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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Including a Protected Species Assessment at Craiglea, Lawshall Green, Lawshall, Suffolk. IP29 4QJ.

On behalf of:

Mr West & Miss Blenkhorn

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Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

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0 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr West & Miss Blenkhorn to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Craiglea, Lawshall Green, Lawshall, Suffolk. IP29 4QJ. The proposal is for proposed extensions and internal alterations.
- 1.1.2 The survey was conducted on 27th March 2023 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSc MCIEEM (licensed to survey for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* and licenced to survey for bats – level 2). The survey consisted of an inspection for preferred habitat types and signs and evidence of protected and priority species, such as for bats, great crested newts, reptiles, badgers *Meles meles* and nesting birds following Natural England (English Nature) Guidelines. A local biological record search was undertaken.
- 1.1.3 The site is a modest, typical residential plot with a detached, rendered brick bungalow with pitched, roof and interlocking tiles, flat roof asbestos shed, short improved grass and ornamental shrubs and bedding plants, as well as small number of small trees on the western boundary, leylandii cypress hedgerow on the northern boundary and short field maple hedgerow on the western boundary (roadside).
- 1.1.4 The site is positioned in a rural village location with residential housing north and south, arable field to the east and Lawshall Green to the west across a lane. Lawshall Green is a County Wildlife Site managed as a hay meadow with notable rare plants including adders tongue.
- 1.1.5 It is understood that the boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained.
- 1.1.6 The proposed construction zone is small and considered low in ecological value and unlikely to support protected, priority or rare species. No signs or evidence of such were observed.
- 1.1.7 Further ecological surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary for the proposed development to proceed. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, precautionary measures for hedgehogs, amphibians, birds and bats are provided in this report and should be followed.
- 1.1.8 With the recommendations followed as described, development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to local ecological value or to protected, priority or rare species and notable habitats. Biodiversity enhancement recommendations are also included in the report in accordance with national planning policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.2 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr West & Miss Blenkhorn to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Craiglea, Lawshall Green, Lawshall, Suffolk. IP29 4QJ. The proposal is for proposed extensions and internal alterations.
- 1.1.3 Wildlife such as nesting birds, bats, reptiles and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are protected by law. Protected and priority species and habitats, are also a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (MHCLG, 2021).
- 1.1.4 This study and report complies with the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2017 Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals.
- 1.1.5 CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 and 18 months (CIEEM, 2019).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 A biological record search was undertaken by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) on behalf of Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.
- 2.1.2 A search of the Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was also conducted, to check for statutory nature conservation sites.
- 2.1.3 These results were then combined with the findings of the site survey, to assess the risk of ecology issues, relevant to planning, occurring on the site.

2.2 Study Limitations

- 2.2.1 Botanical assessment was undertaken at a suitable time of year, though some early flowering species and annuals may not be visible or identifiable to species level.

2.3 Initial Site Survey

Habitats and Surroundings

2.3.1 The site was visited on the 27th March 2023 to survey for ecology issues. This included the following:

- Noting the suitability of habitats present on the site, with regard to protected, priority and rare species; including plants, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, nesting birds, invertebrates and protected, priority or red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC);
- Assessing the habitats surrounding the site and in the local area;
- Direct survey for evidence of protected species as far as possible, e.g. for bats, reptiles, great crested newts, badgers *Meles meles*, and nesting birds;
- Checking for invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

Bat Inspection

2.3.2 The assessment for bats was conducted by an experienced ecologist, licensed by Natural England to disturb and take bats for science and education. The buildings and trees were inspected for bat activity, suitability and potential for roosting following English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines, therefore considerations were:

- the availability of access to roosts for bats;
- the presence and suitability of cracks, crevices, gaps, fissures, ivy growth and other places as roosts;
- signs of bat activity or presence, such as; the bats themselves, droppings, grease marks, scratch marks, urine spatter and prey remains.

2.3.3 Equipment available for use during the survey included a ladder, high powered torch, digital camera and binoculars.

2.3.4 The availability of access to roosts was assessed based upon the presence of holes large enough to allow entry to bats and lack of cobwebs and dirt.

2.3.5 The outside of buildings and trees were inspected for gaps, cavities, access points and crevices, and any signs of bats (droppings, staining, urine spatter), in accordance with Natural England (English Nature) guidelines (English Nature, 2004).

Reptiles & Amphibians

2.3.6 The site was inspected for potentially suitable terrestrial habitats for foraging, sheltering or dispersing amphibians and foraging, sheltering, breeding and basking habitat for reptiles. High quality terrestrial refuges searched for, included:

- Log piles & rockeries,
- Thick leaf litter,
- Compost & manure heaps,
- Mammal burrows,
- Deep ground cracks;
- Refuse suitable for shelter;
- Tussock grassland;
- Hedgerows and any other potential habitats.

Badgers, Hedgehogs, Water Voles, Dormouse & Other Mammals

2.3.7 Signs and evidence of badgers, and other protected, priority and rare mammal activity searched for included the following:

- Setts, holes and burrows;
- Foraging holes and other diggings;
- Latrines, droppings, spraints and scats;
- Mammal hairs;
- Paw prints and other tracks;
- Feeding remains;
- Scratch marks, bedding material and other signs.

3 RESULTS AND RISK

3.1 Site Description & Location

- 3.1.1 The site is a modest, typical residential plot with a detached, rendered brick bungalow with pitched roof and interlocking tiles, a flat roof asbestos shed, short improved grass and ornamental shrubs and bedding plants, as well as small number of small trees on the western boundary, leylandii cypress hedgerow on the northern boundary and short field maple hedgerow on the western boundary (roadside).
- 3.1.2 The site is positioned in a rural village location with residential housing north and south, arable field to the east and Lawshall Green to the west across a lane. Lawshall Green is a County Wildlife Site managed as a hay meadow with notable rare plants including adders tongue.
- 3.1.3 Multiple ponds are present within 250m of the site with most of the ponds located south of the site. The closest of which is approximately 40m south. The ponds are separated from the site by a lane and several residential properties (Ordnance Survey map, 2023).

3.2 Nature Conservation Sites

- 3.2.1 The closest statutorily designated nature conservation site is located Frithy and Chadacre Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located approximately 1.4km north west (MAGIC, 2023).

3.3 Data Search

- 3.3.1 The following information is a list of amphibian records collated by SBIS on behalf of Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

Table 1 - Summary of local records.

Species	Location	Year
Great crested newts	400m north	2014
Common toad	1km south	2019

3.4 Protected, Priority & Rare Species

Vegetation & Habitats

- 3.4.1 The site includes short improved grass, garden beds, small trees and hedgerows. The following plants were recorded within the proposed construction zone:

Perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, petty spurge *Euphorbia peplus*, dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, primrose *Primula* sp., red dead nettle *Lamium purpureum*, violet *Viola* sp., creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, perennial sowthistle *Sonchus arvensis*, groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, ox eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*.

Garden beds included: Oregon grape *Mahonia aquifolium*, rose *Rosa* sp., dogwood *Cornus* sp., *Senecio* sp., ornamental *Geranium* sp., garden privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium* and Mexican orange blossom *Choisya ternate*.

Small trees included: 1 x apple *Malus domestica* and 1 x Norway maple *Acer platanoides* and 1 x leylandii cypress *Cupressus x leylandii*.

The roadside hedgerow was dominated by field maple *Acer campestre*.

The northern boundary hedgerow was leylandii cypress.

- 3.4.2 No protected, priority or notable plants were found on the site. No UK priority habitats are proposed for impact. No Schedule 9 invasive plants were discovered.

Bats

- 3.4.3 No trees are proposed for impact. The outbuilding and dwelling were well-sealed to bats. The soffits, tiles and walls in good condition with negligible opportunities for internal access or external roosting. The tiles were interlocking. No signs or evidence of bats were found.

- 3.4.4 The site was considered low in suitability for foraging bats being modest in size and limited in vegetation likely to produce significant quantities of flying insects.

Other Protected & UK Priority Mammals

- 3.4.5 The site is dominated by short improved grassland considered low in suitability for foraging by brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, badgers *Meles meles* and hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* etc. No other signs or evidence of such species were noted during the survey.

Birds

- 3.4.6 Birds observed or heard on or close to the site during the survey included; goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, great tit *Parus major*, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and blackbird *Turdus merula*.
- 3.4.7 No UK protected birds or evidence of such species were observed, house sparrow and starling are UK priority birds. The birds were heard from the site using adjacent gardens. No evidence of nesting on the site. All other birds recorded are common and widespread species and green-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC).
- 3.4.8 The BoCC ratings are summarised as follows:
- Red-listed - highest conservation concern;
 - Amber-listed - moderate conservation concern;
 - Green-listed - least conservation concern.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

- 3.4.9 The proposed construction zone was dominated by a dwelling, outbuilding, short improved grass (lawn) and small areas of hedgerow and garden beds. The hedgerows and garden beds are largely proposed for retention. The proposed impact to greenspace will be less than 0.1ha. Garden beds present are very open and manicured.

Reptiles

- 3.4.10 Habitats present on the site were considered very low in suitability or potential for reptiles. The ground conditions were open with thinly structured grassland, cut short.
- 3.4.11 No reptiles were not discovered during the survey visit.

Invertebrates

- 3.4.12 The proposed construction zone was considered negligible in suitability or potential for invertebrates of conservation concern with common and widespread habitat types present.
- 3.4.13 No notable invertebrates were observed during the survey.

Other Protected, Priority or Rare Species

- 3.4.14 No signs or evidence of any other protected or priority species were observed on the site, nor were there any suitable habitats for such.

4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION

4.1 Protected & Priority Species

Bats

- 4.1.1 Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Some bats are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection;
- Deliberately disturb a bat anywhere.

- 4.1.2 Bats will forage locally in gardens and the adjacent County Wildlife Site. However, the proposed construction zone was considered negligible in suitability for roosting and foraging bats. No signs or evidence of bats were observed on the site.

- 4.1.3 No trees are proposed for impact.

- 4.1.4 Therefore, it was considered that the risk of significant impact, to bats, bat roosts or local bat populations is very low/negligible.

- 4.1.5 Further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Other Protected, Priority & Rare Mammals

- 4.1.6 The proposed construction zone was considered theoretically suitable for foraging by hedgehogs. However, the site is small and unlikely to be of significant value. No signs or evidence of hedgehogs or any other notable mammals were discovered on the site or adjacent to the site.
- 4.1.7 Therefore, further surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to hedgehogs during construction, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Birds

- 4.1.8 Wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, with certain exceptions (e.g. pest species) in certain situations, it is an offence to intentionally:
- Kill or injure any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 4.1.9 Some bird species (such as barn owls) are also specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and others are UK priority species.
- 4.1.10 The proposed construction zone was considered low in suitability for protected and priority bird species.
- 4.1.11 The risk of significant impact to notable birds or local bird conservation was considered negligible.
- 4.1.12 Therefore, it was considered unnecessary to undertake further bird surveys for rare or protected birds or provide mitigation for such species. However, to prevent harm to actively nesting birds, recommendations, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

- 4.1.13 Great crested newts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Great crested newts are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill;
- Intentionally injure;
- Deliberately disturb, or intentionally or recklessly disturb in a place of shelter or protection;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.

4.1.14 Great crested newts have been recorded within 2km of the site with the closest record approximately 400m north (SBIS, 2023). Ponds are present close to the site, though the ponds are separated from the site by a road (albeit a quiet lane) and residential housing. Therefore, no direct line of habitat connectivity from ponds to the site for amphibians was present. This fact combined with the very small size of the site, modest proposed development and very low suitability of habitats proposed for impact for great crested newts meant the risk of presence or impact to great crested newts was very low.

4.1.15 This was further confirmed when consulting the Natural England great crested newt Rapid Risk Assessment. See Table 2 below. In which case, it was considered unnecessary to undertake further surveys or provide strict mitigation for great crested newts. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Table 2 – Natural England Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment.

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)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.05
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Reptiles

- 4.1.16 Widespread reptile species including, grass snake, adder, slow worm and common lizard, are protected from intentional killing and injuring under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are also UK priority species.
- 4.1.17 The proposed development was considered small scale and habitats very low in suitability for reptiles.
- 4.1.18 Therefore, further reptile surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Plants & Invertebrates

- 4.1.19 No rare, protected or priority plants were present or were likely to be impacted.
- 4.1.20 Further botanical surveys or mitigation for rare plants or notable habitats were considered unnecessary.
- 4.1.21 No Schedule 9 invasive plants were discovered and the risk of spreading such plants was considered negligible.
- 4.1.22 Regarding invertebrates, the proposed construction zone is small and habitats present common and widespread. The risk of presence of a significant assemblage of invertebrates of conservation concern was considered negligible.
- 4.1.23 Further invertebrate surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Other Protected & Priority species

- 4.1.24 No signs or evidence of other protected, priority or rare species were observed on the site and it was considered that there was a very low risk of such species occurring on the site or being impacted by the proposed development.

4.2 Other Issues

Sensitive Habitats

- 4.2.1 The proposed works are small scale and although close to a County Wildlife Site they are separated from the CWS by a lane. The site is also a significant distance from statutorily designated nature conservation sites. Therefore, it was considered that the risk of significant impact to the interest features of the adjacent CWS or other ecological sensitive habitats was very low.
- 4.2.2 Therefore, further surveys or mitigation for designated nature conservation sites or other sensitive habitats were considered unnecessary.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Precautionary Measures & Compensation

Bats

5.1.1 To minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measures should be undertaken:

- Any required movement of roof tiles or works to soffits should be undertaken by hand and if at any stage bats or evidence of bats are found works should stop and an Ecologist called for advice;
- Any new proposed external lighting should be minimised. Where external lighting is required, it should be warm white LED lamps with glass glazing, rather than plastic, as these produce the least amount of heat and UV light possible, minimising the attraction effects on insects and minimising disturbance to local bats.
- Any new external lighting proposed for the development should be aimed carefully, to minimise illumination of boundary habitats and avoid light spillage into the sky, or horizontally out from any structures, by using hoods or directional lighting;

Hedgehogs & Amphibians

5.1.2 The risk of hedgehogs or amphibians being significantly impacted by the development was very low/negligible, to minimise any residual risk of impact or harm or impact, the below recommendations should be followed:

- Before construction commences, vegetation should be maintained short with regular cutting to prevent the site improving in ecological value for wildlife.
- Any clearance works to garden beds should be undertaken by hand;
- During works, waste materials should be removed off site immediately to prevent wildlife using the materials for shelter and being harmed by subsequent movement;
- Construction materials should be stored on hardstanding or on pallets to prevent wildlife from sheltering in the materials and being harmed by movement of the materials;
- No construction work at night when hedgehogs and amphibians are mostly active;

- Any excavations for the development should be covered at night or should have a roughly sawn plank placed in them to facilitate escape, the plank should not be placed at more than 30° and must be at least 30cm in width;
- If at any stage hedgehogs or amphibians are observed on the site, works should stop immediately, and the animal should be allowed to disperse of its own accord, or an ecologist should be contacted for advice.

Birds

- 5.1.3 It is recommended that to prevent harm to nesting birds, any necessary clearance or reduction of trees and shrubs should commence outside of the main bird breeding season (March until the end of August). If this timescale is not possible then an ecologist should check the site for active bird nests before vegetation clearance.
- 5.1.4 If an active bird nest was found, it would be necessary to protect the nest from harm or disturbance until the bird had finished nesting.

5.2 Enhancements

- 5.2.1 To provide biodiversity enhancement in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2021) the below will be undertaken:
- 5.2.2 Installation of the below habitat boxes:
- 1 x Vivara pro sparrow terrace (or similar if out-of-stock) will be positioned high (just below the roof) on the newly developed dwelling facing a northerly direction.
 - 1 x Beaumaris Bat Box (or similar if out-of-stock) will be installed high (just below the roof) of the newly developed dwelling facing a southerly direction.
- 5.2.3 Wildlife boxes can be purchased on-line.
- 5.2.4 All newly restored lawn will be sown with a wildflower seed mix to increase botanical diversity.
- 5.2.5 All other new soft landscaping will be native and/or wildlife attracting.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 At the time of survey, the proposed construction zone supported common and widespread habitats very low/negligible in suitability or potential for protected, priority or rare species. No signs or evidence of such were identified. The risk of significant impact to such species or to local ecological value was considered negligible.
- 6.2 Further ecological surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary for the development to proceed. Recommendations for birds, hedgehogs, bats and amphibians are provided and should be followed accordingly.
- 6.3 With recommendations followed as described, the development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm impact to protected, priority or rare species or notable habitats.
- 6.4 With the biodiversity enhancements followed as described, the proposed development would be enhanced for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with national planning policy.

7 REFERENCES

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1 – Habitat map.

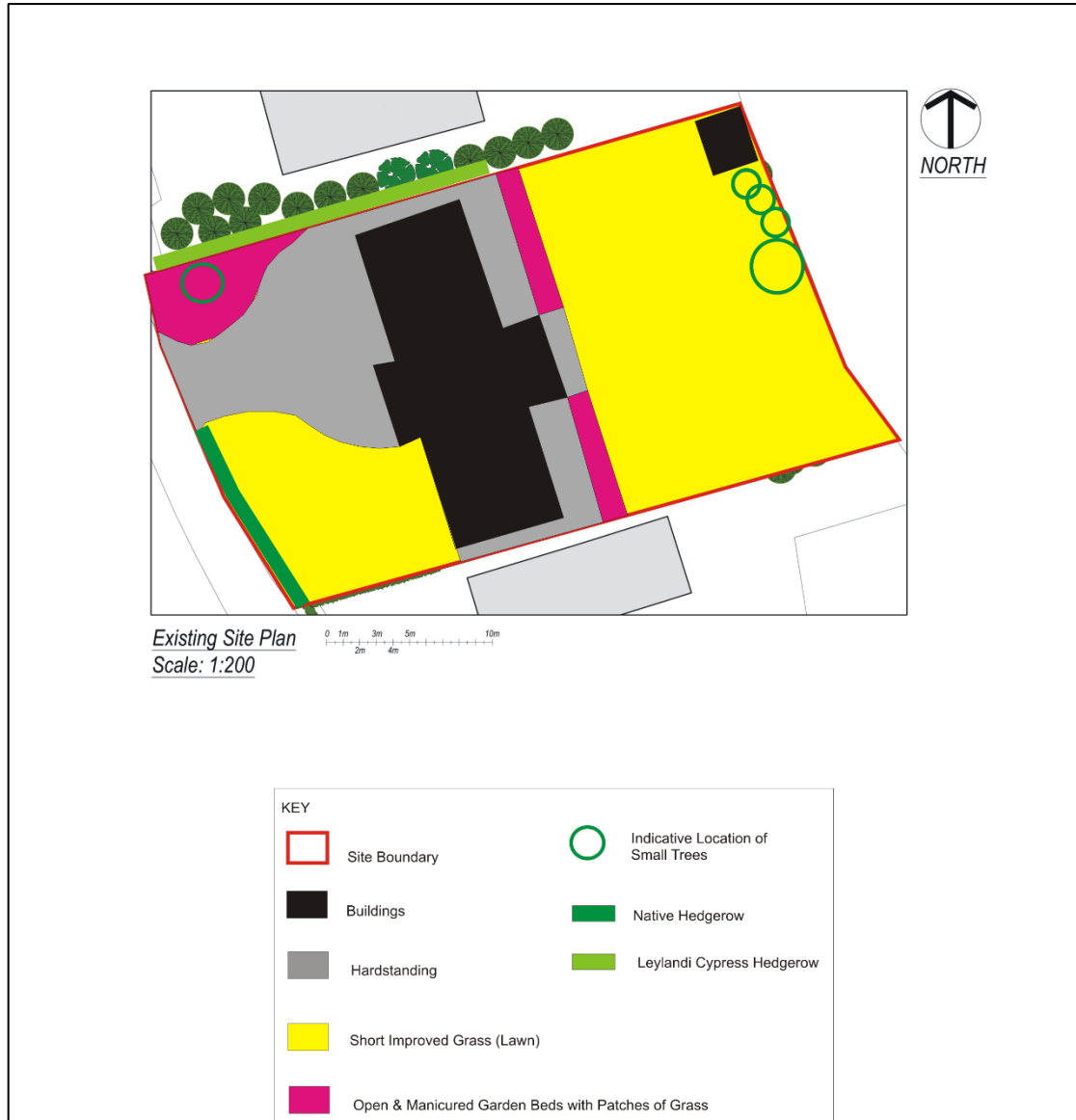


Figure 2 – Existing site.

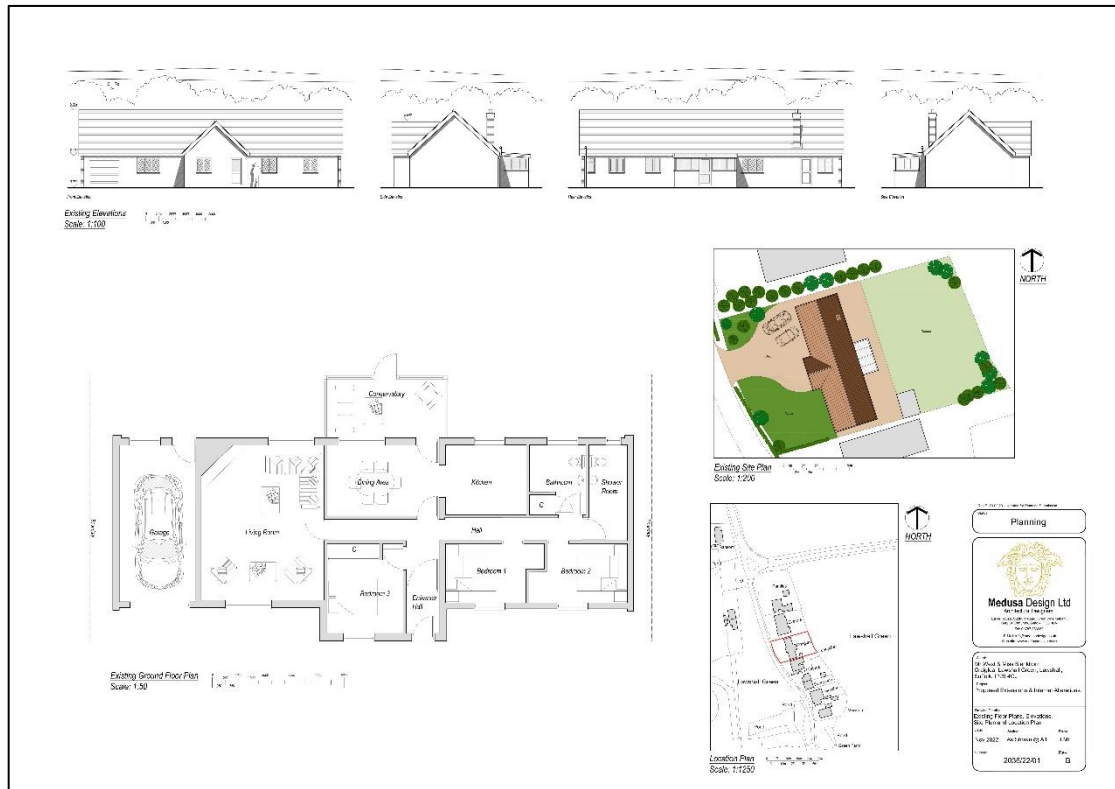
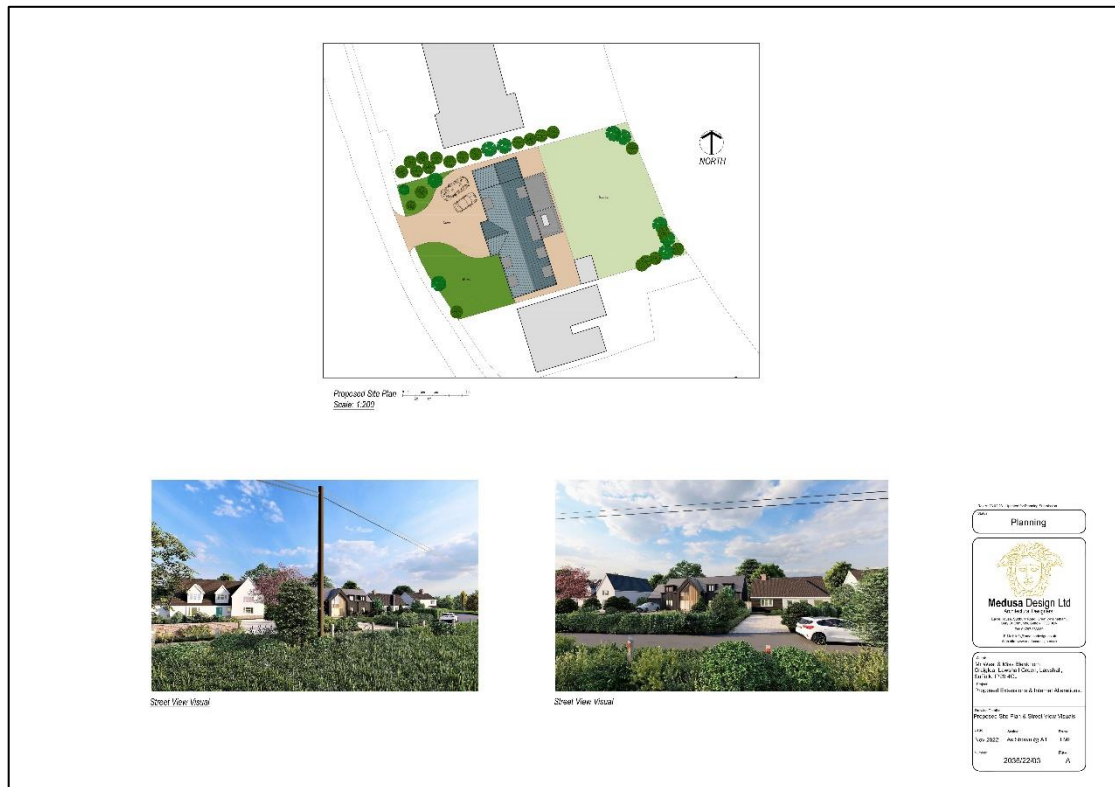


Figure 3 – Proposed development.



8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: Driveway, lawn and western elevation at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 2: Driveway, lawn and western elevation at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 3: Lawn garden bed and eastern elevation at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 4: Close up of roof at Craiglea- note well-sealed to bats and birds.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 5: Rear garden and shed at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 6: Front garden in north east corner at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 7: Front garden including roadside hedgerow at Craiglea.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023