

UPDATE ECOLOGY APPRAISAL

for

WOODSIDE FARM STOWMARKET

ON BEHALF OF

PHIL COBBOLD PLANNING LTD

CLIENT

MR B GAMMER

JANUARY 19 TH 2023

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A Member of the Suffolk Bat Group

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## Contents

### Page

1	INSTRUCTION
2	SITE DESCRIPTION
3	SITE VISIT AND OBJECTIVES
4/5	Objective – Legislation
6/7	SPECIES AND LEGAL PROTECTION
8	LEGAL POLOCIES
9	BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION
10/15	FIELD SURVEY AND HABITAT DESCRIPTION
16/17	IMPACT ASSESSMENT
18/21	SPECIES ASSESSMENT
22/25	RECOMMENDATIONS
26	REFERENCES
27 / 33	SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

## 1 INSTRUCTION

by PHIL COBBOLD  
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CONFIRMATION - 07 / 12 / 2022

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PROPOSAL.  
Demolition of building Barn 1 and erection of five dwellings.

LAND RANGER GRID REFERENCE  
TM 035 602

## 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site proposal of development is of a derelict farm building - Piggery as shown in the photographic section of this report and it's immediately surrounding area.

The building has a foot print of some seven hundred square metres plus its original concrete surrounds of front access at the Western end of the building and 'muck pad' area to the east.

The building immediately abuts mature woodland to the North which runs for some hundred metres before meeting the scrubland edge of the A14.

Beyond the concrete 'muck pad' to the east is a dry ex slurry pit encroached by bramble scrub.

Mature thorn scrub of an ancient hedge and dry ditch system fringe the building and lagoon area to the South and east, beyond which is open arable farmland.

The proposed building area is accessed by the original farm entrance drive which runs along the western front of the site, from Sheppard's Lane.

Beyond the farm drive, to the west, is a collection of disused older barns and cart sheds.

### 3 SITE VISIT - OBJECTIVES

An extended ecological survey was undertaken by Tim Watts - an independent, qualified ecologist with over forty years experience as a professional habitat consultant.

A site visit and survey was carried out on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2023.

Although timing of the survey would be considered sub optimal with regard to judging some habitat types it was not considered a barrier to making an assessment of habitat / habitat suitability of local and European protected species which may be relevant to the site.

Objective to identify the habitat present including any classed as habitat within the NERC Act and duties, the presence and habitat suitability of protected species on the site and within the area of impact.

Consideration was given to the land area of physical proposals and that of the surrounding landmass – within viable / relevant distance with regard to particular species mobility.

The site was surveyed and consideration given to the neighbouring land areas of woodland, hedges and adjoining land use regarding habitat suitability and evidence of protected - conservation concern species – Bats, Owls, Nesting birds, Amphibians, Reptiles and small mammals – and consideration given to the sites relevance and connecting corridor to local wildlife.

#### 4 OBJECTIVE – LEGISLATION / CONSIDERATIONS

The objective was to investigate for species which have specific protection within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, European Habitats Directive on Conservation of Natural Habitats of Wild fauna and Flora 1994 and subsequent amendments to Conservation of Habitats and species regulations 2010

Consideration of National Planning Policy Framework March 2012  
Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.  
Paragraphs 174 – 188 .

The Conservation of Habitats and Species regulation 2017 articles 1(b) and 1 (h) of the habitats directive ' Priority Natural Habitat Type' and ' Priority Species' – ENGLAND'S BIODIVERSITY 2020 : A Strategy for Wildlife and Ecosystem Services.

The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence if he deliberately disturbs such animals in a way as to be likely significantly to affect (a) the ability of any significant groups of animals of that species to survive, breed or rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution of that species. However it is to be noted that the existing offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended which cover obstruction of places used for shelter or protection ( for example bat roost-badger set - water vole burrow etc ) ,disturbance and sale – still apply to European protected species.

The Survey was carried out /with consideration to Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act ( NERC 2006) and extending the biodiversity duty as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 " Crow Act " and amendments to the species protection measures provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

- With particular reference to Great crested newts.

---Principal importance ( NERC 2006 ) Birds of Concern ( Stanbury A et al 2012 )

- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates previous badger legislation by providing comprehensive protection for badgers and their setts, with requirement that any authorised sett disturbance or destruction be carried out under NE licence.

The European Community Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds ( 79/409/EEC) sets out general rules for the conservation of all naturally occurring wild birds, their eggs and habitats. It requires a member states to designate Special Protected areas ( SPAs) for protection of certain species.

The Hedgerows Regulation 1997 aim to protect important hedgerows in the countryside. They make it illegal to remove most countryside hedges without first notifying the local planning authority, and provide protection for ' important hedgerows'. Particular seasonal reference to bird nesting regarding hedgerow management works.

In addition to investigate local species listed in the UK Biodiversity action plan for Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk - 'Species of Conservation Concern' to build up a reliable and responsible picture of localised populations where present.

In consideration of the latter any requirement for future survey work.

## 5 SPECIES OF LEGAL PROTECTION

The species below have particular conservation status as mentioned within both local and European relevance, red/amber listed or covered by general protection within life cycle, migration, or habitat that may be considered and surveyed within an ecology statement.

Species covered by Statutory Instrument – Schedule 2EHD

Great Crested Newt (*triturus cristatus*)

Otter (*lutra lutra*)

Bats (all species *rhinolophidea* and *vespertilionidae*)

Dormouse (*muscardinus avellanarius*)



SPECIES COVERED BY LOCAL ACTION PLANS /  
CONSIDERED VUNERABLE / RED LISTED AND THOSE  
WITHIN THE WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 ----  
SPECIALIST CONSERVATION / PRIORITY SPECIES

Barn Owl (*tyto alba*)

Nightingale ( *Luscinia megarhynchos*)

Woodlark ( *lullula arborea*)

Skylark ( *alauda arvensis*)

Stone Curlew ( *burhinus oedicnemus*)

Swift ( *apus apua*)

Water vole (*arvicola terrestris*)

Hazel Dormouse ( *muscardinus avellanarius*)

Hedgehog ( *erinaceus europaeus* )

Badger (*meles meles*) covered by the Badgers Act 1992

Otter ( *lutra lutra* )

Polecat (*mustela putoriua*)

All amphibians - Great crested, Smooth, and Palmate newts. Common  
and Natterjack Toad , and Common Frog.

All reptiles.

All wild birds nests and eggs

Specimen and specialist flora

Note and record non Native / invasive alien species such as Japanese  
knotweed / Signal Crayfish

## IMPLICATIONS OF LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

With legal responsibilities and planning implications, it is essential that any ecological assessment of potential development / land and water management , including the area of this report, must determine the possible presence or absence of any protected species as part of any planning development consideration. Or make recommendations for further survey work to conclude presence of protected species.

Without this assessment the potential developer// land management contractor would be unable to demonstrate due diligence in his/her responsibilities. Further more the local planning authority would not have been provided with sufficient information for a planning decision to be made. This could result in the application being designated incomplete and not determined, or simply refused.

Paragraph 99 of the ODPM Circular 2005 highlights that " It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development , is established before the planning permission is granted , otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision"

NPPF highlights the duty of Local Planning Authority to deliver net gains for biodiversity within the planning system under NERC 2006 Section 41.

Where mitigation or compensation measures are required to ensure that no significant impacts will result in biodiversity from the development, the proposed measures may be secured through planning conditions or by EPS Mitigation Licences from Natural England.

When determining planning applications, LPA should apply principles which avoid and adverse affect on natural environments and notable species ' if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development can not be avoided ( though locating on and alternative site with less harmful impacts ), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensation for, then planning permission should be refused.

## 6 BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION

Consideration was given to the sites habitat suitability to EPS, local protected species with reference to the NBN atlas and Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service SBIS data. 2 km radius.

European Protected / Local Protected / conservation concern species identified from regional data record 400 Hedgehog recordings within 2 km of the site however nearest is one kilometre to the South and site lacks connectivity to these populations. There are no records of amphibians with viable connection (one recording 1.75km SW) No recordings of Bats within 1.5 km and the site lacks flyway corridors from any recorded population.

Designated sites / Local Nature Reserves / Wildlife sites /Country Park of species/ habitats that may be impacted by the development proposal. None were identified within viable connectivity to the site.

## 7 FIELD SURVEY - HABITAT DESCRIPTION

- 7.1 The sites Southern boundary consists of an ancient dry ditch partially enclosed by thorn scrub, encroachment from the sites original inner hedge line.
- 7.2 The hedge line consisting of mature Common Hawthorn – *crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn – *prunus spinosa*, Field maple – *acer campestre*, Smooth leafed Elm – *ulmus minor*, Bramble – *rubus fruticosus* and occasional Common privet – *ligustrum vulgare*.
- 7.3 The hedge line scrub has reached a height of some four and a half metres and extended to the Southern side of the building.
- 7.4 The sites southern boundary hedge extends by some twenty five metres east of the building before then heading North to connect with an established block of woodland.
- 7.5 The sites eastern end hedging has developed into a scrub belt that surrounds a disused slurry lagoon. The old lagoon now consisting of a dry pit some three to four metres in depth.

7.6 A mature woodland block of approximately one hectare forms the sites Northern boundary and perimeter. The woodland runs North to join more open scrub and drainage systems of the A14, some hundred metres to the North.

7.7 The woodland fringe is of Silver birch – *Betula pendula*, Field maple, Alder – *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash – *Fraxinus excelsior*, and two mature Leylandii – *Cupressus leylandii*. These have reached a height of some twenty five metres immediately alongside the lagoon and buildings.

7.8 The dry lagoon area and its banks have become colonised by thick bramble and thorn bushes. Dense beds of Common nettle – *Urtica dioica* and Creeping Thistle – *Cirsium arvense* have colonised any open ground.

7.9 The areas light free draining soils show excavations and droppings of rabbit activity.

7.10 Beneath bramble, sand heap and discarded agricultural machinery/ car parts a concrete pad extends some twelve metres from the eastern end of the building.

7.11 The buildings concrete apron extends down the northern side of the building creating a two metre wide pathway.

7.12 The Western end of the building consists of some five metres of concrete perimeter loading area , adjacent to the farm access drive.

7.13 Beyond the farm drive to the west stretches a variety of older redundant farm buildings.

7.14 Two enclosed feed silo's stand in front of the proposed building area to a height of some 7 m.

Top entry point surfaces were viewed by close range binoculars and thermal image camera to explore for possible mammal access. None was evident.

7.15 The main building proposal – an delict Piggery consists of 150 mm concrete block plinth to height of some one a half metres. This supporting the buildings timber frame.

The blockwork is in sound condition devoid of cracks or crevasses that could provide wildlife refuge.

7.16

The timber frame cladding consists of gapped splines of 150 mm by 15 mm timber onto the main structure.

This allowing illumination of the buildings interior and ventilation - fresh air flow though the building to aid animal health in the past.

7.17

The main roof, gutting and down pipes are formed- single asbestos sheet and pipe with the occasional clear polycarbonate sheet to allow natural light to illuminate the buildings interior.

Eve height is approximately 4.5 m with gable ends to some 5.5 m.

7.18 The building's interior consists of side and central ' muck passages ' where in the past animal waste would have been pushed out on to the eastern pad, serving the two rows of pig ' kennels' that run the length of the building.

7.19 There is evidence of fire damage to the western gable and roof area ,and where the fire originated from the kennel tops

7.20 Various debris of farm machinery and parts litter the central passage and kennel tops. However clear areas of the side passage floors and kennel tops existed to aid searches for wildlife evidence.

7.21 There is evidence of historic white splashing of owl excreta but no evidence of recent pellets (regurgitated food waste) or feathers that would indicate owls had recently accessed the building.



7.22 The building's floor and kennel surfaces showed evidence of dusting from woodworm activity but no evidence of droppings or eaten insect debris of bats was found.

7.23 Three bird's nests are present within the roof structure two appear to be Black birds's the other columba species - Stock dove or Wood pigeon, seasonally inactive.

7.24 The internal machined roof joists and all support timbers were carefully inspected via thermal image camera and binoculars for evidence heat, abrasion, oiling or staining of animal activity, no evidence was seen.

7.25 The building's external asbestos eve caps and troughing areas were carefully inspected by HD 40 x 22 and Pulstar no wildlife evidence or activity was seen.

## 8 HABITAT SUMMARY - IMPACT ASSESSMENT RE PROTECTED SPECIES AS IDENTIFIED WITHIN LOCAL DATA.

8.1 The sites ex slurry lagoon and woodland edge pond ( marked as potential wetland on the sites mapping ) do not hold water despite three months of heavy seasonal rains.

Viable wetland habitat does not exist to support an amphibian populations within connectivity to the proposed building demolition / construction area.

8.2 The sites surrounding ditch and scrub show excavations within its light free draining soils ( good conditions for sett making) however all activity could be attributed to rabbits. No evidence was found of badger activity on the site.

8.3 The sites dense scrub and hedge line understory provide good terrestrial habitats for small mammals including the hedgehog. It would not be possible to find evidence of the species at this time of year.

8.4 The sites surrounding bramble thicket, hedge line and immediately adjoining woodland provide a diversity and high value habitat for common garden / woodland bird species, as both feeding and nesting areas.

8.5 The sites scrub and hedging adjacent to arable farmland and that of the farmland itself provide habitats for open farmland bird species. Although the proximity of mature woodland, heavy road traffic and housing reduces the value of open farmland habitat.

8.6 There is clear evidence of bird nesting ( all active birds nests protected ) within the building structure.

8.7 No recent evidence was found that would indicate Barn owls are using the building as a roost or nest site.

8.8 A thorough inspection was possible of the proposed buildings open structure regarding bat roost features.

8.9 Neighbouring woodland and adjoining buildings would provide numerous possible roosting areas for bats

8.10 The continuous heavy road noise was heard during the survey (from the nearby A14) National surveys indicate road noise is a deterrent to bat residence and activity.

8.11

No recordings of bats were found in local data searches.

## 9 ASSESSMENT OF RELEVANT / REGIONAL PROTECTED SPECIES - EPS/LPS and / or identified in SBIS Data.

### 9.1 AMPHIBIANS

The site does not contain wetland / ponds that create viable breeding places for amphibian species.

Wetland / ponds to the North west ( previously surveyed ) showed average suitability, and have poor connectivity to the Piggery building area.

### 9.2 REPTILES

No evidence was found previously ( in 2020 ) over suitable survey timing – September.

The site contains suitable habitat although largely isolated by the surrounding arable landmass and hazards of local road systems.

### 9.3 BATS

A Ground Level roost assessment was carried out on the buildings and nearby trees as detailed within the field assessment section 7.

No evidence of the species was found.

A consideration within the Habitat summary - impact section 8 is that the noise levels of the A14 may deter the species from colonising the site.

No nocturnal detector survey was undertaken.

### 9.4 BARN OWL

There is historic evidence of Barn Owl excreta but no evidence the species have visited or recently spent any time within the barn structure. If this was the case regular splashing of excreta and pellets of uneaten regurgitated food would be found on the floor areas of the building.

### 9.5 BADGERS

The site provides suitable light, free draining soil structure to support badger sett construction within the adjoining pit and hedge lines.

No evidence of holes/ sett, breaches in hedge structure or latrines were found to indicate badgers are present in the area.

## 9.6 HEDGEHOG

The site provides suitable habitat for hedgehogs.

It was not possible to determine if the species were present on the site.

## 9.7 OTTERS and WATER VOLES.

The site does not contain wetland to support otters or water voles.

## 9.8 BIRDS AND BIRDS NESTS.

Birds identified on the site.

Pheasant – *phasianus colchicus*  
Red legged Partridge - *aectoris rufa*  
Carrion Crow – *corvus corone*

Long tailed tit – *aegithalos caudatus*  
Blue tit – *parus caeruleus*  
Wood Pigeon – *columba palumbus*  
Wren -*troglodytes troglodytes*  
Dunnock – *prunella modularis*  
Robin – *erithacus rubecula*  
Blackbird – *turdus merula*  
Chaffinch - *fringilla coelebs*

#### 9.9 NON - NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES.

No non native plant species were identified on the site.

## 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 10.1 Under any future development operation

- Of proposed site clearance of bramble/ scrub and ground cover on the perimeter of the building and pit area ( as described in 7.3,7.5 and 7.8 ) - should be done manually via strimming to ground level by a three stage cut. First at a height of 500mm then to 150 mm, and then to ground level.

Operation started in the South working north to the woodland edge. Cut material / brush should be moved and left inside the woodland edge to provide wildlife refuge.

This operation carried out outside the bird nesting season of 1<sup>st</sup> March to the 1<sup>st</sup> September , and when terrestrial animals are still active in October and early November.

This to ensure that no active birds nests are disturbed and that any animals present are active and able to exit to the adjoining woodland.

10.2 The South and Eastern hedge line of mature thorn and elm should be topped at 2.5 m height to create future density of structure and



provide light to the ditch and hedge line understory.

This operation outside the bird nest season of 1<sup>st</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> September.

The hedge should be aided by 'gapping up' with a double row of guarded hawthorn planting where necessary.

Cut timber laid inside the neighbouring woodland edge and brush chipped to mulch the new hedge planting.

This to aid survival of the existing elm and create a density of hedge structure by regrowth and additional planting.

10.3 Any loss of the existing scrub habitat on the buildings perimeter should be mitigated / compensated by the creation of a rough grassland strip and an additional hedge planted protected by post and rail, along the South and eastern boundary.

This belt six metres in width created from the existing arable headland and continued North alongside the existing woodland block.

This area left to regenerate naturally from hedge line suckers to provide a scrubland corridor around the site and woodland.

10.4 Prior to any building demolition works a bird survey should be carried out a maximum of seven days prior to the start of works.

10.5 Five bird nest boxes, a combination of small and medium holed types ( BTO nest box guide ) should be positioned in the neighbouring woodland. Investigations should be made as to the positioning of an Owl box in the neighbouring buildings to the west or within the quiet areas of the western woodland.

This supervised by an ecologist.

10.6 Any future Dwelling design should ensure that there is no light spill into the adjoining woodland to the North.

This to avoid disturbance of nocturnal activity of local wildlife within the immediately adjoining woodland.

All luminaires should lack UV elements, and fluorescent sources avoided. LED Warm white spectrum ( ideally < 2700 kelvin) should be used.

Luminaires should always be mounted on the horizontal I.e no upward lift.

Any external / outside lighting should be Cowled to avoid spill.

10.7

During any future construction phase , trenches should be filled on the

same day as excavation where possible to prevent animals from falling in. Where this is not possible any excavations should be firmly covered overnight with ply/OSB sheets, to exclude wildlife access or timbers placed to provide exit.

## 10.8

Long term storage of building materials on the site should be avoided to prevent injury to sheltering wildlife - during / later movement - over the development process.

## 10.9

All building waste / demolition material should be deposited in skips to avoid creating wildlife refuge and subsequent injury.

## 11 REFERENCES

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WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
IP14 3QE – TM O35602 17 /01 /2023

SHOWING THE SOUTHERN FACE OF THE SITE ONTO  
NEIGHBOURING ARABLE LAND..



WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
IP14 3QE – TM O35602 17/01/2023

SHOWING THE WESTERN END OF THE PIGGERY  
BUILDING.



WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
IP14 3QE – TM O35602 17/01/2023

SHOWING THE EASTERN END OF THE PIGGERY  
BUILDING.



WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
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SHOWING THE BUILDING INTERIOR





WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
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SHOWING SIDE PASSAGE AND CLADDING.



WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
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SHOWING ROOF AREA



WOODSIDE FARM SHEPARDS LANE STOWMARKET  
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EX SLURRY LAGOON / PIT AREA