

**Ecological
Assessment**
Old Maria Cottage



www.parkerplanningservices.co.uk

PREPARED FOR CLIENT: Brigitte Butcher

SITE ADDRESS: Old Maria Cottage, Long Green, Wortham, Diss, IP22 1RD

PREPARED BY: David Watts BSc (Hons) PGCert MCIEEM

APPROVED BY: Jason Parker

Our Offices:

NORFOLK	T: 01603 516319	Norwich	NR1 1LU
SUFFOLK	T: 01284 336348	Bury St Edmunds	IP33 1HQ
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:	T: 01223 637283	Cambridge	CB24 6WZ
LINCOLNSHIRE	T: 01780 437333	Stamford	PE9 2AE
ESSEX	T: 01245 934184	Chelmsford	CM2 7PX

REPORT INFORMATION

© Copyright Parker Planning Services Ltd.

No part of this report is to be copied or reproduced, either physically and/or electronically in any way without prior written consent of Parker Planning Services Ltd.

Every reasonable effort has been made to provide accurate and detailed information to the relevant professional standards at the time of writing of this report. However, Parker Planning Services Ltd. cannot be held responsible for errors, inaccuracies or omissions held within this report where 3rd party information has been used. Nor can the information in this report be used for works outside the remit of a planning statement or report.

Date	3 rd March 2023
Applicant	Brigitte Butcher
Site Address	Old Maria Cottage, Long Green, Wortham, Diss, IP22 1RD
Grid reference	TM 06985 77316
Our Reference	J3824
Report Revision	V1

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
2. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1. INSTRUCTION	4
2.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	4
2.3. SITE DETAILS.....	4
2.4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.....	4
2.5. LEGISLATION	4
2.6. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE AUTHOR.....	4
3. METHODS.....	5
3.1. DESK-BASED STUDY.....	5
3.2. SURVEY TIMING	5
3.3. HABITAT SURVEY METHODS.....	5
3.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES.....	6
3.5. INVASIVE SPECIES.....	6
3.6. CONSTRAINTS.....	6
4. RESULTS	7
4.1. DESIGNATED SITES	7
4.2. HABITATS WITHIN THE SURROUNDING AREA.....	7
4.3. HABITATS WITHIN THE SITE	7
4.4. INVASIVE SPECIES.....	8
4.5. BATS	8
4.6. OTHER MAMMALS	9
4.7. HERPETOFAUNA.....	9
4.8. BIRD SPECIES.....	10
4.9. INVERTEBRATES	10
5. ASSESSMENT	11
5.1. DESIGNATED SITES	11
5.2. HABITATS	11
5.3. BATS	11
5.4. OTHER MAMMALS	11
5.5. HERPETOFAUNA.....	11
5.6. BIRD SPECIES.....	12
5.7. INVERTEBRATES	12
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	13
6.1. AVOIDANCE OF ECOLOGICAL IMPACT	13
6.2. COMPENSATION AND ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT.....	13
7. REFERENCES	14

1. Executive Summary

Parker Planning Services have been instructed by Brigitte Butcher to produce an Ecological Assessment of the land at Old Maria Cottage, Long Green, Wortham, Diss, IP22 1RD. The development proposals are to convert and extend an outbuilding, 'Rhubarb Cottage'.

The site survey found the habitats on the site to be highly modified and typical of residential gardens. The removal of a small area of modified grassland will not result in any significant negative ecological impact.

There was a confirmed bat roost within the roof void of the building. The size, shape and texture of the droppings indicate the roost is used by brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*). The roof will not be affected by the proposals, therefore there are no foreseeable impacts of the development upon the bat roost and further bat activity surveys are not recommended.

There are four ponds within 500m of the site, the closest of which is 35m from the development area. It has not been established if great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are present or absent within any of these waterbodies. Due to the size of the proposals, it is determined that if great crested newts are present within any of these waterbodies, the chances of an offence being committed due to the proposals are highly unlikely. It is recommended that precautionary working practices are adopted to avoid any impacts to great crested newts and other amphibians.

It is recommended that the ecological value of the site is enhanced the incorporation of bat and bird boxes into the proposals.

2. Introduction

2.1. Instruction

Parker Planning Services have been instructed by Brigitte Butcher to produce an Ecological Assessment of the land at Old Maria Cottage, Long Green, Wortham, Diss, IP22 1RD (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 consists of a residential property and its associated garden. There is an outbuilding, 'Rhubarb Barn', to the north of the site. The main residential dwelling, Old Maria Cottage, was included within the scope of the survey.

2.4. Development Proposals

The development proposals are to convert and extend Rhubarb Barn. The new extension will have a footprint of 100m. The existing roof and roof void will not be affected.

2.5. Legislation

A summary of relevant legislation and policy can be viewed in *Appendix 4: 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. Methods

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 20th September 2023.

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 Annex 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. Some species are only visible at certain times of year and may not have been present at the time of the survey.

4. Results

4.1. Designated Sites

Burgate Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 1.2km southeast of the site. The site is within the impact zone of the SSSI.

There are also additional designated sites within the wider surrounding area, including Roydon Fen Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Redgrave and South Lopham Fens Ramsar Site, Gypsy Camp Meadows SSSI, Wortham Ling SSSI and Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

SBIS hold records of nine County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within 2km of the site, the closest of which is Wortham Long Green CWS, approximately 250m northwest of the site.

4.2. Habitats within the Surrounding Area

The surrounding land use is predominantly agricultural. There is a small woodland approximately 50m north of the site. Trees and hedgerows at field boundaries provide terrestrial connectivity throughout the surrounding area.

DEFRA hold records of Priority Habitats within 2km of the site, including good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland fens, chalk rivers, deciduous woodland and wood-pasture and parkland.

4.3. Habitats within the Site

The habitats within the site were typical of residential gardens, including a mown lawn (*g4 modified grassland*) bordered by hedgerows (*h2a hedgerow: Priority Habitat* and *h2b hedgerow: other*), in addition to buildings (*u1b5 buildings*) and other developed land (*u1b6 other developed land*).

g4 modified grassland

A mown lawn comprising the majority of the site. Graminoid species included cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), false oatgrass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Forb species were typical of cultivated land and included Dutch clover (*Trifolium repens*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and daisy (*Bellis perennis*).

There were several semi-mature and early-mature trees within the lawn, with species including crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), cultivated pear (*Pyrus communis*), medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*).

h2a hedgerow (Priority Habitat)

There were five native hedgerows within the site:

- H1, a 3m tall unmanaged hedgerow consisting of hazel (*Corylus avellana*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). There was a single

early-mature ash tree to the centre of the hedgerow. Ground flora included hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and white Bryony (*Bryonia dioica*).

- H2, a 2m tall scattered hedgerow, consisting of field maple (*Acer campestre*), bramble, blackthorn, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*). There was a dry ditch along the west of the hedgerow.
- H3, a 4m tall unmanaged hedgerow consisting of hawthorn, bramble, ivy, ash and plum (*Prunus domestica*). There were two mature pedunculate oak trees to the west and several mature ash to the east.
- H4, a maintained hawthorn hedge 1.5m high.
- H5, a maintained hawthorn hedge 1m high.

h2b hedgerow (other)

There were three ornamental hedgerows within the garden, including:

- H6, a 1m tall maintained hedgerow consisting of hawthorn and spiny oleaster (*Elaeagnus pungens*).
- H7, a maintained hedgerow consisting of box (*Buxus sempervirens*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).
- H8, a privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) hedgerow, maintained at 1.5m.

u1be5 buildings

Then main residential dwelling, Old Maria Cottage, which was not included within the scope of the survey, and the outbuilding, Rhubarb Cottage, which is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5.

u1b6 other developed land

The gravel driveway and other hardstanding surfaces.

4.4. Invasive Species

No invasive species were identified on the site.

4.5. Bats

Data search

SBIS hold records of bat species within 2km of the site, including barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).

Buildings

Rhubarb Cottage consisted of a single storey building constructed of breezeblock and clad with timber. Wooden soffit boxes to the north and south were sealed. The building had a pitched pantile roof with numerous gaps under the rooftiles.

An inspection of the roof void found it to consist of a modern truss construction, approximately 2m in height and lined with bituminous roofing felt. Approximately 40 bat droppings, consistent in shape, size and texture to brown long-eared bat, were identified throughout the roof void. The roofing felt and gables appeared to be in good condition, and it was not possible to determine where bats were accessing the roof void.

Trees

No potential roost features were identified on any of the trees on the site. It was not possible to fully inspect trees adjacent to the site boundary, although these are located at the opposite end of the site to the development area.

Foraging

The site provides suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats, and there is good terrestrial connectivity between the site and semi-natural habitat within the surrounding area.

4.6. Other Mammals

SBIS hold records of water vole and otter within 2km of the site. There is no riparian habitat on or adjacent to the site suitable for either species.

SBIS hold records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within 2km of the site. The site and surrounding area provide suitable habitat for this species.

SBIS hold records of badger (*Meles meles*) within 2km of the site. The surrounding area provides suitable habitat for this species, although no badger setts or signs of badger activity were recorded on the site.

4.7. Herpetofauna

SBIS hold records of amphibian species within 2km of the site, including common toad (*Bufo bufo*), smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and great crested newt. SBIS hold no records of reptile species within 2km of the site.

A search on aerial imagery identified four ponds within 500m of the site:

- WB1, located opposite the site entrance, approximately 35m southeast of the development area.
- WB2, approximately 235m southeast of the site.
- WB3, approximately 300m southeast of the site.
- WB4, approximately 340m northwest of the site.

A plan showing the location of the waterbodies can be viewed in *Appendix 3: Ponds within the Surrounding Area*.

OS plans also show an additional pond adjacent to the site, which appears to be a drainage ditch culverted under part of the site.

The modified grassland on the site provides suboptimal habitat for amphibians and reptiles. The hedgerows at the site boundary provide suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

4.8. Bird Species

SBIS hold records of notable bird species within the surrounding area, including (*Alcedo atthis*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), hobby (*Falxco subbuteo*), brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), red kite (*Milvus milvus*), redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) and barn owl (*Tyto alba*).

Trees and hedgerows on the site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

4.9. Invertebrates

The site provides suboptimal habitat for notable invertebrate species. Trees and hedgerows on the site do however contribute to pollination resources within the surrounding area.

5. Assessment

5.1. Designated Sites

The site is within the impact zone of Burgate SSSI. Due to its distance from the site and the small scale of the proposals, it is not anticipated that the proposals will result in any direct or indirect impacts upon the SSSI.

5.2. Habitats

The habitats on the site are highly modified and are of low ecological value. There are several native hedgerows at the site boundary, although these are planted and relatively species poor.

The site will necessitate the removal of a small area of modified grassland. This will not result in any significant negative ecological impact.

5.3. Bats

There is a confirmed bat roost within the building, which judging by the shape, size and texture of the droppings, appears to be brown long-eared bat, although it is possible that additional bat species are present. It is not possible to confirm the species and to estimate the size and status of the roost without further bat activity surveys.

The development proposals have been designed to ensure the retention of the roost. Provided that no works are carried out to the roof and roof void, and that no exterior lighting is incorporated into the proposals, there are no foreseeable impacts of the proposals upon roosting bats.

5.4. Other Mammals

Hedgehogs have been identified within the surrounding area and the site provides suitable habitat for this species. While a new fence may be required to delineate the proposed building from the existing residential property, the hedgerows at the boundary will be retained and therefore terrestrial connectivity of hedgehog habitat will not be disrupted due to the proposals.

5.5. Herpetofauna

There are four ponds within 500m of the site, the closest of which is approximately 35m from the development area. It has not been established if great crested newts are present or absent within any of these waterbodies.

The development will be 100m² (0.01) in size. Using the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Calculation Tool, it is determined that if great crested newts are present within ponds in the surrounding area, it is highly unlikely that the proposals will result in an offence being committed (see Table 5.1). This is confounded by the terrestrial habitat to be removed to the proposals, which consists of modified grassland providing suboptimal opportunities for great crested newts and other amphibians.

Table 5.1 Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment Calculation Tool

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.0005
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.05
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Despite the highly unlikely chances of great crested newts being impacted by the proposals, the adoption of precautionary working measures will be required to ensure that individual great crested newts or other amphibians are not impacted by development works.

5.6. Bird Species

With the exception of some mown grassland, no vegetation will be removed due to the proposals. Therefore, there are no foreseeable impacts of the development upon nesting birds.

5.7. Invertebrates

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

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Avoidance of Ecological Impact

No works may be carried out to the roof or roof void of Rhubarb Cottage. If for any reason proposals will affect the roof, further bat activity surveys will be required to determine the species present, the size and status of the roost, and the location of access points into the building. Bat activity surveys can only be carried out between May and September. If disturbance or damage to the roost is unavoidable, a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required. In this instance, further mitigation and compensation will be required as part of the EPSML, which will be informed by the further surveys.

To avoid impacts to bats and other nocturnal wildlife, it is recommended that the use of exterior lighting as part of the proposals is avoided.

To avoid impacts to great crested newts and other amphibians, it is recommended that works are carried out in accordance with the following precautionary measures:

- Prior to works commencing, a site storage area will be designated. This will be within the garden of Old Maria Cottage, as far from WB1 as is feasible (e.g., adjacent to the northwest boundary of the site). Any materials hazardous to the health of aquatic wildlife must be stored in this area only.
- Immediately prior to works commencing, the project ecologist will carry out a walkover survey of the development area. Grass will be parted and inspected for great crested newts and other amphibians.
- Following the walkover survey, the project ecologist will deliver a toolbox talk to contractors, detailing the identification of great crested newts and summarising the precautionary measures and protocol should newts be identified during development works.
- If at any point during development works newts are identified, works must cease and the project ecologist must be consulted immediately.

6.2. Compensation and Ecological Enhancement

It is recommended that the ecological value of the site is enhanced by the incorporation of bat roosting and bird nesting habitat into the proposals. This should consist of:

- Two bat boxes of type Schwegler 2FN (or similar), which should be installed on trees at minimum heights of 5m, with clear flight paths to and from the entrances.
- Two bird boxes of type Schwegler 1B (or similar), which should be installed on trees at minimum heights of 1.5m, with clear flight paths to and from the entrances.

7. References

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

CIEEM (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

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

DEFRA (2023). *Magic Maps* [online]. Available at: >www.magic.defra.gov.uk< [accessed 3rd March 2023]

English Nature (2001). *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature

Google Earth Pro (2023). *Google Earth* [online]. Available at: >www.earth.google.com< [accessed 3rd March 2023]

Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018). *Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK*. Institute of Lighting Professionals, Rugby

Natural England (2023). *Designated Sites View* [online]. Available at: >www.designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk< [accessed 3rd March 2023]

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

Appendix 1: Photographs



Plate 1: Modified grassland immediately adjacent to development area



Plate 2: Modified grassland to south of site, H2 & H3 in background



Plate 3: Driveway



Plate 4: Rhubarb Cottage, east and south aspects

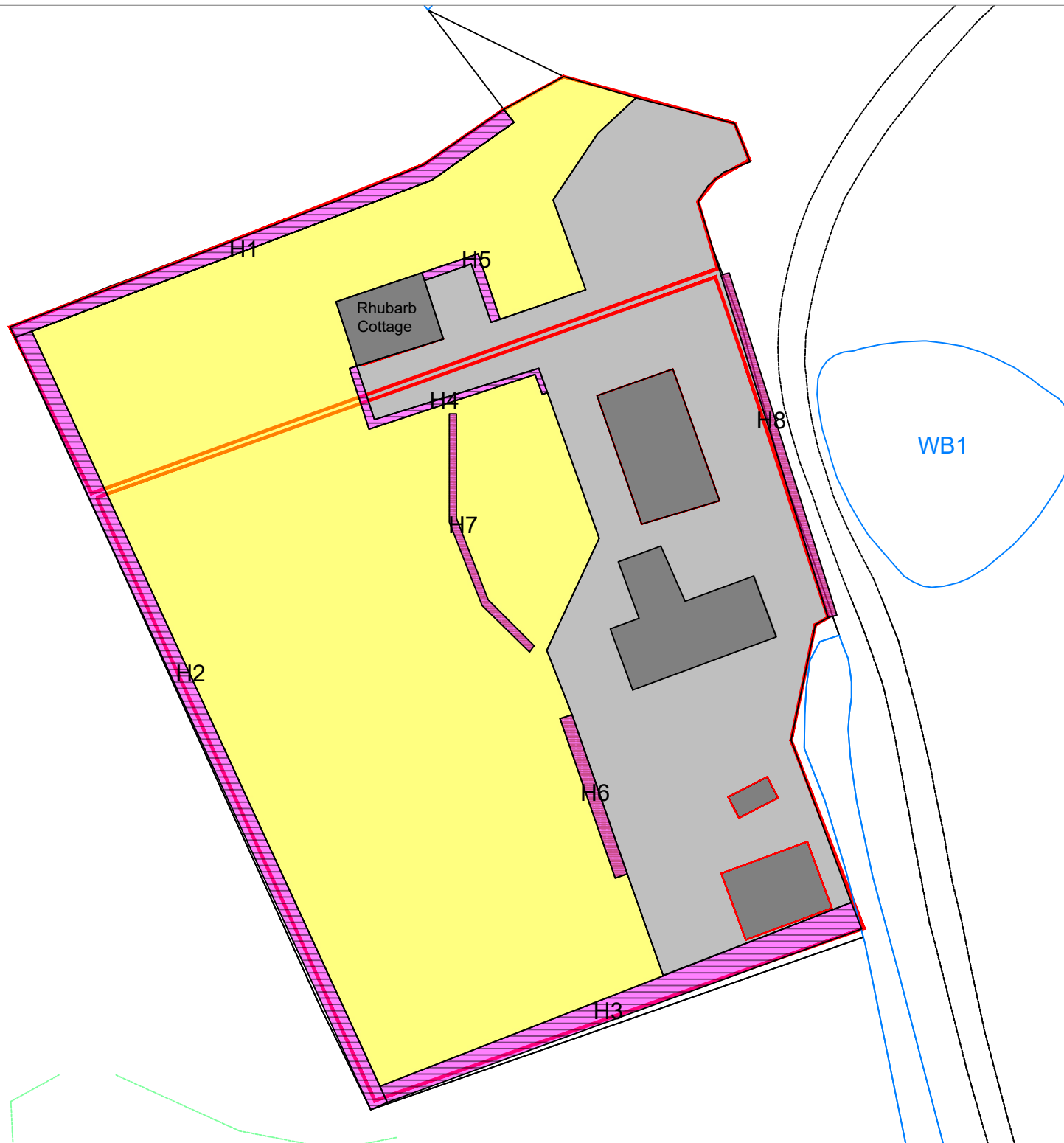


Plate 5: Rhubarb Cottage, north and west aspects



Plate 6: Rhubarb Cottage, roof void

Appendix 2: Habitat Plan



Key:

	g4 modified grassland
	h2a hedgerow
	h2b other hedgerow
	u1b5 buildings
	u1b6 other developed land



Drawing title:	Habitat Plan
Project:	Old Maria Cottage
Drawing number:	P1H-1696-01
Drawn by:	David Watts
Date:	03/03/2023
Scale:	1:500 @ A4

To be reproduced in colour only.



Appendix 3: Ponds within the Surrounding Area



Drawing title:	Pond Plan
Project:	Old Maria Cottage
Drawing number:	PP-1696-01
Drawn by:	David Watts
Date:	03/03/2023
Scale:	1:2000 @ A4

To be reproduced in colour only.



Appendix 4: Legislation

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 badger, 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.