



Norfolk Wildlife Services supports the Norfolk Wildlife Trust  
by providing funds for nature conservation



Wildlife Trust  
Consultancies

## Ecological Impact Assessment: Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield



Norfolk Wildlife Services  
Bewick House  
22 Thorpe Road  
Norwich, NR1 1RY  
Tel: 01603 625540  
office@norfolkwildlifeservices.co.uk  
www.norfolkwildlifeservices.co.uk  
Company Registration No: 3957786

VAT No. 876 3225 06





Norfolk Wildlife Services supports the Norfolk Wildlife Trust  
by providing funds for nature conservation



|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Client</b>              | Mrs Helen Melhuish & Mr Paul Carroll                   |
| <b>Site address</b>        | Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield, IP21 5PY |
| <b>Survey scope</b>        | Ecological Impact Assessment                           |
| <b>Survey date(s)</b>      | 26/04/2023, 16/05/2023, 15/06/2023                     |
| <b>Report reference</b>    | 2022.315   |
| <b>Principal author(s)</b> | Seth Lambiase MCIEEM                                   |
| <b>Quality checked by</b>  | John Harris MCIEEM                                     |
| <b>Authorised by</b>       | Seth Lambiase MCIEEM                                   |

| <b>Document history</b> | <b>Issued by and date</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Draft v1                | S. Lambiase 23/06/2023    |
| Final                   | S. Lambiase 28/06/2023    |

### Declaration of Compliance

This report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct and British Standard Institution's BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. We confirm that the opinions expressed within this document are our bona fide professional opinions.

The information which is being provided is a true representation of the survey methods used and the results assembled, with respect to the stated dates of survey and assessment. The future validity of this report is conditional on any changes which occur to the assessment site, and in any case will be limited by professionally accepted survey lifespans<sup>1,2</sup>.

### Third Party Disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Norfolk Wildlife Services Ltd on behalf of the client named above. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. Section 2.6.3 Age of survey data (pg 20).

Norfolk Wildlife Services  
Bewick House  
22 Thorpe Road  
Norwich, NR1 1RY  
Tel: 01603 625540  
office@norfolkwildlifeservices.co.uk  
www.norfolkwildlifeservices.co.uk  
Company Registration No: 3957786

VAT No. 876 3225 06



## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Non-Technical Summary .....  | 1  |
| 2. Introduction .....   | 1  |
| 2.1. Description of the project .....   | 1  |
| 2.2. Purpose .....  | 1  |
| Figure 1: Location for Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield proposal site ..... | 2  |
| Figure 2: Proposed development .....  | 3  |
| 3. Methods.....   | 4  |
| 3.1. Zone of Influence .....  | 4  |
| 3.2. Desktop study .....  | 4  |
| 3.3. Field surveys and establishment of baseline ecological conditions.....             | 4  |
| 3.4. Assessment of impact potential / risk .....  | 5  |
| 4. Results.....   | 7  |
| 4.1. Local context.....   | 7  |
| 4.2. Desktop study results .....  | 7  |
| 4.3. Field survey results .....   | 7  |
| 4.4. Limitations .....  | 8  |
| 4.5. Further survey recommendations .....   | 9  |
| Figure 3: Map of survey site; bat roost emergence survey positions indicated .....      | 10 |
| 5. Ecological Impact Risk Assessment .....  | 11 |
| 5.1. Potential impacts .....  | 11 |
| 5.2. Cumulative effects .....   | 11 |
| 5.3. Mitigation measures .....  | 12 |
| 5.4. Mitigation licensing for European Protected Species .....                          | 13 |
| 5.5. Residual impact assessment .....   | 14 |
| 6. Enhancements .....   | 15 |
| 6.1. Bat roost box.....   | 15 |
| Figure 4: Bat box enhancement location.....   | 15 |
| 6.2. Amphibian hibernacula.....   | 16 |
| Figure 5: Amphibian hibernaculum enhancement locations.....                             | 16 |
| 7. Conclusions .....  | 17 |
| Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation and Policy Guidance .....                              | 18 |
| Appendix 2: Photographs .....   | 19 |

## 1. Non-Technical Summary

Norfolk Wildlife Services was commissioned to assess the ecological impact potential of the planned conversion to single dwelling of a small cluster of redundant outbuildings at Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield, IP21 5PY.

The site was first inspected on 26/04/2023 by Seth Lambiase MCIEEM (Natural England bat survey class licence registration 2015-11812/13-CLS-CLS, great crested newt survey class licence registration 2015-19173-CLS-CLS). Subsequent dusk bat roost emergence surveys of the building were completed on 16/05/2023 and 15/06/2023.

Hill View Farm is a rural site located on the south-eastern outskirts of Fressingfield, with no statutory designated nature conservation sites located within 2km. The habitats present within the application boundaries include a concrete access track, a small area of hard-standing, four derelict outbuildings and surrounding garden.

The proposed conversion works are expected to have a neutral impact on nature conservation sites and valued habitats.

The bat roost surveys were all negative and the proposal is predicted to have a neutral impact on roosting bats. Certain precautions are advised as best practice.

There is a possibility of a minor negative impact on local hedgehog and reptile (grass snake) populations during the construction phase, which is to be mitigated by precautionary methods of working.

There is potential for displacement and disturbance of a small number of breeding songbirds. Mitigation measures are needed, and compensation (nest boxes) is proposed.

A great crested newt assessment of the pond 30m west of the proposal site returned a positive result for eggs. There is considered to be risk of negative impacts to terrestrial great crested newts as a result of site clearance and new construction works. Mitigation is proposed by way of District Level Licensing and using an Ecological Clerk of Works.

A minor but proportionate wildlife enhancement is recommended in the form of a new bat roost box and two new amphibian hibernacula provided within the Hill View Farm property.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Description of the project

Norfolk Wildlife Services was commissioned to assess the ecological impact potential of the planned conversion to single dwelling of a small cluster of redundant outbuildings at Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield, IP21 5PY (TM 2641 7707).

The proposal site location is shown in Figure 1 and a site plan is shown in Figure 2.

### 2.2. Purpose

The purpose of this ecological impact assessment report is to:

- Describe the ecological baseline of the survey area.
- Evaluate the habitats within the survey area for their ecological value in a geographic context.
- Identify and describe all potentially significant ecological effects as a result of the proposal (e.g. impacts to protected species).
- Outline appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures for significant effects as a result of the proposal and how these could be secured.
- Clearly identify requirements to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation.
- Identify potential ecological enhancement measures beyond avoidance or mitigation.
- Set out any requirement for post-development monitoring.

Figure 1: Location for Hill View Farm, Laxfield Road, Fressingfield proposal site

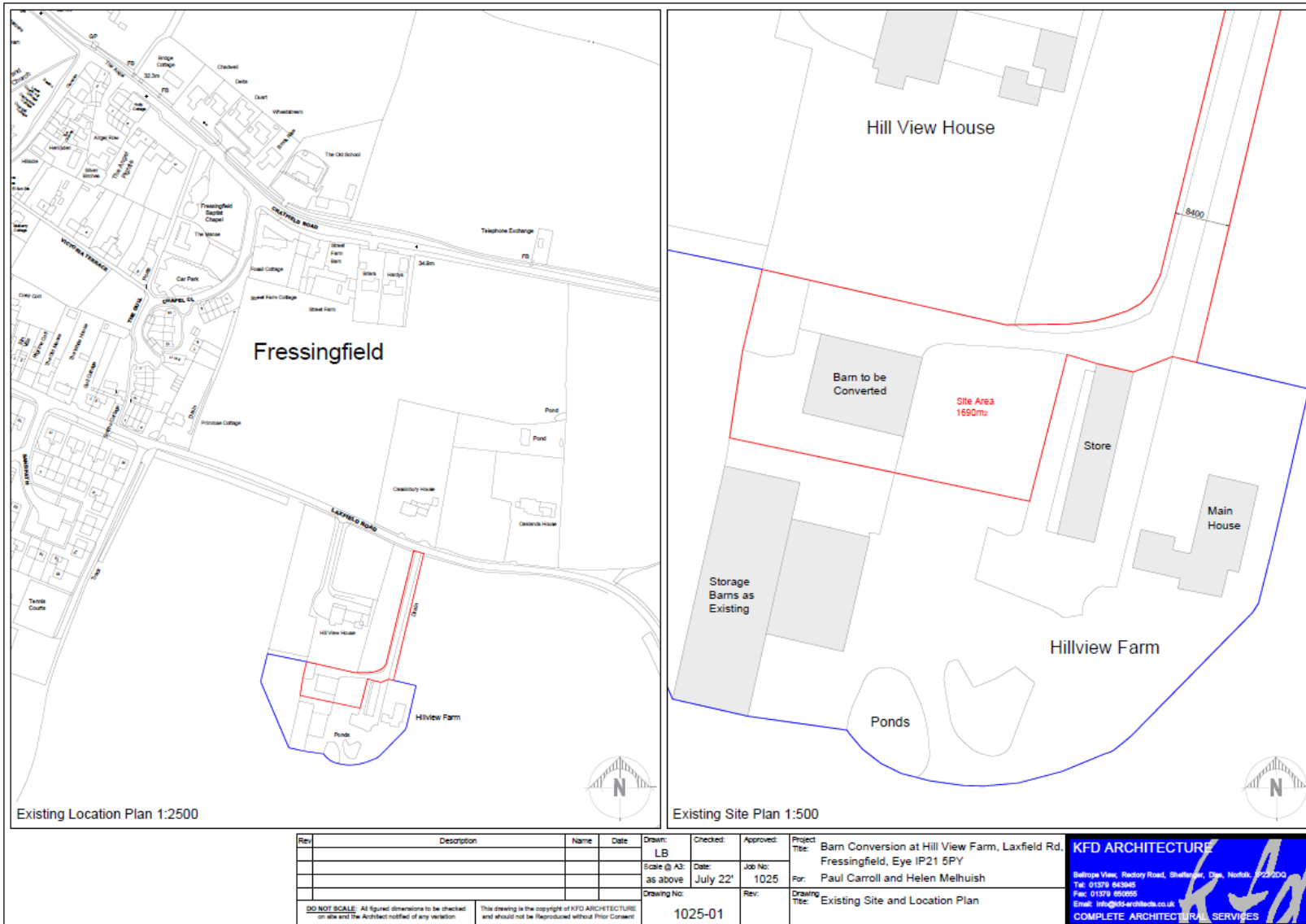
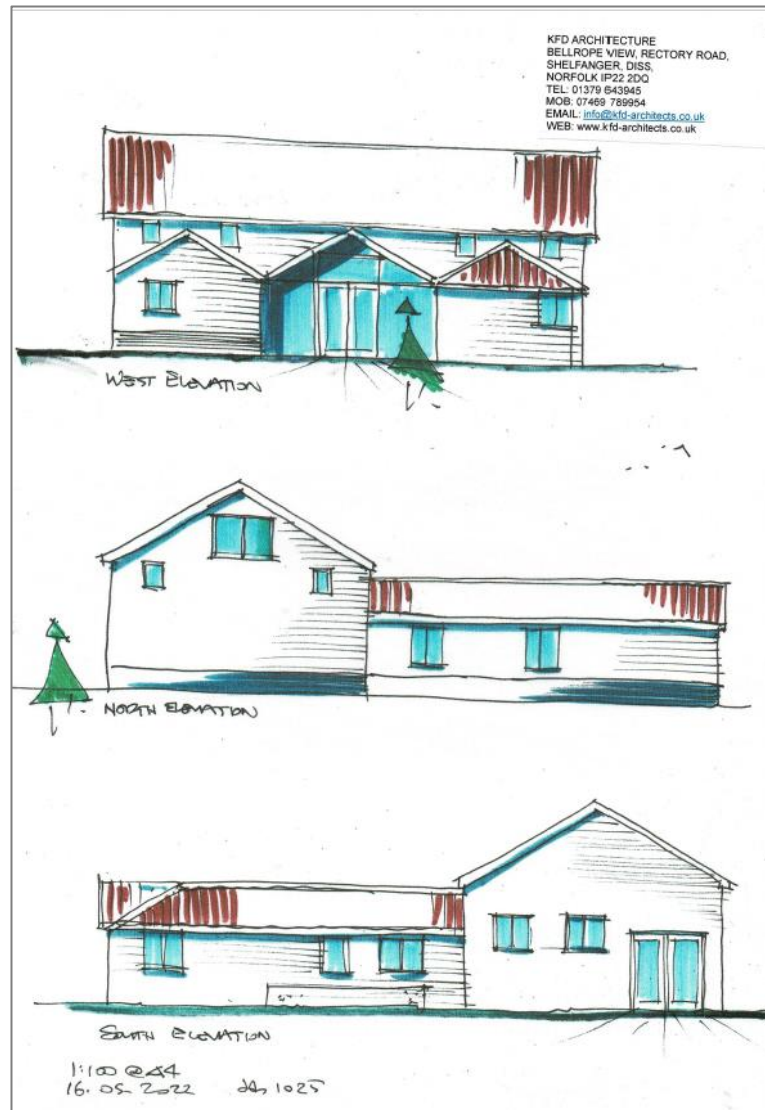


Figure 2: Proposed development



### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Zone of Influence

The Zone of influence (Zoi) is defined by the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2018) as: *“The areas/resources that may be affected by the biophysical changes caused by activities associated with a project”*.

The Zoi for this project considers multiple areas for the potential changes to ecological features as a result of the proposed development. The extents of these areas are:

- Within the application site boundaries (as per Figure 1) and immediately adjacent habitats for direct impacts to valued ecological features (e.g. habitats and protected species).
- Within a 2km radius of a central grid reference (TM 2641 7707) for designated nature conservation sites which may be indirectly impacted as a result of the proposed development.
- Within 250m of the proposed development site for water-bodies (potential amphibian breeding sites).

#### 3.2. Desktop study

A desktop study was made of the survey area using the search criteria and sources described in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Desktop study searches

| Search  | Sources  |
|---|--|
| A 2km search radius for statutory designated nature conservation sites and other features of interest         | Natural England Magic Map Application ( <a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk">www.magic.gov.uk</a> )                     |
| A 1km radius for European Protected Species mitigation licences and great crested newt licence return records | Natural England Magic Map Application ( <a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk">www.magic.gov.uk</a> )                     |
| A 250m radius for extant waterbodies  | Natural England Magic Map Application ( <a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk">www.magic.gov.uk</a> )<br>Google Earth Pro |

#### 3.3. Field surveys and establishment of baseline ecological conditions

The proposal site and targeted outbuildings were first inspected on 26/04/2023 by Seth Lambiase MCIEEM (Natural England bat survey class licence registration 2015-11812/13-CLS-CLS, great crested newt survey class licence registration 2015-19173-CLS-CLS).

Photographs of the property are referenced within the Results section and are shown in Appendix 2.

##### 3.3.1. Habitats

A basic Phase 1 habitat assessment was completed based on JNCC 2010<sup>3</sup> methods and UK Habitat Classification definitions and codes.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit. JNCC, Peterborough, UK.



### 3.3.2. Species

#### Mammals

The proposed development area and its adjacent surrounds was evaluated for its potential value for protected (or otherwise conservation concern) mammal species, particularly roosting bats.

Dusk bat roost emergence surveys of the building were completed on 16/05/2023 and 15/06/2023. The surveyors and equipment used are detailed below in Table 2 and surveyor locations are shown in Figure 2.

Table 2: Bat activity survey details

| Date       | Surveyors   | Equipment  |
|------------|---|--|
| 16/05/2023 | John Harris (JH) MCIEEM, Natural England bat survey class licence 2015-13039-CLS-CLS<br>Ben Christie (BC) MCIEEM, Natural England bat survey class licence 2019-43514-CLS-CLS | Surveyors used Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro bat detectors.<br>Surveyors assisted by a HikMicro Lynx Pro LH15 thermal cameras (TC1) paired with Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter SM Bat Mini detector, and a FLIR Scion OTM266 thermal camera (TC2) paired with a Song Meter SM4BAT detector.  |
| 15/06/2023 | Seth Lambiase (SL) MCIEEM; Natural England bat survey class licence 2015-11812/13-CLS-CLS<br>Lucy Llewellyn (LL)  | Surveyors used Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro bat detectors.<br>Surveyors assisted by a HikMicro Lynx Pro LH15 thermal camera (TC1) paired with a Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter SM Bat Mini detector, and a FLIR Scion OTM266 thermal camera (TC2) paired with a Song Meter SM4BAT detector. |

#### Birds

An assessment was made of the features likely to support breeding birds within the survey area.

#### Reptiles

An assessment was made of the features likely to support reptiles within the survey area.

#### Amphibians

A desktop search for ponds within 250m of the survey area was conducted using the Natural England Magic Map Application (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) and Google Earth Pro, and an assessment was made of the features likely to support great crested newts within the survey area.

### 3.4. Assessment of impact potential / risk

Potential impacts on ecological features are characterized using the following criteria.

#### Positive or Negative

The definition of a positive or negative impact/effect is as per CIEEM<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

- *“Positive – a change that improves the quality of the environment e.g. by increasing species diversity, extending habitat or improving water quality. This may also include halting or slowing an existing decline in the quality of the environment.*
- *Negative – a change which reduces the quality of the environment e.g. destruction of habitat, removal of foraging habitat, habitat fragmentation, pollution.”*

### **Spatial Extent**

The spatial extent of an impact’s predicted effects is estimated according to the following categories: international and European; national; regional / river basin district; county; local planning authority district; local (≈ parish); site (within the proposed development boundaries).

### **Magnitude**

- *Major* – an impact which is predicted to have a crucial effect (positive or negative) on a designated conservation site, habitat or species population within a specified spatial extent. Normally the effect will be considered either long-term (potentially reversible) or permanent.
- *Moderate* – an impact which is predicted to have a modest effect (positive or negative) on a designated conservation site, habitat or species population within a specified spatial extent. Normally the effect will be considered temporary in either the short- or medium-term, and to be reversible.
- *Minor* – an impact which is predicted to result in a slight but unimportant effect (positive or negative) on a designated conservation site, habitat or species population within a specified spatial extent. Normally the effect will be considered to be short-term and reversible.
- *Neutral* – a ‘non-impact’, with no appreciable effects on a designated conservation site, habitat or species population.

### **Duration**

The duration of an impact’s predicted effect may be quantified, or else broadly defined as either short-term, medium-term, long-term or permanent.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Local context

Hill View Farm is a rural site located on the south-eastern outskirts of Fressingfield. Two dwellings and several agricultural buildings, along with multiple trees and garden hedges, sit in an area that projects off the south side of Laxfield Road/B1116 into an arable field.

OS maps show only one static waterbody within 250m of the targeted outbuildings, which is a single pond (not double as indicated on maps) about 30m south of the application boundary.

### 4.2. Desktop study results

There are no statutory designated nature conservation areas within 2km of Hill View Farm. The Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes SAC, Minsmere-Walberswick SPA and Minsmere-Walberswick Ramsar are all c.19km east-southeast of Hill View Farm

Magic Map shows no granted European Protected Species mitigation licences within 1km. There is one positive Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Return within 1km, which is in Fressingfield 600m to the west.

### 4.3. Field survey results

#### 4.3.1. Habitats

The habitats within the red-line site boundaries are:

- Concrete access track (*developed land, sealed surface – u1b, 115*)
- Hard-standing (*developed land, sealed surface – u1b*)
- Outbuildings (*buildings u1b5, 88, 112*)
- Rural garden (*other neutral grassland g3c, 230, 350, 1150, 1160, 1170*)

There is a mature ash standard in the boundary hedge to the north of the outbuildings, which has a trunk cavity rated as a potential bat roost feature.

The eastern half of the outbuildings (half-collapsed brick and clay-lump barn) is overgrown by the invasive exotic Russian vine *Fallopia baldschuanica* (Photo 7). This is not a Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 9(2) species, but it should be thoroughly removed and not replanted.

#### 4.3.2. Species

##### Mammals

There are four discrete outbuildings:

- A brick and clay-lump barn with slate and corrugated sheet-metal roof – all half-collapsed; low bat roost potential; (Photos 1 and 2)
- A blockwork building with a hipped pantile roof; moderate bat roost potential; (Photo 3)
- Open-sided timber barn with collapsed corrugated sheet-metal roof; negligible bat roost potential (Photo 6)
- Timber cladding and clay-lump barn with pantile roof and prolific ivy growth; low/moderate bat roost potential (Photos 4 and 5)

Considering the buildings collectively, and owing to the location, the bat roost potential of the outbuildings was conservatively rated as moderate as per Bat Conservation Trust guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

#### 16/05/2023 bat activity survey

The dusk emergence survey was completed in acceptable conditions: 10% cloud cover, no precipitation, winds at Beaufort Wind Force Scale 0, and temperatures at 13 – 11°C. The survey started at 20:20 and ended at 22:25 (sunset 20:44).

At 21:01 a common pipistrelle appeared from the direction of the larger barns south of the outbuildings, and is suspected of having emerged from a roost there. Another common pipistrelle was observed at 21:09, and activity over the survey site by a common pipistrelle became more regular from 21:22. No bats emerged from the outbuildings.

#### 15/06/2023 bat activity survey

The dusk emergence survey was completed in acceptable conditions: 0% cloud cover, no precipitation, winds at Beaufort Wind Force Scale 2 – 0, and temperatures at 18 – 14°C. The survey started at 21:04 and ended at 22:40 (sunset 21:19).

One common pipistrelle flew into the survey area from the southwest at 21:59, and there was periodic activity over the survey area by one common pipistrelle from then onwards. No bats emerged from the building.

Hedgehogs may pass through the proposed development area and could shelter within the outbuilding debris and scrub.

#### **Birds**

No nesting bird activity was noted during any survey, but the ruined outbuildings overgrown with ivy and Russian vine do have nesting potential.

#### **Reptiles**

The proposal site has minor reptile potential. A small number of grass snakes is considered the most likely possibility for the site.

#### **Amphibians**

A great crested newt (GCN) habitat suitability<sup>6,7</sup> appraisal of the nearby pond (Photo 8) rated it as 'average'. There is a waterfowl presence (mallards) and a fish presence (numerous rudd/roach), but also the pond is sunny and has a decent density of macrophytes.

A GCN egg search of the pond on 46/04/2023 did find a GCN egg (Photo 9). One torching survey completed on 15/06/2023 spotted one adult GCN but no other amphibians.

#### **4.4. Limitations**

The outbuilding were considered unsafe to thoroughly inspect from inside, but given what could be easily seen this is not rated as a significant constraint.

<sup>5</sup> Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

<sup>6</sup> Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). *Herpetological Journal* 10(4), 143-155.

<sup>7</sup> ARG UK (2010). ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index. Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom.

#### 4.5. Further survey recommendations

The bat roost survey results should be regarded as valid at least until the start of the next optimum bat survey season on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024.<sup>8</sup>

DRAFT

---

<sup>8</sup> BCT (2016) guidelines, section 2.6.3 Age of survey data (pg 20).

Figure 3: Map of survey site; bat roost emergence survey positions indicated



## 5. Ecological Impact Risk Assessment

### 5.1. Potential impacts

#### 5.1.1. Designated nature conservation sites

The proposed outbuildings conversion present no credible risk of impacts to any statutory designated nature conservation sites. A *neutral* impact on all designated nature conservation sites is predicted.

#### 5.1.2. Habitats

The works are expected to have a *neutral* impact on valued natural habitats.

#### 5.1.3. Protected species

##### Mammals

The proposed development is predicted to have a *neutral* impact on local bat populations with regard to roost displacement.

Site bat foraging and commuting appears to be mainly by common pipistrelle and likely to be largely resilient to additional lighting associated with the new dwelling. However, a *minor negative* disturbance impact is considered possible.

A *minor negative* impact is possible for any local hedgehog population.

##### Birds

The development of the outbuildings site has the potential to cause *minor negative* impact to local population(s) of common species by way of nesting disturbance and nesting habitat displacement. Site clearance works during the main breeding season (March to end August) could conceivably result in active nest disturbance and/or destruction, and the legal protection afforded to bird nests obliges mitigation measures.

##### Reptiles

A *neutral – minor negative* impact on reptiles is predicted.

##### Amphibians

A GCN presence has been confirmed for the pond located 30m from the southern boundary of the application site. The size of the GCN population appears to be limited, and is potentially on the decline due to certain unfavourable breeding conditions of the pond. Nevertheless, there is a conceivable risk of terrestrial GCN being affected by the site clearance works and during the construction phase (with open excavations and material storage). No more than a *minor negative* impact to the local GCN population is anticipated, but the legal protection for the species requires mitigation measures.

### 5.2. Cumulative effects

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils planning website was used to search for planning applications made in Fressingfield over the past five years. Only two granted applications were relevant; DC/19/03513 for the erection of 12no dwellings and vehicular access) and DC/21/00405 (plus various subsequent condition discharge and alteration applications) for the erection of a new Baptist Chapel, car parking and access and an application for Outline Planning Permission for up to 18no residential units. The ecology assessments for both applications, despite a 2015 GCN record from the locality, predicted no impacts to GCN. No other developments were rated as having any cumulative impact potential when combined with the Hill View Farm proposal.

## 5.3. Mitigation measures

### 5.3.1. Habitats

None.

### 5.3.2. Protected species

#### Mammals

There is no expectation of a roosting bat presence within the outbuildings, but nevertheless there is never an absolute certainty of bat roost absence, especially transient use by a common species. Site inductions for contractors should include mention of procedures in regards to any protected species discoveries. The pre-works instruction given to the contractors should be that if any bat was to be discovered during the works, then all site works must immediately stop and a bat survey licensed ecologist consulted to advise on a course of action.

To mitigate the potential for negative impacts on bat foraging and commuting from the lighting of the new conversions, wildlife-sensitive lighting should be adopted as per recent Institution of Lighting Professionals and Bat Conservation Trust guidance<sup>9</sup>. Any new exterior lighting should be unobtrusive and downcast/directional to prevent direct illumination of bat flight paths and foraging areas as best as possible. Exterior lighting should be PIR activated and on short timers (< 1 minute). Lighting on site is also recommended to avoid blue-white short wavelength and lights with high UV contents, as these have a negative impact on insects and can ultimately reduce foraging for bats<sup>10</sup>.

The site clearance risk to hedgehogs (as well as other terrestrial animals) is to be mitigated by the site induction for contractors advising a level of care and caution when working on site, especially if using machinery. Construction impacts to hedgehog and other animals are to be mitigated by barricading wet/drying concrete and fitting any open excavations with escape ramps. All excavations will be checked for animals before being filled. Demolition waste and green waste will be taken from site or loaded into skips as soon as possible (within 48hrs of creation) to minimise the chance of being used as a refuge by an animal that could be injured/killed during the eventual removal. Building materials stores must be kept on hard-standing or on pallets.

#### Birds

Ivy and shrub removal must either avoid the main nesting season (March through August) or undertake a competent watching brief(s) to check for bird nesting activity prior to felling (maximum 72hrs prior). Site inductions should instruct on the protection afforded to active bird nests and the need for awareness of nesting evidence. Any identified active nests must be left undisturbed and buffered from active work areas until the nesting attempt reaches a natural conclusion.

Two new nest boxes for songbirds will be provided with the new development (either on trees or buildings) as compensation for potential nest sites to be removed. Recommended nest box models include the Vivara Pro Seville WoodStone Nest Box and the Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box, but variations and equivalents can be advised by an ecologist.

#### Reptiles

Mitigation for reptiles will be as for mammals (above). Any encountered reptiles will be relocated within the Hill View Farm property.

<sup>9</sup> Ferguson, J., Fox, H. & Smith, N. (2018) Bats and artificial lighting in the UK. Bats and the Built Environment series, Guidance Note 08/18. Institution of Lighting Professionals and Bat Conservation Trust.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, E.L. (2013) Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation. University of Bristol, UK.



## Amphibians

Mitigation for amphibians will be as for mammals (above), and an application for GCN District Level Licensing will be submitted to Natural England.

A GCN survey-licensed Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will give a toolbox talk to contractors, monitor key areas of the site clearance, and will be on-call during all works to safely relocate any encountered GCN.

### 5.4. Mitigation licensing for European Protected Species

There is no reasonable expectation of impacts to roosting bats, but there is a credible risk of disturbance/injury/death to small numbers of great crested newts (GCN). As such, an application for District Level Licensing (DLL) will be submitted to Natural England.

A mitigation licence derogating from the legal protection afforded to GCN by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) can only be granted in cases where the activity meets the following three tests.

#### 1. Overriding public interest

The overriding public interest of the proposed development project is derived from producing one new unit of housing from derelict buildings.

#### 2. There is no satisfactory alternative

The alternatives to the proposed works are:

- a) Do nothing and leave the outbuilding to further decline into debris. There would be no immediate impact on GCN unless the current (or a future) property owner chose to demolish and clear the outbuildings from the property.
- b) Do not convert the outbuildings and build the new dwelling elsewhere on the Hill View Farm site. A completely impractical option that would not significantly change the potential risk to GCN.
- c) Acquire a DLL and employ an ECoW to minimise the risks to individual GCN. Under a DLL scheme, funds would be paid by the developer to promote GCN conservation elsewhere in Suffolk at identified priority locations.

A cost vs. benefit analysis considering public interest and GCN conservation status concludes that option (c) is the most reasonable alternative.

#### 3. The resulting permitted actions will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status within their natural range

There would be a risk of disturbance/injury/mortality negative impact on the site GCN population. Funds paid by the developer for DLL would promote GCN conservation elsewhere in Suffolk at identified priority locations, providing superior, strategic protection of GCN favourable conservation status.

## 5.5. Residual impact assessment

Table 3: Residual impact risk assessment

| Receptor            | Potential impact  | Mitigation  | Residual impact                                   |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| Bats                | Possible minor negative impact on foraging and commuting behaviour of site population from new external lighting. | Implement a lighting plan that is wildlife sensitive.   | Neutral   |
| Hedgehogs           | Minor negative impact on local population from accidental injury/death during site clearance and construction.    | Barricading wet/drying concrete, fitting any open excavations with escape ramps and having precautionary methods of waste and building material storage and movement.                       | Neutral   |
| Birds               | Minor negative site impact to breeding birds as a result of nest disturbance/destruction.                         | Timing the site clearance outside the main nesting season, or else completing a competent watching brief prior to commencing.<br><br>Erect two nest boxes within the completed development. | Short-term minor negative, long-term neutral      |
| Reptiles            | Minor negative impact on local population from accidental injury/death during site clearance and construction.    | Barricading wet/drying concrete, fitting any open excavations with escape ramps and having precautionary methods of waste and building material storage and movement.                       | Neutral   |
| Great crested newts | Minor negative impact on local population from accidental injury/death during site clearance and construction.    | District Level Licensing<br><br>ECoW to check/clear site prior to works with highest impact potential, and to be on-call to relocated any great crested newts.                              | Neutral site/local impact; positive county impact |

## 6. Enhancements

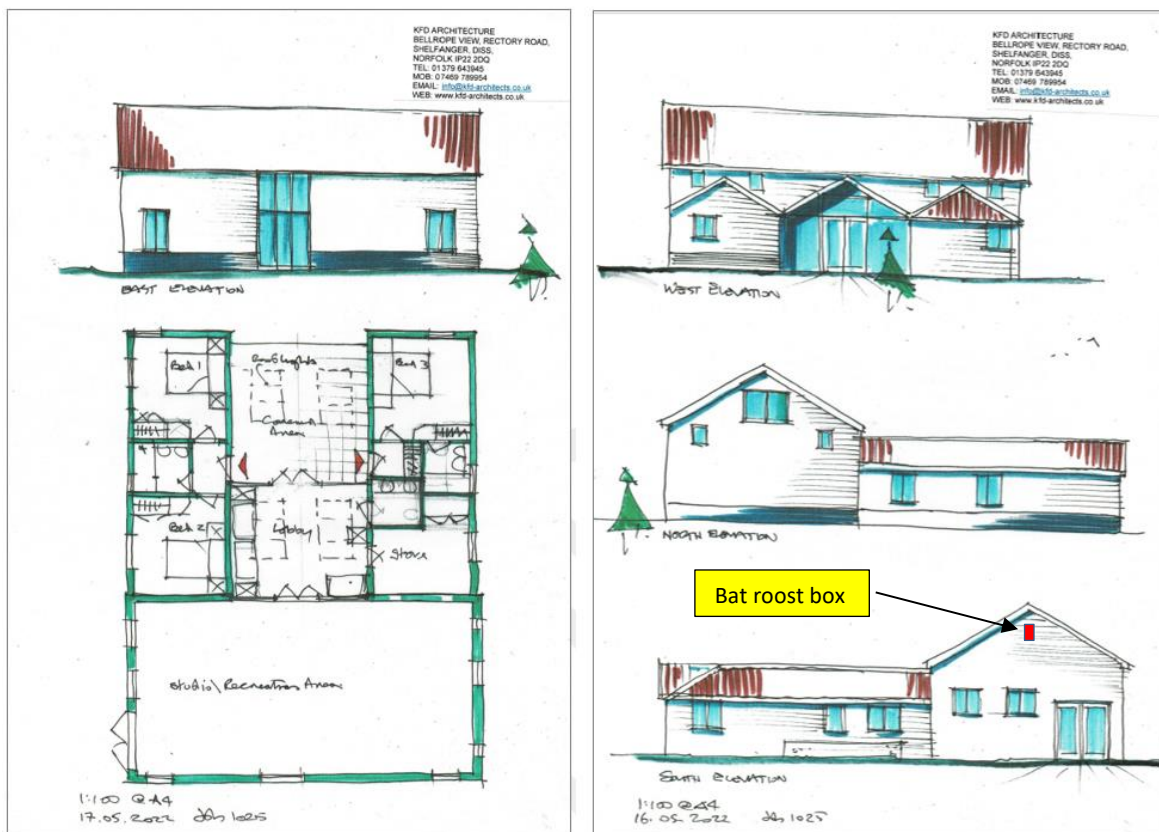
Given the low ecological impact potential of the proposed development, a proportionate enhancement measure would be fitting one additional new bat box and two amphibian hibernacula within the property.

### 6.1. Bat roost box

One bat roost box will be provisioned. It is advised to position the bat box high (4+m) on the west elevation of the main portion of the new dwelling, away from any windows and lights (see Figure 4). Suggested bat box models are Vivara Pro's Beaumaris Woodstone Bat Box, Chillon WoodStone Bat Box, Elisa bat box, Greenwood's Single Crevice Bat Box, 2FE Schwegler Wall-mounted Bat Shelter or other equivalent designs as recommended by a licensed bat surveyor.

Long-term maintenance of the bat box should be minimal, as the advised crevice-style boxes are self-cleansing of droppings. However, the attachment to the building should be as advised by the manufacturer and checked at least annually.

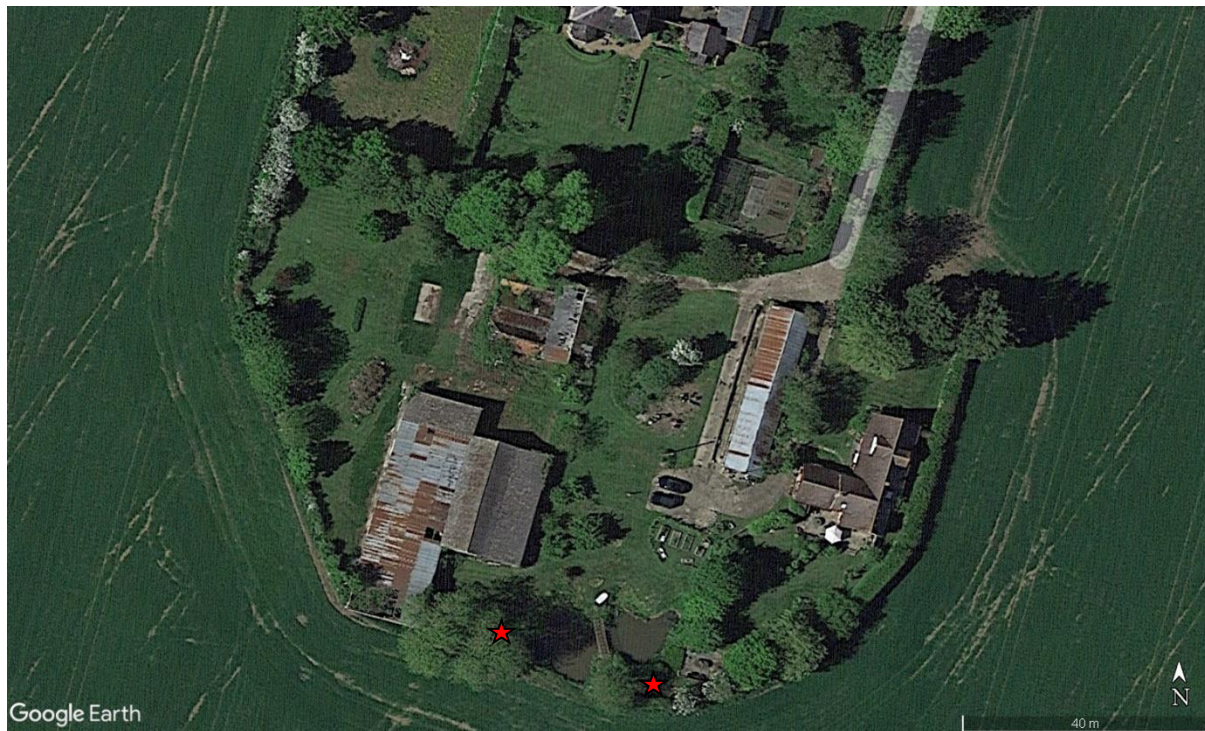
Figure 4: Bat box enhancement location



## 6.2. Amphibian hibernacula

Two amphibian hibernaculum will and provisioned within the Hill View Farm landholding, close to the breeding pond (see Figure 5) and constructed as per Froglife guidance<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 5: Amphibian hibernaculum enhancement locations



<sup>11</sup> <https://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Hibernaculum.pdf>

## 7. Conclusions

An ecological impact assessment of a proposed outbuilding conversion development at Hill View Farm, Fressingfield has predicted:

- No impacts on designated nature conservation sites.
- No impacts on valued natural habitats.
- Bat roost displacement is not expected but some precautionary measures are advised.
- There is a possibility of a minor negative impact on local hedgehog and reptile populations during the construction phase, which is to be mitigated by precautionary methods of working.
- A potential for a minor negative impact on site bird populations. To be mitigated by sensitively timing the site works outside the nesting season, or by using watching briefs to confirm nest absence.
- A potential for negative impact on local great crested newt population. Mitigation to be via District Level Licensing and using an Ecological Clerk of Works.

A minor but proportionate wildlife enhancement as a result of the proposal is recommended in the form of one new bat roost box and two new amphibian hibernacula, all provided within the Hill View Farm property.

DRAFT

## Appendix 1: Relevant Legislation and Policy Guidance

### Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 9, states protections from intentional or reckless actions upon the certain animal species that are listed in Schedule 5 and the plant species listed in Schedule 8. The Schedule 5 listed species have different types of safeguards depending on whether they are protected by Section 9.1, 9.2, 9.4 and/or 9.5.

- Section 9.1 – protection from killing or injury; includes water vole, grass snake, common lizard, slow-worm and adder.
- Section 9.4a – protection from intentional damage or destruction to any structure or place used for shelter or protection; includes water vole.
- Section 9.4b – protection from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection; includes all bat species, hazel dormouse, otter, water vole and great crested newt.
- Section 9.4c – protection from access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection being obstructed; includes all bat species, hazel dormouse, otter, water vole, great crested newt and natterjack toad.

All wild birds are protected from destruction of their nests (with minor exceptions) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A higher level of disturbance protection is extended to Schedule 1 species, such as barn owls, and their active nest sites.

Plants listed under Schedule 9 of the act are invasive and generally need controlling on a development site. It is an offence to “plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild”, the invasive species listed on this schedule. Disposal of the plants or soil contaminated by them may need to be to a controlled waste site.

### Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, broadly retains the habitat and species protections that are required under the European Habitats Directive (EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). The statutory protection for European Protected Species and Natura 2000 sites (now referred to as ‘National Site Network’ sites) remains unchanged for now.

This legislation affords very strict protection to its Schedule 2 listed species, which includes all species of bats, hazel dormouse, otter, great crested newt and natterjack toad (Habitats Directive Annex IV species). Developments that are likely to have a significant impact upon any Schedule 2 listed species (e.g. bats and great crested newts) require a European Protected Species mitigation license from Natural England in order for the development to legally proceed.

### Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) came into force on 1 October 2006. Under Section 40 of the Act, all public bodies (including planning authorities) now have a legal duty to consider biodiversity in their work (i.e. a material consideration for planning applications). As such, in order to increase the likely success of any planning application, consideration should be given to enhancing the biodiversity value of the site following redevelopment. Section 41 lists priority (Principal Importance) habitats and species which are to be particularly considered with respect to potential impacts, and may include species which are not otherwise protected by UK legislation.

## Appendix 2: Photographs



Photograph 1: Brick and clay-lump barn (right)



Photograph 2: Interior of brick and clay-lump barn



Photograph 3: Blockwork building with pantile roof (left)



Photograph 4: Timber cladding and clay-lump barn with pantile roof and ivy





Photograph 5: Interior of timber cladding and clay-lump barn with pantile roof



Photograph 6: Open-sided timber barn with collapsed roof (centre)



Photograph 7: East side of outbuildings overgrown with Russian vine



Photograph 8: Pond



Photograph 9: Great crested newt egg found in pond

DRAFT