



ecosupport



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Executive Summary

Ecosupport Ltd was commissioned by Shedfield Equestrian Centre to conduct an updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a property associated with Shedfield Equestrian Centre, Botley (here after referred to as 'the site'). The purpose of this survey was to assess any ecological impacts that may arise as a result of the proposed development. As part of this assessment, the following surveys were undertaken:

- Extended phase I habitat survey (June, 2022)
- Preliminary roost assessment (Building), (June, 2022)

The following important ecological features were identified on site following the conclusion of the above survey work and may be subject to adverse impacts in the absence of suitable mitigation / compensation:

- Low potential for roosting bats within the Property.

In the absence of any mitigation measures, the proposed development is anticipated to result in, ***certain adverse impacts***. In addition to this measures are outlined within section 6.0 of this document to mitigate where impacts have been identified.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief

Ecosupport Ltd was commissioned by Shedfield Equestrian Centre to conduct a updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a property associated with Shedfield Equestrian Centre, Botley (here after referred to as 'the site'). The purpose of this survey was to assess any ecological impacts that may arise as a result of the proposed development. The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- Identify and classify any priority habitats;
- Assess the ecological value of the site;
- Identify any signs of protected species and potential features that may support them
- Make recommendations for further survey work as necessary;
- Make recommendations for any necessary ecological avoidance and mitigation where possible at PEA stage.

NB: If the works do not take place within 18 months of this report¹ then the findings of this survey will no longer be considered valid and may require updating.

1.2 Site Description & Location

The site comprises of Shedfield Equestrian Centre and associated land located off the A334, Botley, (centered on OS grid reference SU554131) (**Fig 1**). The site is bound by pony fields to the east and west, a woodland directly to the north and stables associated with the equestrian centre to the south. The wider landscape consists of a network of fields and interconnecting hedgerows with blocks of woodland.

Figure 1. Aerial image of the site with redline boundary.



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

1.3 Proposed Development

It is understood that the current proposals are for the building to be removed as part of the enforcement notice and rebuilt with a new dwelling.

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019)*

This instrument makes changes to the three existing instruments which transpose the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives so that they continue to work (are operable) upon the UK's exit from the European Union (EU). These include The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This instrument also amends section 27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ensure existing protections continue. The intention is to ensure habitat and species protection and standards as set out under the Nature Directives are implemented in the same way or an equivalent way when the UK exits the EU.

This transposes the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into UK domestic law. It provides protection for sites and species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure species listed in Schedule 2 or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or shelter. It is also illegal to deliberately disturb these species in such a way that is likely to significantly impact on the local distribution or abundance or affect their ability to survive, breed and rear or nurture their young.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) licence must first be obtained from Natural England.

2.1.2 *The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)*

This is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity is protected within the UK. Protected fauna and flora are listed under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Act. They include all species of bats, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is occupying a roost or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost. Similarly, this Act makes it an offence to kill or injure any species of British reptiles and also makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy their eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built).

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) states that it is an offence to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 part II of the Act. This list over 30 plants including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*).

2.1.3 *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)*

This Act strengthens the Wildlife & Countryside Act by the addition of "reckless" offences in certain circumstances, such as where there is the likelihood of protected species being present. The Act places a duty on Government Ministers and Departments to conserve biological diversity and provides police with stronger powers relating to wildlife crimes.

2.1.4 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires that public bodies have due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning authorities must consider biodiversity when planning or undertaking activities. Section 41 of the Act lists species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the *UK Post – 2010 Biodiversity Framework*.

2.1.5 Protection of Badgers Act

The Protection of Badgers Act (1992) relates to the welfare of Badgers (*Meles meles*) as opposed to nature conservation considerations. The Act prevents:

- The wilful killing, injury, ill treatment or taking of Badgers and / or
- Interference with a Badger sett
- Damaging or destroying all or part of a sett
- Causing a dog to enter a set and
- Disturbing a Badger while it is occupying a sett

Provisions are included within the Act to allow for the lawful licensing of certain activities that would otherwise constitute an offence under the Act.

2.2 Policy

2.2.1 National

Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment. They should do this by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks.

The plan states to protect and enhance biodiversity plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks. This includes the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them. Plans should identify the protection and recovery of priority species and opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

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

- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, 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;

- 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; and
- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

2.2.2 Local Winchester City Council (2006-2013)

The site falls under the jurisdiction of Winchester City Council. The Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy Development Plan in 2013, with saved policies from the Local Plan 2006 also remaining applicable.

Policy *CP16 – Biodiversity* states that the Local Planning Authority will support development which maintains, protects and enhances biodiversity across the District, delivering a net gain in biodiversity, and has regard to the following:

- Protecting sites of international, European and national importance, and local nature conservation sites, from inappropriate development;
- Supporting habitats that are important to maintain the integrity of European sites;
- New development will be required to show how biodiversity can be retained, protected and enhanced through its design and implementation, for example by designing for wildlife, delivering BAP targets and enhancing Biodiversity Opportunity Areas;
- New development will be required to avoid adverse impacts, or if unavoidable ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with compensation measures used only as a last resort. Development proposals will only be supported if the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm to the habitat or species;
- Maintaining a District-wide network of local wildlife sites and corridors to support the integrity of the biodiversity network, prevent fragmentation and enable biodiversity to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- Supporting and contributing to the targets set out in the District's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for priority habitats and species.

Planning proposals that have the potential to affect priority habitats and/or species or sites of geological importance will be required to take account of evidence and relevant assessments or surveys.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Designated sites

A search for designated sites that may be impacted by the proposals was conducted using freely available online resources.

3.1.2 Waterbodies

Any ponds located within 250 m of the proposed development were searched for using Ordnance Survey maps and available aerial images.

3.2 Field Survey

3.2.1 Habitats

The field survey work which forms the basis of the findings of this report was carried out by Ashley James BSc (Hons) ACIEEM (project ecologist with Ecosupport) on the 29th June 2022. Weather conditions during the survey comprised temperatures of 16 °C, light winds and sunny spells.

The Phase 1 Habitat survey (JNCC, 2010) methodology was adopted which is a method of classifying and mapping wildlife habitats in Great Britain. It was originally intended to provide “...relatively rapidly, a record of semi-natural vegetation and wildlife habitat over large areas of the countryside”. The standard Phase 1 Habitat survey methodology has been ‘extended’ in this report to include the following:

- Floral species lists for each identified habitat;
- Descriptions of habitat structure, the evidence of management and a broad assessment of habitat condition;
- Mapping of additional habitat types (e.g. hardstanding);
- Identification of Priority Habitats under Section 41 of the NERC Act;
- Evidence of, or potential for, the presence of certain species/groups

3.2.2 Badger

The site was thoroughly searched for evidence of use by Badgers (*Meles meles*), with the specific aim of identifying the presence and location of any setts. In accordance with the *Badgers and Development: A Guide to Best Practice and Licensing* (Natural England, 2011) guidance, the survey accounted for a 30m from the site’s boundary (observed where possible i.e. does not conflict with private dwellings). Evidence of Badgers could include latrines, dung pits, feeding remains and foraging evidence, trails and setts.

3.2.3 Bats

The assessment of the buildings / trees noted on site was undertaken by Ashley James during the initial walkover survey under class level 1 survey licence number (2021-10059-CL17-BAT). This followed BCT (Collins (ed) 2016) best practice survey guidelines searching for any PRFs / evidence of bat occupation and assigning a roost potential assessment as outlined in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of a built structure for roosting bats (reproduced from BCT (Collins (ed) 2016).

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site are likely to be used by roosting bats
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ² and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by a large number of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

3.3 Assessment Methodology

3.3.1 Introduction

The methodology for the assessment of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development is based on CIEEM's *Guidelines for Ecological Assessment in the UK* (CIEEM 2018). Although this assessment does not constitute a formal Ecological/ Environmental Impact Assessment, the CIEEM guidelines provide a useful framework for assessing ecological impacts at any level.

3.3.2 Valuation

Features of ecological interest are valued on a geographic scale. Value is assigned on the basis of legal protection, national and local biodiversity policy and cultural and/or social significance.

3.4 Limitations

3.4.1 Habitats

There were not considered to be any significant limitations on the results of the habitat survey with all areas of the site accessible and the survey conducted at a suitable time of year for vascular flowering plants.

² For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

4.0 ECOLOGICAL BASELINE

4.2 Designated Sites

4.2.1 Nationally Designated sites

There are is one nationally designated sites within 2km of the site (**Fig 2**). This consists of Waltham Chase Meadows SSSI which is located 1.9km north west of the site.

4.2.2 Priority Habitats

One block of Ancient semi natural woodland is present directly adjacent to the north of site (**Fig 3**). A second block of Ancient semi natural woodland is also present 400m north west of the site.

Figure 2. Map of nationally designated sites located within 2 km as provided by Magic Maps.

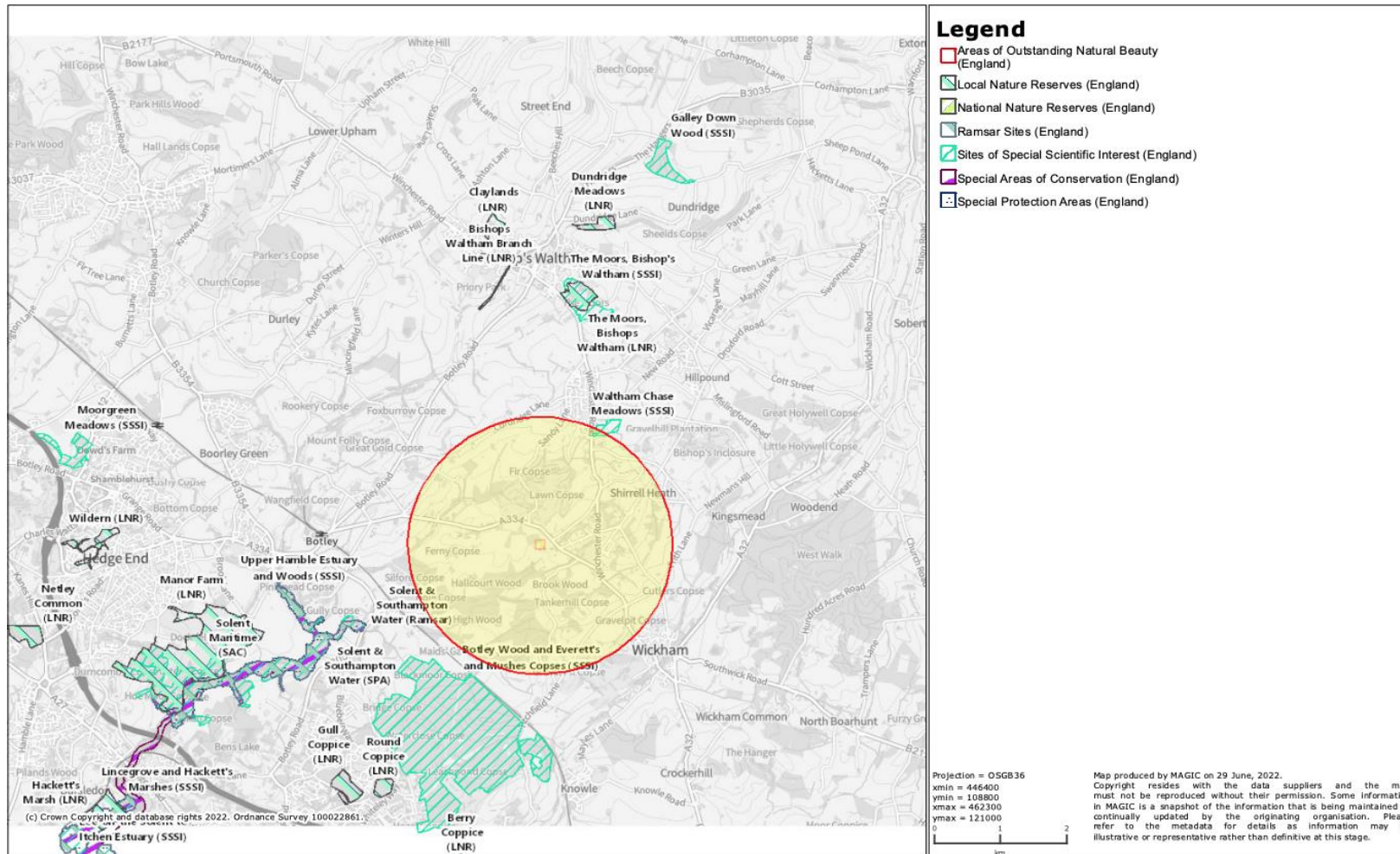
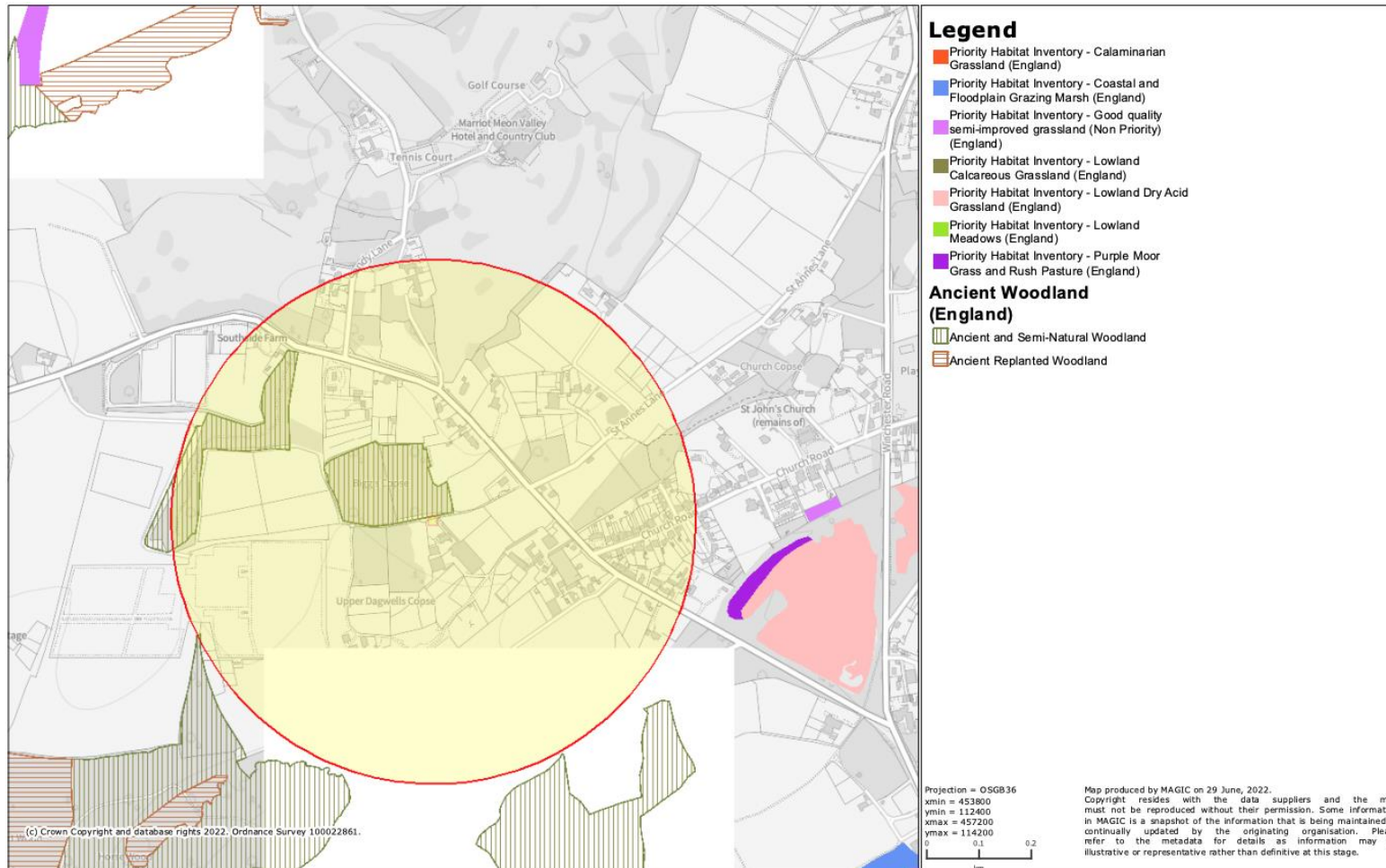


Figure 3. Map of priority habitats sites located within 500m of the site as provided by Magic Maps .



4.3 Vegetation Survey Results

The vegetation within the site has been described below using the broad Phase I habitat classification terminology as described with JNCC (2010) (with the corresponding UK Habs habitat type also provided using Habitat Definitions Version 1.1 (UKHab Ltd., 2020). The below species noted should not be considered an exhaustive list and instead refer to dominant, characteristic and other noteworthy species associated with each community within the survey area. The habitat types on site comprise (approximate spatial extent shown in the Phase 1 habitat map appended):

- Hard standing (u1b)
- Buildings (u1b)
- Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (Adjacent to site) (w1 with secondary code 37).

4.3.1 Hard Standing (u1b)

This covers the areas of concrete hard standing used by the entrance as an access road (**Fig 4**), as well as Hardstanding used in association with the equestrian centre which was largely devoid of any significant vegetation communities (and would be classed as u1b, developed land; sealed surface using UK Habs)

Figure 4. View of hardstanding associated with the access road.



4.3.2 Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (w1 with secondary code 37 Adjacent to site).

A large parcel of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland is located directly adjacent to site (**Fig 5**) and would be classed as w1 broadleaved woodland with secondary code 37 Ancient-semi natural woodland in UK Habs.)

Figure 5. View of the entrance to the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.



4.4 Bat Survey Results

4.4.1 Buildings

The findings of the preliminary roost assessment of all buildings on site is outlined in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Results of the preliminary roost assessment undertaken in the property.


Building	Figure	Description of Construction	PRFs / Evidence of Occupation	Assessed Roost Potential
Single Dwelling	<p>Figure 8. Front elevation of the property.</p> 	<p>The sole building onsite consisted of a single dwelling, used as part of the accommodation associated with the equestrian centre (Fig 6). The building was constructed in part from stone and wooden panels. The building also consisted of a flat roof constructed from sheet metal.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the building no internal loft space was present (Fig 7)</p>	<p>Due to the nature of the roofing materials, PRFs somewhat limited to small gaps underneath the metal overhang (Fig 9)</p> <p>No physical evidence of bats were present externally or internally, in the form of droppings and feeding remains.</p>	<p><i>Low potential</i></p>

Figure 7. View of the internals showing no roof void.



Figure 10. View of gaps underneath metal overhang.



4.4.2 Trees

No Trees were present on-site.

4.5 Badgers

4.5.1 Site Survey

No evidence of badger foraging was identified as the site solely consists of hardstanding. The site is therefore considered to be of **negligible potential** for foraging and commuting badgers.

4.6 Reptiles

4.6.1 On site Habitat Assessment

The current habitats on-site can be considered to offer no potential for reptiles as the whole site consisted of hardstanding. The habitat on-site is therefore **negligible potential** for reptiles.

4.7 Great Crested Newts

4.7.1 Water Bodies Within 250 m

In total 0 ponds are present within a 250m search radius from a central point of the site.

4.7.2 On site Habitat Assessment

The terrestrial habitat on-site comprises of solely hardstanding. Taking this into consideration the terrestrial habitat on-site is considered to be of **negligible potential** for GCN.

4.8 Hazel Dormouse

4.8.1 Site Assessment

The terrestrial habitat on-site comprises of solely hardstanding. The site is therefore considered to be of **negligible potential** for dormice. However the woodland directly adjacent to site does have potential for dormice.

4.9 Breeding and Nesting Birds.

4.9.1 Site Assessment

The site consist of hardstanding and the building associated with Shedfield Equestrian Centre. The building and hardstanding were well sealed and offered no gaps suitable for breeding and nesting birds. The site therefore offers **negligible potential** for breeding and nesting birds.

5.0 LIKELY ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS IN ABSENCE OF MITIGATION

5.1 Introduction

The CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2018) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, in some cases, features of less than local value may be protected by legislation and/or policy and these are also considered within the assessment. Although significant effects may be identified at this stage of the assessment, it is often possible to provide appropriate mitigation.

5.2 Site Preparation and Construction

5.2.1 Impacts to Habitats

The proposals entail no development works to the site, therefore the site will have **no adverse impact** to any habitats on-site.

The site is within 15m of ancient woodland to the north, which is considered of **local value**. However, given that the proposals are to keep the property in-situ and no construction works are proposed within 15m of the Ancient semi-natural, it is not considered that this is likely to result in any direct adverse impacts on this habitat. If construction were to extend beyond the existing footprint closer to the woodland though (such as through use of machinery or storage of materials) this could indirectly impact upon the ancient woodland through root compaction. Any deviation to the footings already in place would require a mandatory 15m buffer zone to protect the woodland from root compaction. Therefore, a **minor adverse impact** is possible at the **local level** if the current plans are to change.

5.2.2 Impacts to Wildlife

The proposed works will result in the demolition of the dwelling which is considered to be of low potential for roosting bats. This could result in the disturbance, harm of even killing of bats if undertaken unmitigated. Therefore in the absence of mitigation an **adverse impact is possible** with the level of importance to be determined by the phase II bat survey results.

5.3 Site Operation

5.3.1 Impacts to Wildlife

The development is taking place in an area within which night-time lighting is minimal and therefore any additional lighting associated with the proposed plans could result in disturbance to bats along with any other nocturnal wildlife present. Therefore, a **minor adverse impact is likely** on nocturnal animals at the site level.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The below sections outline a number of recommendations for further survey work required to fully assess the potential ecological impacts of the development and ensure and proposed mitigation and compensation appropriate and proportionate. In addition to this, measures are outlined to protect the existing features of value.

NB. These recommendations are based on the current plans and if the plans are to change and the development footprint is to increase then, the survey effort required will need to be re-assessed.

6.2 Bats

6.2.1 Emergence / Re-entry Surveys

The dwelling on site was assessed as being of '**Low**' roost potential and will therefore require 1 dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey if works are to take place on this building in the future (as per the survey effort requirements from BCT 2016 **Table 6**).

Table 6. Recommended minimum number of survey visits (from Table 7.3 (BCT, 2016)).

Low Roost Suitability	Moderate Roost Suitability	High Roost Suitability
One survey visit. One dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey.	Two separate survey visits. One dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey*.	Three separate survey visits. At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third could be either dusk or dawn.
May – August	May – September with at least one of the surveys between May - August	May – September with at least two surveys between May and August

NB. If bats are present during the first survey a further two surveys will be needed in line with BCT guidelines.

6.3 Enhancements

6.3.1 Bats

As a general enhancement for bats in the local area two 1FF bat boxes will be placed within the woodland adjacent to site (**Fig 11**). It is spacious enough for bats to use as a summer roost or nursery site and is open at the bottom, allowing droppings to fall out so it does not need cleaning. It is also manufactured from Woodcrete meaning it will last for at least 20 - 25 years making it a valuable long-term ecological enhancement. To compensate for fluctuations in temperature in spring and autumn, the 1FF is provided with a roughened rear panel made of hard-wearing wood. Therefore depending on their individual temperature requirements, the bats can choose between the cooler Woodcrete surface or the warmer wooden panel. The inner dimensions of the 1FF have a reducing width making it ideal for bat species which inhabit crevices such as Pipistrelle and Noctule bats.

The boxes to be sited on trees and will be done so using the galvanised steel hanger and aluminium nail provided. They should be positioned at a height of between three to six metres from ground level. Bat boxes should ideally be sited in open sunny positions. The arrangement of the bat boxes should ensure they face different directions to provide a variety of micro-habitats. To increase the chances of bats roosting in the new features, the bat boxes will be placed adjacent to vegetation features as bats will be more likely to discover the artificial roosts if it is placed close to an existing flight path.

Figure 11. Example of the 1FF Schwegler bat box to be erected in suitable trees within the woodland.



7.0 REFERENCES

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