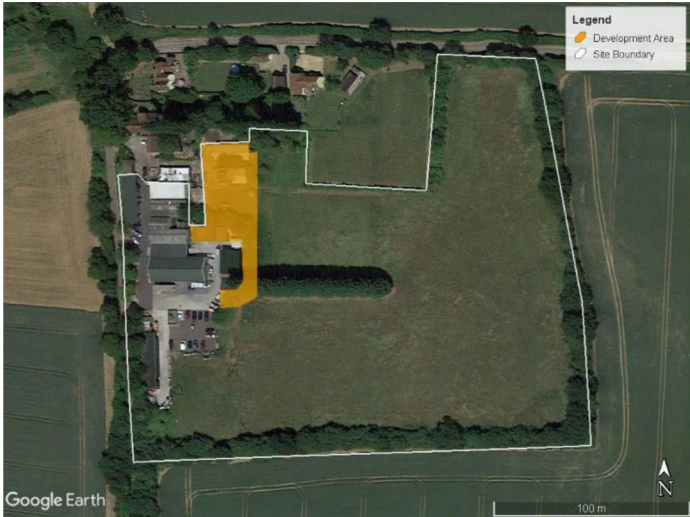
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It is important that planning decisions are based on up-to-date ecological reports and survey data. However, it is difficult to set a specific timeframe over which reports, or survey data should be considered valid, as this will vary in different circumstances. In some cases, there will be specific guidance on this (such as for the age of data which may be used to support an EPS licence application). In circumstances where such advice does not already exist, CIEEM provides general advice in its Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys<sup>1</sup> which should be referred to if this report is not submitted within 12 months of the first production.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

| Purpose of Report  | Site Boundary   |
|--|---|
| <p>The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) was written to identify ecological constraints to the proposed project and make recommendations for further surveys, where required, to inform a detailed impact assessment. Where no further surveys are required the report makes recommendations for avoidance measures or proportional mitigation and compensation measures required to avoid potential impacts from the proposals.</p> <p>Enhancement measures are outlined to meet the aims and objectives set out within national policies for biodiversity net gain.</p> |  |
| <p>Method</p> <p>The report is written in accordance with CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Desk Study:</li> <li>• Habitat survey</li> <li>• Preliminary habitat suitability assessments for notable and protected species</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p>Summary</p>   |   |
| <p>No ecological constraints to the development were identified during the survey of this Site and so no further surveys are required. As a precaution, recommendations have been given to protect badgers during construction as a sett is present on the southern boundary of the Site (approximately 120 m from the development area).</p> <p>Recommendations for enhancement have been presented and included the creation of a wildflower meadow and the installation of bird and bat boxes.</p>  |   |

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Samsara Ecology was commissioned by Nick Horn (the Client) in April 2020 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Poplars Farm, Broad Bridge Road, Aythorpe Roding, Dunmow, CM6 1RY (the Site) [Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference TL 57627 15548].
- 1.1.2 The Site is 3.5 ha and the Development Area inside the boundary covers 0.1 ha and comprises ruins of a former building, hardstanding, cleared areas and hardcore. The Site boundaries are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - The Site Boundaries**



- 1.1.3 The Client is submitting a planning application to rebuild a building where the ruins are currently located and construct an access road to the new building. An existing frame of a building within the development footprint has been demolished and re-erected with a new replacement cladding finish.
- 1.1.4 The PEA survey was undertaken on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

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## **1.2 Purpose of the Report**

1.2.1 This report has been written in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Ecological and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) guidelines for PEA and aims to:

- Identify key ecological constraints to the proposed development.
- Identify any requirements for further surveys and set out the time frame in which they can be completed.
- Inform the Client on where any significant ecological effects can be avoided or minimised where possible in line with legal and policy implications.
- Make recommendations for enhancement where there are opportunities for the project to achieve a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with local and national policies.

1.2.2 All relevant planning policies and legislation are presented in **Appendix 1**.

## **1.3 Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE)**

1.3.1 The report has been written by Hayley Farnell BSc, MSc (hons) an SQE with over 15 years of professional experience in environmental consultancy. Hayley is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds a Class 2 survey licence for bats [Licence Number: 2015 -15896-CLS-CLS] and a Class 1 survey licence for great crested newts [Licence Number: 2017-27675-CLS-CLS].

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Study Area

- 2.1.1 The 'Study Area' is the area in which data has been collected in order to complete this assessment. This includes the habitats within the Site boundary, guideline search areas for species and the 'standard' desk study area which is based on the size and type of the proposed development, but which typically ranges from 500 m to 2 km.
- 2.1.2 The area used for the desk study is given in section 2.2, and search areas for each species considered within the survey, are presented in **Appendix 2**.

### 2.2 Desk Study

- 2.2.1 The local biological records centre (The Essex Field Club) was contacted for records on local, national, and internationally designated wildlife conservation sites, notable habitats, and protected species within 1 km of the Site boundaries.
- 2.2.2 Information regarding the location of Protected Species Licences (PSL) granted by Natural England within 1 km of the Site has been obtained using the tools within the Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC)<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.2.3 Aerial mapping has been used to provide the context of surrounding habitats.
- 2.2.4 This level of desk study is considered to be proportionate to the proposed development for which potential impacts are likely to remain within the Site boundaries.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> [Accessed XX]

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## 2.3 Habitat Surveys

### 2.3.1 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.3.1 Habitats within the Development Area have been identified, classified, and described in accordance with JNCC's Handbook for Phase 1 surveys<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3.2 The Phase 1 habitat survey has been carried out within the Development Area boundaries.

## 2.4 Suitable Habitat Assessments for Notable and Protected Species

- 2.4.1 In addition to the Phase 1 habitat survey, initial assessments have been undertaken to identify if the Site's habitats are suitable to support Species of Principal Importance (SPI) or other notable or legally protected species.
- 2.4.2 During the survey, the surveyor has searched for and recorded suitable features within the habitats which can be used for breeding, foraging and/or create links to suitable habitats within the wider landscape for wildlife, in particular:
- Terrestrial Invertebrate
  - Great Crested Newt (GCN)
  - Reptiles
  - Nesting bird and/or other notable or protected bird species
  - Bats
  - Water vole
  - Otter
  - Dormouse
  - Badger
  - Hedgehog
- 2.4.3 Although evidence of the presence of protected or notable species may be found during the initial survey (i.e. droppings, species in situ, nest, dens, or feeding remains, etc.) it is not guaranteed. Therefore, Further surveys are recommended where suitable habitats are identified and there is a requirement to establish the presence or likely absence of such species in order to complete an impact assessment.
- 2.4.4 In some cases, a worst-case scenario will be established to identify potential impacts from the proposed development where there are suitable habitats to support protected or notable species.
- 2.4.5 The field survey for the majority of species was carried out within the survey area. However, this area has been extended beyond the boundaries for great crested newt, badger, water vole and otter when there is likely to be an impact to them from the proposed development and where access outside the Site boundaries was available.
- 2.4.6 Details of the methodologies of initial surveys undertaken and habitat requirements for each of the species listed are presented in **Appendix 2** and summarised in Table 1 below.

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<sup>3</sup> JNCC (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit.



**Table 1 – Summary of Habitats and Survey Areas**

| <b>Ecological Feature</b> | <b>Legal Status</b>   | <b>Typical Suitable Habitats<sup>a</sup></b>  | <b>Survey Area<sup>b</sup></b>                      |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| Terrestrial invertebrate  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 400 species are SPI</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassland</li> <li>Woodland Rides</li> <li>Woodland Edges</li> <li>Ponds</li> <li>Riverbanks</li> <li>Hedgerows</li> </ul>   | Within the Sites boundaries.                        |
| Great crested newt        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPS</li> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 2</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ponds</li> <li>Rough grassland</li> <li>Scrub</li> <li>Hedgerows</li> <li>Woodland</li> <li>Rubble or Stockpiles</li> </ul>  | Within the Sites boundaries and up to 500 m beyond. |
| Reptiles                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 2 and Sch 5</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rough grassland</li> <li>Woodland edges</li> <li>Embankments</li> <li>Scrub</li> <li>Hedgerows</li> <li>Heathland</li> </ul>   | Within the Sites boundaries.                        |
| Birds                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 5 and some are listed in Sch 1</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings</li> <li>Brownfield sites</li> <li>Trees</li> <li>Woodland</li> <li>Grassland</li> <li>Amenity and residential open space</li> <li>Rivers</li> <li>Estuaries</li> <li>Costal</li> <li>Heathland</li> <li>Arable</li> <li>Pasture</li> </ul>                        | Within the Sites boundaries.                        |
| Bats                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPS</li> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 2</li> </ul>                 | <p><b>Roosting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built structures</li> <li>Trees</li> </ul> <p><b>Foraging and Commuting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woodland</li> <li>Hedgerows</li> <li>Pasture</li> <li>Grassland</li> <li>Arable</li> <li>Rivers, streams, and ponds</li> </ul> | Within the Sites boundaries.                        |
| Water vole                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 2</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rivers</li> <li>Streams</li> <li>Ditches</li> <li>Ponds</li> </ul>   | Within the Site's boundaries and up to 50 m beyond. |

| Ecological Feature  | Legal Status  | Typical Suitable Habitats <sup>a</sup>  | Survey Area <sup>b</sup>                             |
|---|---|---|--|
|   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lakes</li> </ul>   |  |
| Otter   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPS</li> <li>WCA 1981 Sections 9 and 11</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean rivers</li> </ul>  | Within the Site's boundaries and up to 50 m beyond.  |
| Dormouse  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPS</li> <li>WCA 1981 Sch 5</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hedgerows connections with woodlands and foraging resources</li> </ul>   | Within the Site's boundaries and up to 1 km beyond.  |
| Badger  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection of Badgers Act 1992</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embankments</li> <li>Woodlands</li> <li>Grassland</li> <li>Hedgerows</li> <li>Scrub</li> <li>Arable</li> </ul> | Within the Site's boundaries and up to 30 m beyond   |
| Hedgehog  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPI</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassland</li> <li>Gardens</li> <li>Woodland</li> <li>Pasture</li> <li>Arable</li> </ul>                       | Within the Site's boundaries and up to 500 m beyond. |
| <p>Notes:</p> <p>a – These are a list of the typical habitats these faunas are known to use; the surveyor has also checked for evidence of the species within the Site and so there may be incidents when the animals are found in different habitats to those listed.</p> <p>b – The search for the areas beyond the Site's boundaries have only been conducted where suitable habitats are present for the species within the Site and where access is available.</p> <p>SPI – Species of Principal Importance</p> <p>EPS – European Protected Species</p> <p>WCA – the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</p> |   |   |  |

## 2.5 Preliminary Ecological Assessment

- 2.5.1 Data from the survey will be analysed to provide recommendations for further surveys, avoidance measures, mitigation and/or compensation required for the ecological constraints identified within the Study Area.
- 2.5.2 Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>4</sup> and the 25-year environmental plan<sup>5</sup> (see **Appendix 1**) the government has set out policies and aims to deliver a net gain in biodiversity through improved green infrastructure and increased opportunities for wildlife. In accordance with these policies, enhancement measures are recommended for inclusion in the proposed development.

<sup>4</sup> MHCLG (2019), National Planning Policy Framework, HM Government

<sup>5</sup> Defra (2019), A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HM Government



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## **2.6 Limitations to the Surveys**

- 2.6.1 Any ecology assessment must be considered as a 'snapshot' of the site conditions at the time of the survey. Ecological constraints will change over time and therefore the findings of this report are valid for a period of one year, after which the report should be reviewed to assess whether the survey should be updated.
- 2.6.2 There were no access constraints for the survey.
- 2.6.3 No constraints were such that they affect the overall conclusions and recommendations made herein.