

T4 ECOLOGY LTD

ECOLOGY CONSULTANCY SERVICES, MALDON, ESSEX



T. M. Sills
Whites Farm
Helions Bumpstead.
Haverhill
Suffolk
CB9 7AB

MH1367

25th April 2023

Dear Michael,

Re: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report Incorporating Bat Survey Inspection T4-Ecology Ref: 1367-Version 1 –07/02/22 (Survey October 2021) – Church Farm, Church Hill, Hempstead, Essex, CB10 2PA

In respect of the above site and further to your recent instructions, a site visit was undertaken on the 21st April 2023 by Pete Harris MCIEEM FRGS.

Peter Harris is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (CIEEM) and a Fellow of The Royal Geographical Society (FRGS). The surveyor is licensed by Natural England for surveying great crested newts. The surveyor is an ecologist with over 14 years of experience, and has been involved in a wide range of projects from single dwelling developments to large strategic urban renewal schemes subject to full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The purpose of the visit was to identify whether the conditions on site had materially altered from those described in the above referenced PEA report, and whether or not the conclusions and recommendations within that report remain valid and fit for the purposes of accompanying a planning application. This is because the above referenced PEA report survey data is beyond the standard 18-month report lifespan generally advised by The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Proposed Development

Proposals are for the conversion of existing buildings for commercial use.

Survey Details

The update survey was undertaken on the 21st April 2023 by Pete Harris MCIEEM FRGS. Weather conditions were dry, with 100% cloud cover and ambient air temperature of 13°C.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the April 2023 update was as per section 3.0 of the above referenced PEA report including an internal inspection of the buildings.

Results

The April 2023 site visit identified that the site has altered very little in the intervening period since the October 2021 site visit, and it is considered that section 4.2.1 of the above referenced PEA report presents an accurate and appropriate site description. Photographs from the April 2023 visit are included as Attachment 1.

Minor changes can be described as follows:

Barn Owl

In the previous PEA, evidence of barn owl perching was identified in building 8. Evidence of continued perching use was again identified in April 2023 in building 8, and additionally in building 7, which comprises an open fronted shelter. Evidence in both buildings comprised dropping splatter and scattered pellets of varying freshness. Whilst the use by barn owl appears to have altered slightly, the recommendations in section 5.2 of the PEA remain valid and appropriate.

Consequently, the findings, recommendations and conclusions of the above referenced PEA report remain fully generally valid and appropriate. For ease of reference, Section 5.1 of the PEA report states:

'In summary, the proposed development area comprises existing buildings and associated hard standing situated in the context of a farmyard. As such, the site is subject to disturbance as would be reasonably expected in such a land use context.'

The statutory designation search undertaken as part of the desk study identified that the site is not situated directly within nor bounding any statutory or non-statutory designated locations.

No trees or buildings with roosting potential are situated on site, nor would be lost to the proposal. At most, buildings on site are considered to offer a negligible level of roosting potential. Further surveys are neither necessary nor appropriate.

Although no evidence of bats was found, it is probable that bats from nearby roosts will forage in the gardens of the site, in those of adjacent properties given boundary tree lines and presence of offsite ponds. Three species have been recorded roosting in St Andrew's church, with two further species found hibernating. The church is located around 150m to the west of the survey site. Given that all trees/tree lines would be retained, and where appropriate enhanced as part of a proposal, this foraging behaviour would be expected to continue after the completion of the building work and therefore it is considered that the proposal for this site will not have a detrimental effect on the local bat population, or on protected species. However, as specific recommendations, to manage potential impacts of the construction and completed phases, use of a bat considerate lighting scheme is recommended, along with the use of integral bat boxes. The full scope of ecological enhancements recommended are provided in section 5.2.

It is not considered reasonably likely that reptile species would be adversely affected by the development proposals given nature of the proposal relating to existing buildings. Whilst no further surveys are necessary and risk to the species is considered low, a precautionary Non-Licensed Method Statement is advised in respect of great crested newt. Such a document should be requested by way of an appropriately worded condition upon consent, and should be a specific pre-commencement requirement.

No active or inactive badger setts were found, with no evidence of badger activity identified. No surveys have been advised. However, general appropriate precautionary measures for the construction phases have been advised in section 5.2.

Appropriate recommendations in respect of due diligence relating to nesting birds and priority species and other ecological enhancements have been made in section 5.2 of the report.

It is considered and concluded that the proposal can proceed without adverse impacts upon legally protected/priority species and habitats provided the specific mitigatory guidance and enhancement recommendations identified within section 5.2 are fully adhered to. Where

necessary, appropriately worded conditions should be placed upon any consent granted in order to ensure appropriate measures are followed'.

The recommendations in Section 5.2 of the PEA state:

Construction Phase & General Precautions

- *A Non-Licensed Method Statement should be prepared and be fully adhered to during the development phase. The methods would be proportionate and appropriate in the context of existing land use. Such a document should be requested by way of an appropriately worded condition, and should be a pre-commencement requirement. This document shall also include appropriate recommendations/precautions in respect of reptile species.*
- *To protect any radiating mammals, it is recommended that any trenches be covered over with wooden sheeting at night and fencing off the demolition/construction zone and associated compounds would be advisable during the demolition/construction phase.*

Barn Owl

- *With specific regards to barn owl, a priority and at-risk species, from a general perspective, it is advised that the use of the building(s) 7 and 8 by the species is maintained as part of the development. The strategy should establish permanence by creating a permanent accessible potential roost site space within (i.e. inside) the finished development to replace, and with the ultimate aim of enhancing what has been altered. Ideally, this should comprise erection of a barn owl in the wider site, in addition to an integral feature within the building.*

Bats & Lighting

- *In order to minimise risk of disturbance to potential features that may provide bat commuting and foraging habitat during the construction phase and as part of the completed development, a low impact lighting scheme is advised:*
 - a) Brightness of lights should be as low as possible, and in accordance with British Standard Institute (BSI) and Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance. Where possible, low pressure sodium lights are advised.*
 - b) Lighting should not be directed at features that may be utilised by bats such as woodland, tree lines, hedgerows and water bodies/water courses.*

- c) *Directional lighting and/or fittings with hoods and cowls should be utilised.*
- d) *Where possible, security lighting should be motion sensitive and timers to minimise the amount of time that lights are on.*
- e) *Where possible, directional low impact solar bollard lighting should be used to illuminate roads, paths and parking areas.*

Nesting Birds-General

- *As general guidance, the bird breeding season is from March to September. If works to buildings/vegetation are proposed during the season, a check should be made for nests prior to works commencing. If nests are present, they should be left intact and undisturbed until the young have fledged.*

Enhancements

- *The following ecological enhancements are recommended:*
 - o *1 integral bird box per new dwelling;*
 - o *1 integral bat box per new dwelling;*
 - o *Barn owl provision;*
 - o *1x woodcrete terrace swallow box per dwelling;*
 - o *5 externally (tree or fence mounted) bird boxes;*
 - o *Use of wildlife friendly lighting scheme;*
 - o *Installation of 1 x invertebrate box per dwelling,*
 - o *Inclusion of native/wildlife friendly planting in landscape scheme;*
and
 - o *Enhancements to be secured in BMP by way of planning condition.*
- *To enable wildlife to continue using the development area post development, it is advised that boundaries remain relatively open such that wildlife can continue to radiate in the area. This includes the use of permeable boundaries such as tree lines and hedgerows, in addition to leaving hedgehog gaps in any new fencing proposals.*

It is therefore concluded that the PEA remains fully valid and appropriate for the purposes of accompanying a planning application.

I trust that the above is of assistance, but should you have any queries, or you require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



—
Peter Harris BSc (hons) MCIEEM FRGS
Director & Principal Consultant

Attachment 1 –Photographs 21st April 2023



Buildings 1 and 2



Interior



Interior



Building 3 viewed from north west



Building 3 interior



View across yard looking north



Building 5



Building 5 interior



Building 6



Building 7



Building 7 interior



Owl Spatter & pellets in building 7



Building 8



Building 8 interior



Owl spatter/pellets building 8



Building 8 interior



Building 9



Building 9



Building 10



Pond 1 located offsite to south east



Pond 2 located offsite to west



Managed land located west of yard