Ecological Assessment

Coblands Farm

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Prepared for Client:
Peter and Lucy Hughes

Site Address
Coblands Farm, Depden, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 4BT

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REPORT INFORMATION

Date	28th November 2022
Applicant	Peter and Lucy Hughes
Site Address	Coblands Farm, Depden, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 4BT
Grid reference	TL 77261 55221
Our Reference	J3864
Report Revision	V1

1. Executive Summary

Parker Planning Services have been instructed by Peter and Lucy Hughes to produce an Ecological Assessment of the land at Coblands Farm, Depden, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 4BT in relation to an application for planning.

The survey found the habitats on the site to consist primarily of modified grassland, hardstanding surfaces and buildings, in addition to hedgerows at the site boundaries. There were two vineyards to the north and south of the site. There was a pond on the site and a pond adjacent to the site. The development proposals will affect existing buildings only and will not have a negative impact upon the habitats on and adjacent to the site.

A scoping survey of two barns on the site found them to consist of metal structures, without roof voids or other features suitable for roosting bats. Both buildings are considered to have negligible potential for bats.

Three trees on the site were found to have potential for bats. If these trees require either pruning or removing due to the proposals, they should be climbed and inspected by a licensed bat ecologist prior to the commencement of works. If roosting bats are identified, derogation under a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required.

A pond within the site was found to have potential for great crested newts (Triturus cristatus). As the development will only necessitate the redevelopment of existing structures, it is anticipated that if great crested newts are present then they will not be impacted by the development works.

The trees and hedgerows on the site have potential for nesting birds. To avoid impacts to nesting birds, tree work and work to buildings must either avoid the bird nesting season (1st March – 31st August) or be carried out within this period only if a further survey by a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed nesting birds to be absent within 48 hours prior to the commencement of work.

No further protected or notable species with the potential to be impacted by the development proposals were identified.

2. Introduction

2.1. Instruction

Parker Planning Services have been instructed by Peter and Lucy Hughes to produce an Ecological Assessment of the land at Coblands Farm, Depden, Bury St Edmunds, IP29 4BT (hereafter referred to as 'the site').

2.2. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the report is to identify the habitat types on the site, along with the presence or absence of any protected or notable species. The impacts of the proposed development are assessed, and recommendations are made regarding mitigation, compensation and ecological enhancement.

2.3. Site Details

The site is accessed by a driveway leading east off Bury Road (A143), approximately 0.7km northeast of the village of Clopton Green.

The site consists of a building complex, including two agricultural barns (Building 1, to the west and Building 2, to the east). There were several residential dwellings adjacent to these which were not included within the scope of the survey. The site boundary extends to encompass a field to the north,and includes part of two fields to the south.

2.4. Development Proposals

The development proposals are to renovate Building 1 and Building 2.

2.5. Legislation

A summary of relevant legislation and policy can be viewed in Appendix 3: Legislation and Policy.

2.6. Qualifications of the Author

David Watts is a suitably qualified ecologist who is a full member of CIEEM, holds a BSc (Hons) Ecology, a PGCert Biological Recording, and holds Natural England class licences to survey bats, great crested newts (Triturus cristatus) and barn owls (Tyto alba).

3. Methodsst

3.1. Desk-Based Study

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Magic Maps and Natural England websites were consulted as to any land-based designations and priority habitats within a 2km radius of the site.

Aerial imagery was assessed using OS maps and Google Earth Pro to give an appraisal of the surrounding land use.

A consultation was undertaken with the local biological record centre, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS).

3.2. Survey Timing

The site survey was carried out in suitable weather conditions by David Watts on 23rd November 2022.

3.3. Habitat Survey Methods

The study area was surveyed in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UKHab, 2018) guidelines. Habitat types were assigned a primary code to a hierarchical level of at least two, and secondary codes to further clarify the habitat.

Habitats and species present on or adjacent to the site were assessed using CIEEM's (2018) guidelines. Ecological features were classed as being of either international, national, regional, district, local or low importance (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Importance of ecological features

Value of feature	Key examples
International	Internationally designated sites (e.g. SPA, SAC); internationally significant habitat listed in Annexe 1 of the Habitats Directive; a regularly occurring globally threatened species
National	A nationally designated site (SSSI, NNR, LNR), a regularly occurring significant number/population of a nationally important species; a feature identified as being of critical importance.
Regional/County	Viable areas of key habitat identified in the regional or county BAP; a regularly occurring significant population/number of any species important at regional/county level; sites of conservation importance which exceed the district selection.
District	Areas of habitat identified in District/City/Borough BAP; sites/features which are scarce within the District/City/Borough; a regularly occurring significant population/number of any species important at District/City/Borough level.
Local	Areas identified in a Local BAP; sites/features which are scarce in the locality or which are considered to enrich the habitat resource within the local context (e.g. species-rich hedgerows); any populations, species or habitats of local importance.
Low	Habitats of moderate to low diversity which support a range of locally and nationally common species, the loss of which can be easily mitigated.

3.4. Protected and Notable Species

A survey of the site was undertaken for signs of and suitable habitat for any protected and notable species.

Buildings and trees were assessed for their potential for roosting bats using methods prescribed by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016). A walkover inspection was made for any other notable mammal species, including badgers (Meles meles), otters (Lutra lutra) and water voles (Arvicola amphibius).

The site was assessed for its suitability for reptiles and amphibians. Any ponds within 500m of the site were identified through an assessment of Ordnance Survey maps and aerial imagery.

The site was assessed for its suitability for nesting birds. Any bird species identified during the survey were recorded.

The habitats on the site were assessed for their suitability for invertebrates, although a detailed invertebrate survey was not undertaken.

3.5. Invasive Species

Any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) on or immediately adjacent to the site were recorded.

3.6. Constraints

The site survey was constrained by the season in which it took place. The survey was undertaken at a suboptimal time of year for botanical surveys and some species may not have been present at the time of the survey.

4. Results

4.1. Designated Sites

DEFRA (2022) and Natural England (2022) hold records of statutory designated sites within 10km of the site. These include:

Hay Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 4.8km northeast of the site.

Cavendish Woods SSSI is located approximately 5.1km south of the site.

Trundley and Wadgell's Woods Great Thurlow SSSI is located approximately 8km southwest of the site.

Frithy and Chadacre Wood SSSI is located approximately 8.1km southeast of the site.

Kentwell Woods SSSI is located approximately 8.6km southeast of the site.

SBIS hold records of three non-statutory sites within 2km of the site. These include:

Black Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS) is located approximately 830m southeast of the site.

Brush Wood CWS is located approximately 1.8km east of the site.

Bromagefield Wood is located approximately 1.9km east of the site.

Great Wood is located approximately 1.9km east of the site.

Garbs Grove CWs is located approximately 1.9km south of the site.

4.2. Habitats within the Surrounding Area

The immediate surrounding land use consists predominantly of arable land. Although most of the habitat in the surrounding area appears to be highly modified, connectivity is provided by trees and hedgerows at field boundaries, which link the site with several small woodlands. Terrestrial connectivity is somewhat constrained by the A143 adjacent to the west boundary of the site.

DEFRA hold records of a number of priority habitats within 2km of the site, including traditional orchards, wood pasture and parkland and deciduous woodland. Black Wood, an ancient/semi-natural woodland (also a CWS, as noted above), is located approximately 830m southeast of the site.

4.3. Habitats within the Site

A plan detailing the habitats with accompanying target notes can be viewed in Appendix 2: Habitat Plan.

g4 modified grassland

To the north and south of the site were two areas of modified grassland (g4 modified grassland). The north section consisted of a field approximately 0.8ha in size which had been recently sown; it appears that this had previous been in use as arable land. Graminoid species consisted predominantly of perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne), with occasional false oat grass (Arrhenatherum elatius) and cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata). Forb species were typical of disturbed ground, including ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), broadleaved dock (Rumex obtusifolius), bristly oxtongue

(Helminthotheca echioides), groundsel (Senecio vulgaris), smooth sow thistle (Sonchus oleraceus), creeping thistle (Cirsium arvense) and scentless mayweed (Tripleurospermum inodorum).

The modified grassland to the south of the site was sheep grazed, and consisted of a mixture of perennial ryegrass, cock's foot, false oat grass and Yorkshire fog (Holcus lanatus). Forb species were typical of improved grassland, including creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens), broadleaved dock (Rumex obtusifolius), ragwort (Jacobaea vulgaris), hawkweed (Hieracium sp.), Dutch clover (Trifolium repens) and scentless mayweed. There was also a small area of grassland to the centre of the site of similar composition.

w1b6 line of trees

Either side of the access drive were linear groups of trees. Trees to the north were early-mature and well established, while trees to the south had been recently planted. Species included silver birch (Betula pendula), pedunculate oak (Quercus robur), Norway maple (Acer platanoides), small-leaved lime (Tilia cordata), hornbeam (Carpinus betulus), crab apple (Malus sylvestris) and wild cherry (Prunus avium).

h2a hedgerows

Native hedgerows at the site boundaries:

H1, to the north of the site, consisted of field maple (Acer campestre), sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus), hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) and hazel (Corylus avellana). The hedgerow was fairly dysfunctional, with a lack of recent management and several large gaps.

H2, to the west of the site, consisted of field maple, hazel and blackthorn (Prunus spinosa). The hedgerow was well established but had not been recently managed.

H3, to the east of the site, bordered a residential garden and had been well-maintained to a height of 2m. Species included dogwood (Cornus sanguinea), hazel, field maple and hawthorn.

c1d7 vineyards

Recently established vineyards to the north and south of the site.

u1b5 buildings and u1b6 other developed land

Buildings and hardstanding surfaces. Buildings are discussed in more detail in Section 4.5 Bats.

r1 standing open water

An artificial pond with brick sides which was highly eutrophic. The pond is discussed in more detail in Section 4.7 Herpetofauna.

11 scattered trees

Scattered trees growing around the buildings both within hardstanding and grassed area. Species included pedunculate oak, ash (Fraxinus excelsior), horse chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum), Leyland cypress (Cupressus x leylandii) and hybrid poplar (Populus x canadensis).

4.4. Invasive Species

SBIS hold records of invasive species within 2km of the site, including Egyptian goose (Alopochen aegyptiaca), Canada goose (Branta canadensis), Reeve's pheasant (Syrmaticus reevesii), ruddy shelduck (Tadorna ferruginea), Chinese muntjac (Muntiacus reevesi), American mink (Neovison vison) few-flowered garlic (Allium paradoxum) and yellow archangel (Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. Argentatum).

No invasive species were identified on the site.

4.5. Bats

Desk Based Study

SBIS hold records of bat species within 2km of the site, including common pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus) and brown long-eared bat (Plecotus auritus).

DEFRA hold no records of granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) for bats within 2km of the site.

Buildings

Two buildings, referred to as Building 1 and Building 2, will be affected by the proposals and were therefore included within the survey. There were additional residential dwellings on and adjacent to the site which were not included with the survey.

Building 1 consisted of a barn constructed of corrugated metal and plywood. The building was divided into two sections on an east west axis. The east section had a pitched corrugated metal roof. The interior consisted of a single void with no natural light. The west section, which was in use as a grain store, had a pitched corrugated metal roof with skylights on both aspects; the interior consisted of a single void which was well lit. No signs of bats or features suitable for bats were identified within the building. The building is considered to have negligible potential for roosting bats.

Building 2 consisted of a barn constructed of a corrugated metal with a pitched corrugated metal roof. There were gaps below the eaves which provided potential access points and allowed low light levels within the building. The interior of the building consisted of a single void. There was a poultry shed on the east aspect of the building which was in use at the time of the survey. No signs of bats or features suitable for bats were identified within the building. The building is considered to have negligible potential for roosting bats.

Trees

Four trees and two groups of trees were inspected for roosting bats. Additionally, there were linear groups of trees either side of the driveway, all of which were young to semi-mature, with negligible potential for roosting bats. A summary of the bat roost inspection is detailed in Table 4.1, below.

Table 4.1 Bat roost assessment of trees

Reference	Species	Potential roost features	Bat roost potential
T1	Pedunculate oak	Small knothole at 3m.	Low
T2	Pedunculate oak	Small knotholes and lifted bark throughout stem and primary branches.	Low
T3	Pedunculate oak	No potential roost features visible from ground level. Tree of such a size that potential roost features may be present.	Low
T4	Hybrid poplar	No potential roost features present.	Negligible
G5	Leyland cypress, ash	No potential roost features present.	Negligible
G6	Horse chestnut, hybrid poplar	No potential roost features present.	Negligible

4.6. Other Mammals

SBIS hold records of otter within 2km of the site. There were no riparian habitats on or adjacent to the site suitable for otters or water voles.

SBIS hold records of notable mammal species within 2km of the site, including brown hare (Lepus europaeus), hedgehog (Erinaceous europaeus) and polecat (Mustela putorius).

4.7. Herpetofauna

SBIS hold records of smooth newt (Lissotriton vulgaris) approximately 1.4km north of the site.

[redacted]

There was a single pond on the site (WB1) and a pond within a residential garden adjacent to the site (WB2). There was also a pond 305m southwest of the site (WB3). WB1 and WB2 were surveyed in detail, whereas access was not provided to WB3. Using the great crested newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI), WB1 was found to have below average suitability and WB2 was found to have good suitability for great crested newts.

Table 4.2 Great crested newt Habitat Suitability Index

SI Description	WB1		WB2	
	Result	SI value	Result	SI value
Geographic location	Optimal	1	Optimal	1
Pond area	30m^2	0.1	80m^2	0.4
Pond permanence	Never dries	0.9	Never dries	0.9
Water quality	Poor	0.33	Moderate	0.67
Shade	5%	1	5%	1
Water fowl effect	Absent	1	Absent	1
Fish presence	Absent	1	Absent	1
Pond density	5	0.7	5	0.7
Terrestrial habitat	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67
Macrophyte cover	0%	0.3	5%	0.35
Score:		0.58 (below average)		0.72 (good)

SBIS hold records of slowworm (Anguis fragilis) within 2km of the site. The habitats on the site are suboptimal for reptiles, consisting predominantly of short swards of modified grassland and hardstanding surfaces. The hedgerows at the site boundaries provide suitable habitat for reptiles when considered in isolation, however they are not linked to particularly suitable reptile habitat.

4.8. Bird Species

The trees on the site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. The buildings on the site also provide suitable habitat for nesting birds, particularly barn swallows (Hirundo rustica), although no nests were identified during the survey.

4.9. Invertebrates

No notable invertebrate species were identified during the survey. The habitats on the suite are highly modified and are unlikely to support significant populations of notable invertebrate species.

5. Assessment

5.1. Designated Sites

The closest statutory designated site to the site is Hay Wood SSSI, approximately 4.8km from the site. As the development proposals will result in the conversion of existing buildings, without the loss of any habitat, this will result in no foreseeable impacts upon this or other designated sites.

5.2. Habitats

The modified grassland, vineyards, hardstanding surfaces and buildings on the site are all highly modified and are of low ecological value. The hedgerows at the site boundary, although not meeting the criteria for importance defined in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, are native and are therefore considered to be of local ecological value.

The only habitats directly affected by the proposals are the buildings on the site. Works to these will not result in any foreseeable negative ecological impact. There are several trees growing in close proximity to Building 1, and it is possible that these will necessitate either removal or pruning works to facilitate the proposals. In the absence of any further mitigation any tree removals will result in a minor negative ecological impact.

5.3. Bats

Building 1 and Building 2 both have negligible potential for roosting bats. Therefore, there are no foreseeable impacts resulting from the renovation of these buildings upon roosting bats.

T1, T2 and T3 have low potential for roosting bats. If any of these trees necessitate further pruning or removal, in the absence of further mitigation this could result in impacts upon roosting bats.

Bat species have been identified within the surrounding area and the site provides suitable foraging habitat for bats. In the absence of further mitigation, the installation of any artificial lighting into the proposals could impact upon foraging bats.

5.4. Other Mammals

There are no foreseeable impacts of the development proposals upon any other protected or notable mammal species.

5.5. Herpetofauna

WB1 has below average suitability and WB2 has good suitability for great crested newts. As the proposals will only necessitate works to the existing buildings, there will be no foreseeable impacts upon great crested newts, regardless of whether they are present within these waterbodies.

The site provides suboptimal habitat for reptiles and therefore there are no foreseeable impacts of the proposals upon reptile species.

5.6. Bird Species

In the absence of further mitigation, any development works affecting the buildings and adjacent trees have the potential to impact upon nesting birds.

5.7. Invertebrates

There are no foreseeable impacts of the development proposals upon notable invertebrate species and the development will not impact upon pollination resources within the surrounding area.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Habitats

If any trees necessitate removal due to the proposals, this must be compensated by planting on at least a like-for-like basis. Trees planted for compensation should be native or of known benefit to local wildlife.

6.2. Bats

T1, T2 and T3 have low potential for roosting bats. If any of these trees necessitate removal or further pruning due to the proposals, these should be climbed and inspected by a licensed bat ecologist. If roosting bats or signs of bats are identified, derogation under a Natural England EPSML will be required before tree works commence.

To avoid impacts to foraging bats and other nocturnal wildlife, the use of exterior lighting as part of the proposals should be avoided. If for any reason exterior lighting is required, the following recommendations prescribed by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018) should be followed:

All luminaires should lack UV elements,

LED luminaires should be used where possible,

A warm white spectrum (<2700 kelvin) should be adopted to reduce blue light,

External security lighting should be set to a short timer or motion sensor

The spread of light should be at, or near horizonal level,

The times that lights are used should be limited to provide some dark periods

6.3. Birds

It is recommended that works to the buildings and any tree works either avoids the bird nesting season (1st March – 31st August), or only commences within this period if a further survey conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed nesting birds to be absent.

6.4. Other Protected and Notable Species

In the unlikely event that any protected or notable species (e.g., bats, badgers, great crested newts) are identified during development works, works must cease, and a suitably qualified ecologist must be consulted immediately.

7. References

ARGUK (2010). ARGUK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index. Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom

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Natural England (2022). Designated Sites View [online]. Available at: >www.designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk< [accessed 1st December 2022]

UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2018). UK Habitat Classification User Manual. Ecountability ltd, Kentisbeare.

Appendix 1: Photographs

Plate 1: Building 1

Plate 2: Building 1

Plate 3: Building 1, interior (east section)

Plate 4: Building 1, interior (west section)

Plate 5: Building 2

Plate 6: Building 2

Plate 7: Building 2, interior

Plate 8: Modified grassland

Plate 9: Building 2 interior

Plate 10: Line of trees

Plate 11: Vineyard

Plate 12: Hedgerow

Plate 13: Hedgerow

Plate 14: Hedgerow

Plate 15: Garden

Plate 16: Pond

Plate 17: T1

Plate 18: T2

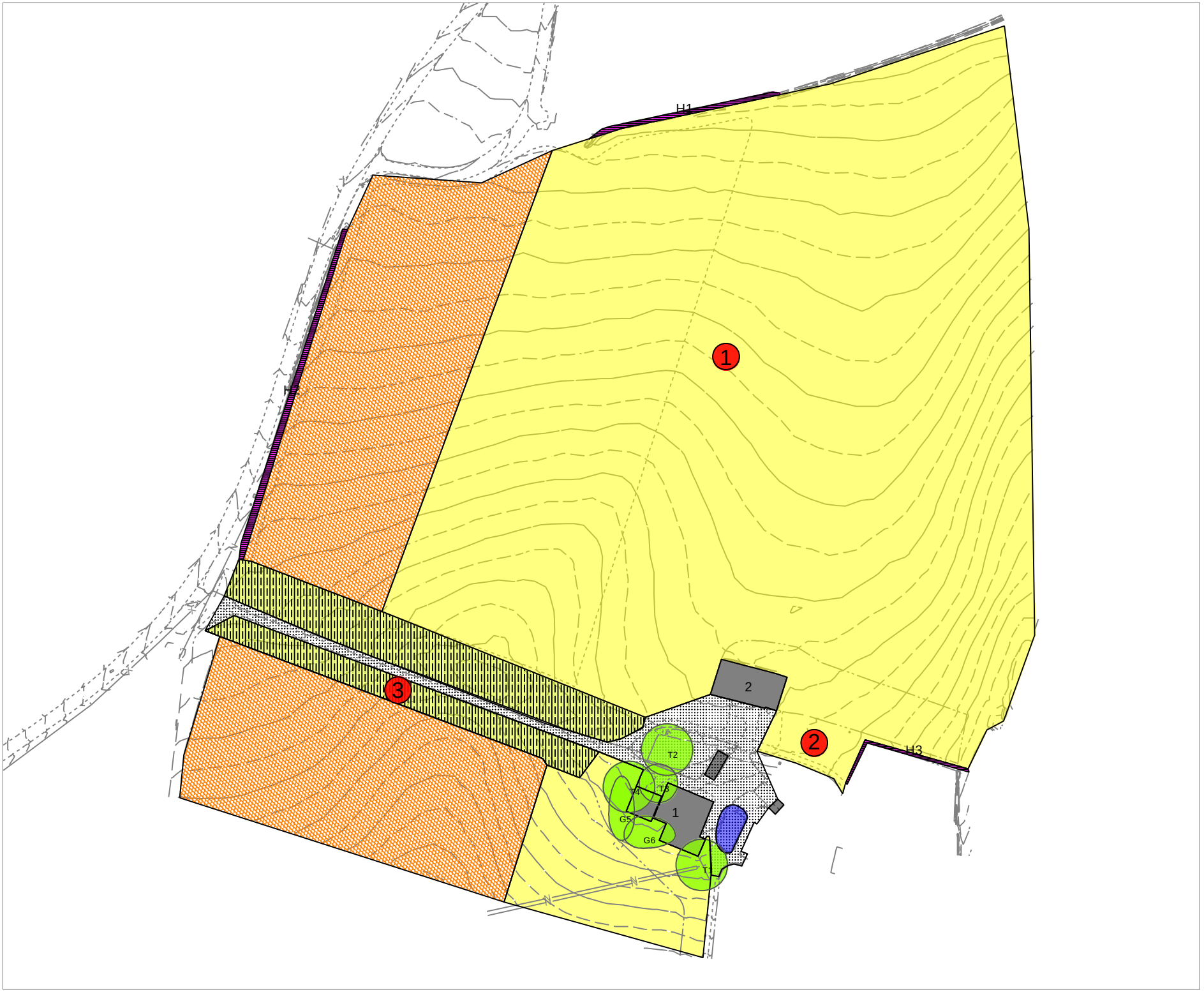
Plate 19: T3

Plate 20: T4

Plate 21: G1

Plate 22: G2

Appendix 2: Habitat Plan



Habitat key:

	g4 modified grassland
	w1g6 line of trees
	h2a hedgerow
	c1d7 vineyards
1	u1b5 buildings (reference number relates to bat survey)
	u1b6 developed land (hardstanding surfaces and gravel)
	r1 standing open water
T1	11 Scattered trees (reference number relates to bat survey)

Target notes:

1	Recently sown modified grassland
2	Grazing pasture
3	Recently planted line of trees

NORTH

Drawing title:	Habitat Plan
Project:	Coblands Farm
Drawing number:	P1H-1672-01
Drawn by:	David Watts
Date:	02/12/2022
Scale:	1:750 @ A4

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Appendix 3: Legislation and Policy

Statutory Designated Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are European designated sites and have being identified by JNCC/Natural England as being of interest for their bird species classified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). SPA are classified in accordance with the European Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, also known as the Birds Directive. SPA are of international importance and have statutory protection.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) protect special habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive and are of international importance.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are first-tier sites for conservation. They are identified by JNCC/Natural England as being of interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features. The legal framework for SSSI is within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are of national importance and have statutory protection.

Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance that have been designated under the criteria of the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands for containing representative, rare or unique wetland types or for their importance in conserving biological diversity.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are statutory sites of at least local importance. They are declared under section 21 of the National parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. All district and county councils have powers to acquire, declare and manage LNRs. Parish and town councils can also declare LNRs but they must have the powers to do so delegated to them by the principal local authority. To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. Some are also nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

A County Wildlife Site (CWS), is a designation which recognises a site's high value for biodiversity. CWS's raise awareness of a site's importance for wildlife, particularly with regard to planning and land management.

Hedgerow Regulations 1997

The Hedgerow Regulations set out criteria that must be used by the local planning authority to determine whether hedgerows are important. These relate to the values of hedgerows from an archaeological, historical, landscape and ecological perspective. The exclude hedgerows that are less than 30 years old. Removal of a hedgerow in contravention of the regulations is a criminal offence.

Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb any animal protected under Schedule 2 of the regulations. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an animal, even if the animal is not present at the time.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended), makes it an offence to:

Deliberately or recklessly injure, kill or capture any animal protected under Schedule 5 of the act.

Deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird; to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while occupied or being built, or to take or destroy the egg of a wild bird. Additional protection is afforded to bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Act.

Intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any wild plant included in Schedule 8 of the Act.

Badger Protection Act 1992

Badgers (Meles meles) benefit from specific protection under the provisions of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under the Act, it is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempt to do so), to cruelly ill-treat a badge, to interfere with a sett, cause a dog to enter a sett, and to disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett.

Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) includes a list of 943 national priority species and 56 habitats of principal importance, with all species and habitats having specific action plans defining the measures required to ensure their conservation. Although the UKBAP has since been superseded by the UK-Post 2010 Biodiversity Framework and a focus on County Biodiversity Plans, it remains a useful point of reference.

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 required that any public bodies take into consideration any species and habitats listed in the UKBAP when implementing their duty and exercising any normal functions.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should aim to protect or enhance biodiversity and conservation interests, and where possible any development should aim to increase net gains in biodiversity.