



3/26/2023

# Ecological Phase 1 Survey

Aspal Close No5. And No.10

Final Report

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## Introduction

This report has been conducted on behalf of BTP Group as a requirement for planning purposes to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Aspal Close, Beck Row, Suffolk IP28 8BB. This report is to determine the impact of the existing and proposed alteration(s) will have with various species onsite.

The study was required in order to determine the likely ecological constraints associated with a proposal for a small-scale commercial development within part of the site (“the Development”), and to establish the potential scope of further, more detailed ecological surveys which may be needed to support any future planning application(s).

This report provides details of the PEA completed in March 2023. It includes details of the Site’s habitat features, protected species interest, a summary of its biodiversity opportunities and constraints. Recommendations for further survey are also described, where these are considered relevant.

## Legislation and Planning Policy

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) provides the main legal framework for nature conservation and species protection in the UK. The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the main statutory nature conservation designation in the UK.

Natural England is the key statutory agency in England for advising Government, and for acting as the Government’s agent in the delivery of statutory nature conservation designations.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, provide supplementary protected species legislation.

An important thing to note is that although the Wildlife and Countryside Act does provide defences for development to be carried out which will destroy bat roosts, the habitat regulations require a special licence to be issued by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) if roost destruction or disturbance is to take place. In practice English Nature (EN) will provide advice to owners with bat problems directly affecting the site under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, while all developments involving planning permission will require a DEFRA licence.

All species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence for anyone intentionally to kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (whether live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

The UK is a party to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, set up under the Bonn Convention, under which article three of the agreement requires protection of all bats and their habitats, including the identification and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas for bats.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2018, and in February 2019, and states the following in relation to biodiversity and planning:

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists;
- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”

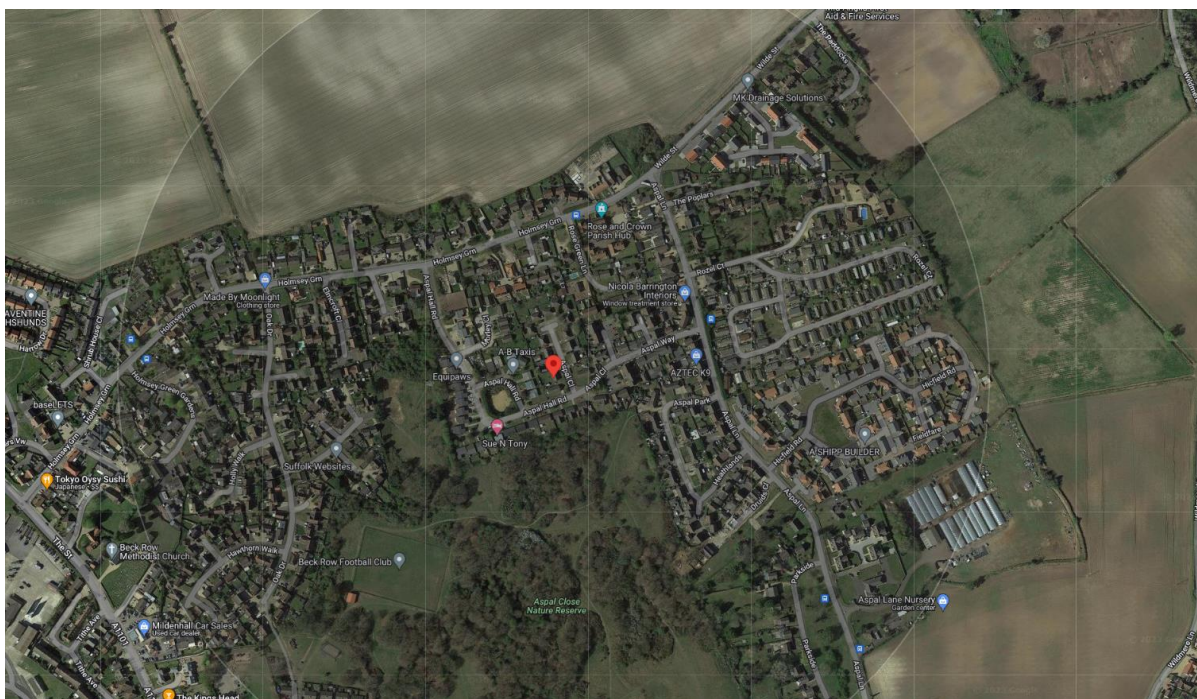
A site visit has been undertaken to determine whether the site and surrounding land could contain protected species.

## Method

An extended Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken for the Site on 09 March 2023 in a sunny environment. The methodology adopted followed the standard JNCC approach to Phase 1 habitat survey (JNCC, 19931) by which all habitats present within the site were classified and mapped.

In advance of the survey the 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey map was checked and online aerial photos inspected to identify any ponds within 250 m of the Site that could potentially support breeding populations of the legally protected amphibian great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN).

The below image highlights the site and any records from NBN Atlas.



The below image highlights the site and any records from Magic/DEFRA.



The site is within the area for Lapwing birds and adjacent Corn Bunting and Curlews;

Lapwings (not shown) but covers site, breed between mid-March and June. They nest on spring-tilled arable land or on short grassland with a low stocking rate.

Curlews (yellow) nest in a wide variety of upland vegetation types. They usually select relatively tall vegetation, either within a tussock on rough pasture or within the tall, but not too dense, vegetation of an unimproved hay crop.

The corn bunting (red) is a sparrow-sized, streaky brown bird of hedgerows and farmland that feeds on seeds and invertebrates. In the winter, it will join mixed flocks of buntings, finches and sparrows to feed on seeds on farmland.

The inspection of buildings to assess their roosting use/suitability for bats can be conducted at any time of year, according to the best practice survey guidance (Collins, 20165). However, finding evidence of bats (e.g. Their droppings) on external surfaces that are unprotected from rainfall may be restricted if undertaken outside the main bat active season (May to September) and/or after periods of wet weather. Bat droppings inside buildings may also quickly disintegrate in damp conditions.

On-Site buildings were surveyed externally in line with Collins (2016) using binoculars and torches, as necessary, to search for evidence of bats.

Evidence of bats searched for included live and dead bats (e.g. Roosting in cracks and crevices in brickwork and structural timbers), bat droppings on walls and other exposed surfaces and staining (caused by bat fur oils and/or urine spots).

All habitats within site were recorded and mapped. All habitats within the site were assessed for their potential to support rare or notable species. The habitats within and adjacent to site have been surveyed as evidence of protected/important species.



The above image highlights the site development.

## Results

The Detached property is residential that has been well maintained throughout. The current state of the property would indicate no colonisation of bats as there are no suitable roosting points. Externally there are no crevices on the external walls for roosting, the eaves have been well maintained and sealed with roof tiles intact with no sign of potential shelter or a place of protection for bats.

As many bats shelter in buildings, behind hanging tiles and boarding or in roof spaces. The barns and outbuildings have been primarily occupied for some time extensively used, cleaned and vigorous use of artificial lighting and human activity/disturbance decreases the potential for bat roosting.

There were no obvious roosting opportunities and when considering the context and position. There were some external features potentially of value to roosting bats. Narrow gaps were present between the walls and overlying wooden fascia boards, as well as in places below the overlapping roofing line. These minor features were present on the property. The dwelling was assessed as being of Low overall potential value to roosting bats.

Below is the dwelling.





Given the condition of the dwelling was water tight and maintained, the interior inspection was carried out with no findings.

Surrounding site there are various regularly managed, closely mown lawns of amenity grassland.

The survey was carried out in average conditions 30 minutes before sunset and lasted 60 minutes. Given the position, noise and light there were no bats present during our visit, this could also be contributed by the site is near to the Aspal Close Nature Reserve.

The nature reserve is an 18.9 hectare Local Nature Reserve in Beck Row in Suffolk. It is owned by West Suffolk District Council and managed by the council together with Aspal Close Management Committee. This site has grassland, woodland and scrub. Almost 300 plant species and six bats have been recorded and there are around 200 ancient oaks, some of which may be 1,000 years old.

## Conclusion

The site is not covered by any wildlife site designation, and no designated wildlife sites are located adjacent to the site boundary although the Aspal Close Nature Reserve is within sum 50.0 metres of site.

In this instance the small-scale of the proposed development and the distance from this and other designated sites, precludes any significant negative impact on the SSSI in our opinion. There are no features of interest or indeed any reason why the dwellings could not be built.

The land on site was dominated by habitats of low relative biodiversity value which do not represent a significant constraint in development planning terms. However, whilst no activity was present during our visit/survey we have recommended mitigation for apparent species to the area.

Prior to occupation of any of the dwellings hereby approved, a wildlife friendly lighting Scheme shall be provided. This should follow ILP Guidance<sup>1</sup> and a professional ecologist Should be consulted to advise the lighting strategy for this scheme, to help advise the Lighting strategy and avoid impacts upon any created bat roosts. In addition, it is advised That the following measures should be indicated to avoid impacts to foraging and

Commuting bats:

Light levels should be as low as possible as required to fulfil the lighting need. Warm White lights should be used at <3000k. This is necessary as lighting which emit an ultraviolet component or that have a blue spectral content have a high attraction effects on insects. This may lead in a reduction in prey availability for some light sensitive bat species. The provision of motion sensors or timers to avoid the amount of 'lit-time' of the proposed lighting. Lights should be designed to prevent horizontal spill e.g. Cowls, hoods, reflector skirts or Shields.

The common pipistrelle is an edge specialist, preferring to forage along woodland edges and along isolated tree lines. It is insectivorous, preying on flies, caddisflies, lacewings, and mayflies, Mosquitoes, midges, and gnats are particularly favoured prey items.

Any soft landscaping for the development should incorporated with the planting of native species scrub and/or trees to provide nesting and foraging habitat for birds. The provision of integrated bird and bat boxes, please see appendix A into new structure should be considered to deliver a positive outcome for biodiversity in overall terms. We would also recommend multi-species bat boxes on site, these can either be fixed to the gable end of the barn or to mature trees on site at a height between 2.5m and 5m. Boxes are to partially face the sun for gain warmth

Hedgehog link to be either;

Linic Products UK Made Hedgehog Highway Portal/Gate/Surround for Fences, etc. (S7869)

Fences and walls around our gardens prevent hedgehogs from travelling between gardens to forage for food, find a mate and access nesting sites. By providing a gate into your garden for hedgehogs

you can give them safe passage between gardens and help them avoid the dangers of crossing roads. Hole width : 125mm Hole height : 125mm Overall width : 220mm Overall height : 165mm



Or

B) Cut holes 13 x 13cm at the base of fence.

Consideration should be given to sensitive lighting design to minimise light spill and adverse impacts on nocturnal wildlife. It would be recommended that the east boundaries be kept free of any lighting during construction, i.e. Ensure all lighting is switched off overnight and no lights face these boundaries. This will help ensure the flight paths are not disturbed during peak bat activity times.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

Bat/bird boxes for site will comprise of;

To be located on gables which are south facing where appropriate. Following from the lighting strategy box will positioned away from lighting to prevent adverse impact on the use of the box.

Specifications: Exterior quality resin bonded ply, manufactured with surface sunk coated staples to resist rusting, external surfaces treated with water based woodstain, internal ceramic heat sinks.

Size: 49cm Height x 26cm Width x 13cm Depth



This Improved Roost-Maternity Bat Box has the following features;

A large 3 crevice box.

Suitable for larger roosts or maternity groups of the small British crevice-dwelling bats - the Pipistrelles, Soprano Pipistrelles and Barbastelle's. These species make up over three quarters of UK bats.

Bird box Versatile; Can be used as a traditional or open fronted nesting box Innovative design; The base has a small gap allowing birds to clean out the box with ease Attract wild birds; Perfect for nesting tits, sparrows, robins and pied wagtails. Body: L13 x W13 x h22cm Including roof: L16 x W18 x 26cm

