



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

For:

Diss - Hopton – Hopton CEVC Primary School – Fence Works

**Prepared by Natural Environment Ecology Team,
Suffolk County Council**

For Hopton CEVC Primary School

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**Suffolk County Council
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www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolksnaturalenvironment

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Approved	Seph Pochin – Ecologist
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Important Note:

This Report has been prepared in accordance with CIEEM guidelines to serve the dual functions of assisting in the conservation of biodiversity and ensuring that those instructing the Ecology Team do not fall foul of the complex legal framework that protects our wildlife and habitats.

It is your responsibility to read and understand all of the important points in this Report and, in any case of doubt or difficulty, to contact the Ecologists for any further advice or explanation required.

Natural Environment Ecology Team

Suffolk County Council

Ipswich

Suffolk

1. Project title: Hopton CEVC Primary School – Fence Works

1.1 Site identification/address: Thelnetham Road, Hopton, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2QY.

1.2 Ecology Scheme Reference: 2022-2023/106

1.3 Client's reference/contact: Sarah Adnett; [REDACTED]
sarah.adnett@hopton.suffolk.sch.uk

1.4 Report date: January 2023

1.5 Report Summary:

This Report has been prepared to advise the applicant of any relevant ecological constraints and other matters that might have an impact upon biodiversity as a result of the proposal to construct a new fence (or fences) at Hopton CEVC Primary School.

No trees, shrubs or other habitat of value to biodiversity will be lost in order to deliver the fencing project.

In normal circumstances, it would be a requirement that the scheme results in an overall net gain for biodiversity at the site however, there will be no net loss and fencing off the smaller (former swimming pool) area and allowing natural regeneration will certainly provide good habitat.

It is essential that all work, including cutting back or removal of ecological features (such as – but not limited to - trees and hedgerows) follows the following protocol (further detail is provided in Appendix Two below):

**Avoidance
Mitigation
Compensation
Enhancement**

As mentioned above, SCC will normally expect any proposed development would result in a Biodiversity Net Gain (as set out in the Environment Act, 2021) however, as there will be no net loss here, this is not mandatory but is, of course, encouraged.

A number of potential enhancements that the school may wish to consider have been suggested at the end of this document, to help the applicant to achieve Biodiversity Enhancement at The Site.

Subject to the timing of any necessary site clearance works (in this case, minimal and with little consequence for biodiversity, as long as the Precautionary Method Statement is adhered to) the proposal to install new fencing will not have a negative impact on biodiversity.

1.6: Key Issues: Constraints, Warnings & Essential Actions (*including any further surveys required*):

THIS REPORT IS ONLY VALID FOR SIX MONTHS FROM THE DATE ABOVE. AS NEW SPECIES AND OTHER RECORDS ARE ADDED TO OUR SYSTEM REGULARLY AND BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN LEGISLATION, SHOULD THIS PROPOSAL NOT PROCEED WITHIN THIS TIME LIMIT, IT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR A FRESH DATA SEARCH TO BE COMPLETED (AND A FURTHER SURVEY MAY BE REQUIRED).

Trees and shrubs can suffer fatal damage through compaction by vehicles and materials and by, for example, excavation work. When establishing site compounds, considering areas for the storage of materials and parking vehicles and plant and in planning routes for any trenches or holes or in positioning scaffolding poles, installing posts or similar structures, please ensure that all contractors and staff are aware of and abide by BS5837:2012 “Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations” and the NJUG Guidelines: “Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees”.

Please note that any removal of, or substantial alteration to, any tree, mature shrub or hedge plant should be referred to the appropriate District or Borough Council Tree Officer.

Further Surveys Required: A Breeding Bird Assessment will be required prior to the commencement of works onsite, if these works take place within the Breeding Bird Season (which is considered to be March 1st to August 31st inclusive).

Please be aware that, if a Breeding Bird Assessment is required and breeding birds are using any trees, shrubs, or buildings for nesting activity, it will be a criminal offence to disturb them, and re-scheduling of these works may be required.

2 Ecological survey details:

2.1 Site Description:

Hopton CEVC Primary School (hereafter known as The Site), is located in the village of Hopton, close to Diss in the West of Suffolk.

The Site consists of the school buildings, tarmac hardstanding for car parking and the playground, areas of mown amenity grassland (sports field) and has a deep boundary feature of semi-mature and mature trees and shrubs to the rear and Leylandii hedging to some of the boundaries.

Residential housing and well-lit roads are directly adjacent to The Site, with amenity fields located nearby.

2.2 Designated Sites (e.g., Ramsar, SPA, SAC, SSSI, CWS):

There are a number of Designated Sites nearby (some sites may have more than one designation):

SAC/SPA/Ramsar Sites (within 10 km)

Waveney & Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC

SSSIs (within 10 km)

Hopton Fens SSSI

Weston Fen SSSI

AONB (within 10km):

N/A

County Wildlife Site(s) (CWS) (within 2 km):

N/A

There is no connectivity between any The Site and any Designated Site listed above as there are numerous residential properties located between The Site and the Designated Sites. No habitat that is a feature of any Designated Site is present at The Site.

Subject to the works adhering to the conditions set out in the attached site-specific Precautionary Method Statement, no Designated Site will be impacted by the proposal.

2.3 The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003:

This proposal will not result in negative impacts upon watercourses or groundwater. A WER (WFD) Compliance Assessment is not required.

2.3 Species and Habitats that could be affected by the proposal:

2.4.1 European Protected Species ‡: (*pursuant to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*)

There are records of Bats within 2km of the Site. No shrubs that may have to be cut back have any features such as cavities, cracks or lifted bark, that could potentially be used by Bats. No buildings are to be demolished. It is considered highly unlikely that Bats will be impacted by the proposal.

Subject to the works strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the attached Precautionary Method Statement, no European Protected Species (EPS) will be impacted by this proposal.

2.4.2 Priority (Biodiversity Action Plan) Species*‡: *(pursuant to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981[as amended], The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006).*

Common Birds have been recorded within 2km of The Site and several species of Common Bird were observed onsite during the site survey. If the removal of any shrub is to take place during the period March to August inclusive, it will be necessary to conduct a Breeding Bird Assessment at The Site, to check for active nesting in the vicinity prior to the removal or cutting back of the tree or shrubs.

Subject to all works strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the site-specific Precautionary Method Statement, it is unlikely that Common Birds will be impacted by the proposal (subject to suitable and appropriate compensation planting for any trees and shrubs that might be lost).

Subject to the works strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the attached Precautionary Method Statement (and to any necessary compensation), it is highly unlikely any Priority Species will be impacted by the proposal.

For further information on Suffolk's Priority Species visit:

<http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/speciesandhabitats>

2.4.3 Other Protected Species‡ *(pursuant to, e.g., The Protection of Badgers Act 1992, The Eels [England and Wales] Regulations 2009, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006).*

There are records of Common Reptiles (Common Lizard, Grass Snake, Slow-Worm) within 2km of The Site. Subject to all works adhering to the conditions contained within the Precautionary Method Statement, it is considered highly unlikely that Common Reptiles will be impacted by the proposal.

Common Toad have been recorded within 2km of The Site, and Common Amphibians have been recorded within ponds nearby. Subject to all works adhering to the conditions contained within the Precautionary Method Statement, it is considered highly unlikely that Amphibians will be impacted by the proposal.

Subject to the works strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the attached Precautionary Method Statement, no other protected species will be impacted by the proposal.

For more information on England's Protected Species visit:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1747>

2.4.4 Priority (Biodiversity Action Plan) Habitats ‡: *(pursuant to The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 [as amended], The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006)*

No areas of Priority (Biodiversity Action Plan) Habitat are present onsite and there is no connectivity between The Site and any area of Priority Habitat: residential housing, and busy roads all provide a significant barrier to migration between The Site and any areas of Priority Habitat. Subject to the proposal strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the attached Precautionary Method Statement, no areas of Priority (Biodiversity Action Plan) Habitat will be impacted by the proposal.

For further information on Suffolk's Priority Habitats:

<http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/speciesandhabitats>

*See "Suffolk Priority Species and Habitats (Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan) January 2015.

‡ All species records will be sent to SBIS (Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service).

3 Evaluation of Site and Impacts of Proposal

3.1 Evaluation

The proposal to install new fencing at Hopton CEVC Primary School, should not result in any negative impacts upon biodiversity, subject to any necessary Breeding Bird Assessments, and all operations strictly adhering to the conditions set out in the attached site-specific Precautionary Method Statement.

3.2 Essential Actions

The accompanying Precautionary Method Statement (Appendix Three) must be read, agreed, signed, and returned to ecology@suffolk.gov.uk before works may go ahead.

3.3 Compensation

There is no loss of biodiversity at this site and, therefore, compensation is not required.

3.4 Biodiversity Enhancements (*Pursuant to The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and The Environment Act 2021*):

Enhancements are not specifically required for this proposal as there will be no net loss but enhancements should always be considered and implemented where possible.

As an example, the former swimming pool will be fenced off; this could be left to naturally regenerate and may become a useful outdoor classroom or quiet area (or, indeed, a place for studying nature in due course. If this does not mature as envisaged, modest planting could be implemented to achieve the desired results.

The Precautionary Method Statement attached shows a variety of ways of making the site more attractive for wildlife.

Please contact the Ecology Team for further advice and information.

3.5 Conclusions

Subject to adhering to the attached site-specific Precautionary Method Statement (and any other advice set out in this Report), likely significant long-term harm to biodiversity will be avoided.

Dated: January 2023

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Appendix One:

Use of the Mitigation Hierarchy:

It is essential that any work, including cutting back or removal of ecological features (such as – but not limited to - trees and hedgerows) follows the following protocol:

Avoidance
Mitigation
Compensation
Enhancement

Avoidance: Strenuous efforts must be made in planning any project or development to avoid loss or damage to any ecological feature. These features are valuable in so many ways, not least in the ecosystem services that they offer.

Mitigation: If removal or cutting back of any feature is the only option available, then harm must be mitigated by undertaking the appropriate surveys for, e.g., breeding birds, bat roosts or other essential bat habitat, floral interest and so on. Surveys must meet the appropriate guidelines for best practice (see, e.g., CIEEM website) and be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced personnel.

The application must explain how mitigation will address the likely impacts of the proposal and identify key timing issues to protect biodiversity that may constrain the development. Mitigation proposals must be robust and likely to be effective.

It is expected that detailed mitigation proposals will be secured through appropriate planning conditions e.g., a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) and the long-term management secured by way of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

Compensation: The loss of any natural feature must be compensated for. This means that, for example, if there is no alternative to removal of a mature tree, at least three appropriate (suitable species and provenance) trees must be planted elsewhere, as close as possible to the removed feature, two such trees for an immature specimen and one-for-one for saplings.

Enhancement: It is a SCC requirement that all projects and developments deliver Biodiversity Net Gain. The site must be surveyed to establish a baseline and a Landscape Plan provided showing how Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved. Such a plan must also show full details of monitoring and maintenance (including replacement where necessary).

By following the mitigation hierarchy set out above, it is to be hoped that developments will be delivered in the most sustainable way possible, always seeking to deliver the maximum gain for our wildlife and habitats as they are so vital to our health and wellbeing and an essential tool in tackling the declared climate emergency.

Please feel free to contact the Ecology Team to discuss your proposals and see how we may be able to assist you in delivery of your project.

Appendix Two: Precautionary Method Statement



Precautionary Method Statement

For:

**(Diss) Hopton –
Hopton CEVC Primary School –
Fence Works**

**Prepared by Natural Environment Ecology Team,
Suffolk County Council**

For Hopton CEVC Primary School

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PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT

FOR:

HOPTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

FENCE WORKS

TO AVOID A POTENTIAL WILDLIFE CRIME AND/OR AN EMS INCIDENT, THIS STATEMENT IS SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT WORK TAKING PLACE IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023. SHOULD THIS WORK TAKE PLACE AT ANY OTHER TIME OF THE YEAR, YOU MUST REVERT TO THE ECOLOGISTS FOR FURTHER ADVICE.

This Precautionary Method Statement deals with biodiversity issues and relevant ecological constraints and should be followed by all staff and contractors working on the proposal to install new fencing at Hopton CEVC Primary School.

It is recommended that this document forms part of the project's briefing notes, and the Site or Project Manager signs and returns a copy of this Precautionary Method Statement to the Ecologists to confirm that they have read and understood the important points contained within.

Important General Notes:

- If any contractor or member of staff is concerned about any potential impacts of their work upon wildlife or habitats not dealt with below or anything of ecological concern arises during the operation, they must call the Ecologists to discuss the matter further.

All Contractors are required to inform Suffolk County Council and the Ecology Team (ecology@suffolk.gov.uk) of any ecological or environmental incident or "near-miss" as soon as it is practical to do so.

PRE-CONSTRUCTION ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION:

- Trimming of any trees, hedges and shrubs must be undertaken outside of Bird Breeding Season (March-August inclusive), or subject to the all-clear being given by in season Breeding Bird Assessments.
- 6 degrees centigrade.

- **If timings for this project change, please contact the Ecologists for further advice.**

DURING CONSTRUCTION WORK:

PROTECTED SPECIES:

Badgers (no signs noted during the Scoping Survey but they are present in the wider area and are highly mobile):

- **If fresh footprints (see drawing below) or evidence of a Sett are discovered in the immediate vicinity of the works, you must call the Ecologists for further advice before starting work. Badgers Setts are usually distinguished by large amounts of excavated material with entrances about 250mm or 10” or more in diameter in a flattened oval shape. Also note latrines which are about 150mm or 6” deep (see photograph below).**



Sett Entrance © Wildlife Online website



Latrine Pit © Badgerwatcher website



Badger footprint © Twycross Zoo website

- If any holes are found within any area of vegetation to be cleared, works must cease immediately, and the Ecologists called as a matter of urgency for further advice.

Trees:

- Trees and shrubs can suffer fatal damage through compaction by vehicles and materials. When establishing site compounds, considering areas for the storage of materials, parking vehicles and plant, and in planning routes for any trenches or holes, please ensure that all contractors are aware of and abide by BS5837:2012 “Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations”
- Trees and shrubs can suffer fatal damage through severing and damage to roots during excavation work. Please ensure that all contractors follow NJUG Guidelines “Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees” <http://www.njug.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/V4-Trees-Issue-2-16-11-2007.pdf>

Breeding Birds:

- **Should any trimming or clearance of trees, hedges and shrubs be undertaken during Breeding Bird Season (1st March - 31st August inclusive) please contact the Ecologists to arrange a Breeding Bird Assessment before any works take place.**
- **If, during the operation, any agitated birds are encountered (for example, alarm calls or “mobbing” flight) indicating nesting activity in the area, operations must cease immediately, and the Ecologists called as a matter of urgency for further advice.**

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- **All materials, plant and equipment should be stored on road or on hard standings. If that is not possible, use tarpaulins or sheets to prevent potential pollution risks and, in addition, use pallets or similar to lift the materials from the ground to prevent their use by animals.**
- **Materials should be removed from the site as quickly as possible to reduce pollution risks further and to minimise the chance of animals taking refuge within/below them.**
- **When depositing or moving any materials, plant or equipment, a visual check must be made underneath to ensure that small mammals, reptiles, or amphibians are not present and will not be harmed.**
- **Any holes or trenches that must be left open overnight (avoid leaving open holes over weekends, if possible) must be visually checked for any mammals or other small animals and a means of escape (such as a plank) must be provided.**
- **Avoid overnight works as this is when mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic invertebrates are most likely to move across the area.**

POST CONSTRUCTION WORK:

- **The Ecologists will always be pleased to discuss any possible enhancements to the site to discharge Suffolk County Council’s Statutory Duty to conserve biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act, 2006 and to meet SCC’s obligations to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.**

Please call Suffolk County Council Ecologist, Andrew Murray-Wood on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] if you have any problems or queries regarding any wildlife issue at this site.

YOUR SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED:

Agreed and Signed by the Site or Project Manager:

Name (Print): _____

Company: _____

Contact Telephone Number: _____

Contact E-Mail: _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Please return to: ecology@suffolk.gov.uk

Dated: January 2023

**Andrew Murray-Wood
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