



**Fenswood
Ecology**

**10 Dial Lane, Felton
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
September 2021**

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10 Dial Lane, Felton, Ecological Appraisal

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Contents

Introduction	
Methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Consultation• Ecological Assessment• European Protected Species• Other Protected and Notable Species• Invasive Species• Limitations to Survey	
Findings and Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site Description• Designated Sites• Habitats• European Protected Species• Other Protected and Notable Species• Invasive Species	
Ecological Assessment and Mitigation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Scheme• Designated Sites• European Protected Species• Other Protected and Notable Species• Invasive Species• Enhancements	
References	
Appendices	

Summary

Fenswood Ecology was commissioned by Ms Hannah Wilkinson to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal at 10 Dial Lane, Felton (centred around Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: ST 52581 66031). An ecological assessment of the site was undertaken by Jamie Edmonds in September 2021.

The ecological value of the site was assessed, along with the likely presence of protected or notable species, and any potential ecological constraints to the proposed development.

Recorded site habitats were building, hard standing and amenity grassland. Site habitats were considered to not be of importance to nature conservation.

The onsite dwelling and associated buildings offer negligible bat roosting potential; however it should be appreciated that almost any structure may be used by an individual or transient bat from time to time. Bats require very limited cavity space and only very small roost entry gaps and can be found in any structure which provides close shelter. Should bats be discovered on site at any time, works should be halted in the immediate area and an appropriately trained, qualified and licensed ecologist consulted immediately.

No evidence of badgers was observed during the walkover and given the extent of suitable habitat for badgers in the wider landscape it is considered that the site is not important for badgers. However, it is possible that badgers use the site from time to time for foraging. Therefore, taking a best practice approach, all deep excavations should be covered overnight during demolition/construction works. Shallow excavations should have a scaffold board or equivalent placed in them overnight to allow any badgers to exit, should they fall in, and all chemicals should be stored securely.

Recommendations for post development ecological enhancement measures are provided where relevant.

Introduction

Fenswood Ecology was commissioned by Mrs Hannah Wilkinson to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal at 10 Dial Lane, Felton (centred around Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: ST 52581 66031). An ecological assessment of the site was undertaken by Jamie Edmonds in September 2021.

The purpose of survey work at the site was to carry out an ecological assessment and to review the potential for the site to contain, or be used by, species protected or considered to be of primary importance under UK legislation, namely the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

This report details the findings of the survey work and subsequent assessment. Methodologies employed are described including site surveys and evaluation and the need for any further survey work and/or mitigation measures are included, where appropriate.

Methodology

Data Consultation

A full search of biological records was not considered appropriate due to the small size of the site, and the lack of semi natural habitats with the potential for notable species.

The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk>) was consulted in September 2021 for information on statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest within 1 km of the application area.

Information obtained from MAGIC and any other relevant sources are included within the report where appropriate.

Ecological Site Assessment

The site was surveyed by Jamie Edmonds on 7th September 2021 following an extended Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This survey method aims to characterise habitats and communities present but is not intended to provide a complete list of all plants occurring across the site.

The habitats and vegetation types present were recorded on to a field map and any evidence of protected species encountered during the survey was recorded. This included observations of field signs and an assessment of the suitability of the habitats present to support protected species.

Habitats and species of principal importance that are listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and the

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) were noted where necessary.

Site photographs are provided in Appendix 1. Information on habitat distribution is presented in Appendix 2, and identify features of interest, where appropriate.

The value and sensitivity of ecological features present on site was determined based on the guidance given in 'Guidelines on Ecological Impact Assessment' (IEEM, 2016). Individual ecological receptors (habitats and species that could be affected by the development) for the scheme were assigned levels of importance for nature conservation. The highest level is international, then decreasing in order of importance through national, county, district, local to lastly, zone of immediate influence only.

European Protected Species

Based on the habitats present on site and within the immediate area survey for the following species/species groups was undertaken during the Phase 1 habitat survey.

Amphibians

A desk based search was undertaken prior to the site visit using a 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey (OS) map to identify any water bodies within 500 m of the application area that are not separated from the site by a major barrier (i.e. rivers, motorways, A roads) to amphibian dispersal.

There are no ponds on site or within 500m of the site. The on-site habitats are not suitable to support amphibian species and therefore will not be mentioned again in this report.

Bats

All trees and buildings on site were inspected to assess their potential to support roosting bats, in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Collins, 2016).

An individual tree may have several features of potential interest to roosting bats. It is not always possible to confirm usage of a feature by bats as often the animals may be present on one day and no evidence of occupation may be found on the next. Consequently, it is normal practice when undertaking such surveys to assign each feature to a defined category of roosting potential as follows:

Negligible: This category is usually used where a feature appears initially to have significant bat roost potential but is considered on closer inspection to have no or very limited potential to support roosting bats. It is usually used during surveys to confirm that inspection of a feature has been carried out and has found that the feature is not considered to comprise suitable habitat for roosting bats.

Low: This category is used to describe a feature that may have some superficial interest to roosting bats but is considered suboptimal to the extent that bats are not considered likely to use the feature for shelter. A cavity that is open at the top allowing access to wind and rain may be considered to be of low bat roost potential.

Moderate: This category is used to describe a feature that has some potential to support roosting bats but is considered to be less than ideal in some way. For example, the feature may be occupied by other animals, such as birds or squirrel; it may be subject to disturbance or have sub-optimal connectivity with navigational features.

High: This category is used to describe an optimal feature considered to be ideally suitable for use by roosting bats where no evidence of occupation by bats has been found. Features considered to be of high bat roost potential may include upwards-leading cavities of appropriate dimensions and height from the ground, with no obstructions below the cavity entrance. The tree may be particularly prominent within the landscape and is likely to have good connectivity with navigational features and sufficient suitable foraging habitat in the vicinity.

Confirmed: This category is used where positive evidence of bats usage has been recorded from a feature. For example, bats or bat droppings may be present, or existing bat records may be associated with the feature. A licence from Natural England is likely to be required if the bat roost is to be disturbed by the development.

The habitats on site were also assessed for their potential to be used by foraging and commuting bats.

Birds

A formal bird survey was not undertaken as part of this assessment, however whilst on site the opportunity was taken to record all species of birds encountered.

Hazel dormouse

The habitats present on site were assessed for their suitability to support hazel dormice and for connectivity with other suitable habitat within the surrounding area. The on-site habitats are not suitable to support dormice and therefore will not be mentioned again in this report.

Reptiles

The habitats present on site were assessed for their suitability to support basking, foraging and hibernating reptiles and for connectivity with other suitable habitat within the surrounding area. The on-site habitats are not suitable to support reptile species and therefore will not be mentioned again in this report.

Riparian Mammals and White-clawed Crayfish

A desk-based search was undertaken using an OS map to identify any watercourses within 30m of the application area.

There are no watercourses within 30m of the proposed site, therefore otters (*Lutra lutra*), European water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) and white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) are not considered receptors and subsequently not mentioned again in this report.

Other Protected and Notable Species

The opportunity was taken whilst on site to assess habitats for the potential to support nationally or locally scarce or notable species, or any species protected under domestic legislation.

Badger

Signs of badger (*Meles meles*) activity were searched for within the application area, and within 30m of the site where accessible, as part of the extended Phase 1 survey. Survey followed standard methodology detailed in Surveying Badgers (Harris *et al.*, 1989). This included survey for badger setts, along with survey of linear features and boundaries for signs of badger activity including dung pits, foraging marks, feeding signs and pathways.

Invasive Species

During the initial protected species walkover survey, the opportunity was also taken to record the presence of any invasive plant or animal species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), if present.

Limitations to Survey

Access to the full application site was provided.

The survey was undertaken within the sub-optimal botanical survey season but it is still considered that a robust evaluation of habitat types, potential species constraints and the overall site character has been made.

Where it was not possible to make a robust evaluation, recommendations for further assessment and surveys have been included.

Findings and Evaluation

Site Description

The site consists of a dwelling with two detached garages, hardstanding curtilage and amenity grassland garden at the front and rear of the dwelling. The dwelling is on the north edge of the village of Felton and situated at the rear of a farm. The farm is to the west of the site, with all other sides acting as grazing pasture.

Designated Sites

There are two statutory designated sites within 1km of the site; Hartcliff Rocks Quarry SSSI (515m north east) and Lulsgate Quarry SSSI (710m west). Both sites have been designated for geological features (Natural England, 2021). The site is also within Band C of the Consultation Zone for the North Somerset & Mendip Bat SAC, which is 4.8km to the west (North Somerset Council, 2018).

Habitats

The habitats below are listed in order of dominance across the site.

Hard standing

The curtilage surrounding the dwelling is a mixture of concrete and crushed stone. The existing hard standing works as access to and around the building and a parking area.

This habitat is species poor and man-made and therefore is considered to be of importance to nature conservation within the zone of immediate influence only. This habitat will not be discussed further in this report.

Building

The dwelling (within the redline boundary) is a typical block/ brick building with a tiled roof. It has plastic fascia-boards and soffits. There are two garages immediately south of the dwelling, the closest to the dwelling has been constructed in the same manner as the dwelling and is well maintained. The second is a brick and concrete structure with a flat roof and has no main door.

This habitat is species poor and man-made and therefore is considered to be of importance to nature conservation within the zone of immediate influence only.

Amenity Grassland

Small areas of amenity grassland can be found at the front and rear of the dwelling. Both areas are highly maintained and have no surrounding plants,

bushes or trees.

This habitat is species poor and therefore is considered to be of importance to nature conservation within the zone of immediate influence only and will not be mentioned further in this report.

Species

Badgers

No badger setts or evidence of badgers using the site were identified during the survey. However, the habitats surrounding the site good foraging habitat. It is highly unlikely that badgers would use the dwelling or hard standing. Therefore, the site is considered to be of low importance to badgers within the immediate zone of influence.

Bats

The dwelling was visually inspected from the ground and inside the loft from the hatch opening. It does not have any features that are suitable for roosting bats, the roof, fascia boards and soffits have been well maintained. The roof is lined with felt, which is in good condition and offers no obvious bat access. Therefore, it is considered that the dwelling has negligible bat roost potential and is of low importance to bat species as a roosting feature in the area.

The surrounding habitat lacks connectivity and is unlikely to be used by commuting bats but the nearby grazing pasture does offer foraging habitat. As such it is considered that the site is of low importance to foraging and commuting bats within the immediate zone of influence.

Birds

In 2009, a re-assessment of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) was published by Eaton *et al.* (2009), which defined rare and threatened bird species on two lists (Red and Amber) describing the level of threat to each species of concern.

“Red” is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action due to either a historical decline in breeding population, severe (>50%) decline in breeding or non-breeding population, or severe decline in breeding range over 50 years or more. “Amber” is the next most critical group, with species qualifying for this status as a result of either recovery from red list criterion, being classed as rare breeders in the UK, moderate (>25%) decline in breeding or non-breeding population or moderate decline in breeding range over 25 years or more. These categories are followed by Green, indicating that the species are relatively unthreatened.

No formal bird survey was undertaken during the site visit in September 2021

however the dwelling was visually inspected for its suitability for nesting birds. No birds were seen using the proposed site at the time of survey and the site offers very little nesting opportunity. As such it is considered that the site is of low importance to birds within the immediate zone of influence.

Other Key and Protected Species

Invertebrates

Habitats typically considered of high value to invertebrates include deadwood, wetland and significant expanses of brownfield. The proposed site comprises manmade structures and is very small in size. As such, the proposed site is considered to support a range of common invertebrate species only and is not considered to be of importance to invertebrates within the immediate zone of influence and are not discussed further in this report.

Invasive Species

No invasive species were noted within the proposed site and will therefore not be mentioned again within this report.

Ecological Assessment and Mitigation

The Scheme

The project is to add a second level to the existing dwelling and to increase its size slightly at the rear (east side). The existing entrance would remain the same, as would the front garden. A new porch would replace the existing one.

Designated Sites

There are two statutory designated sites within 1km, which have been designated for their geological importance. Due to their distance from the proposed development and the proposed development not impacting local geology it is considered that the development will not jeopardise the designated sites. The site also falls within Band C of the North Somerset & Mendip Bat SAC consultation zone, however the site is on the very edge of the consultation zone and offers negligible roosting and commuting habitat. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development will not jeopardise the designation.

Species

Badger

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. It is an offence under the act to kill, injure or take a badger. It is also an offence to destroy damage or obstruct a currently active badger sett, or to disturb animals within the sett.

No evidence of badgers was observed during the walkover and given the extent of suitable habitat for badgers in the wider landscape it is considered that the site is not important for badgers. However, it is possible that badgers use the site from time to time for foraging. Therefore, taking a best practice approach, all deep excavations should be covered overnight during demolition/construction works. Shallow excavations should have a scaffold board or equivalent placed in them overnight to allow any badgers to exit, should they fall in, and all chemicals should be stored securely.

Bats

All species of bat occurring within the UK are included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). Under Regulation 41 bats are protected from deliberate capture, injury or killing, from deliberate disturbance and from deliberate damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (roost).

All UK bats are also included on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, their protection is limited to certain offences. Under the 1981 Act (as amended) it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats while they are occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection, or to obstruct access to any such place.

Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein's (*Myotis bechsteinii*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), lesser horseshoe (*R. hipposideros*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats are included as priority species within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

The onsite dwelling offers negligible bat roosting potential; however it should be appreciated that almost any structure may be used by an individual or transient bat from time to time. Bats require very limited cavity space and only very small roost entry gaps and can be found in any structure which provides close shelter. Should bats be discovered on site at any time, works should be halted in the immediate area and an appropriately trained, qualified, and licensed ecologist consulted immediately.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

A Planning permission to extend and alter the building was granted in 2022, ref: 21/P/2938/FUH

B The owners have revised their brief and now propose a more modest solution to their requirements in the form of a side extension with a projecting rear range.

PLANNING HISTORY

A The previous approved proposal was to create a rear extension under a flat roof and form a continuous front extended roof supported on hardwood posts.

B The officer's report cited the following policies relevant to the previous proposal

- 1 Residential development outside settlement boundaries
- 2 Good design
- 3 Parking and Highway safety
- 4 Green Belt
- 5 Protected species

C The officer concluded that the proposal met the criteria listed above.

THE PROPOSAL

A In this instance the proposal is to demolish the existing detached garage and build a side extension following the existing profile of the building save that in this case the extension will include a rear projection forming a gabled elevation to the rear.

B The proposal will include for an overhanging roof partway along both front and rear elevations supported on hardwood posts.

C The principle of introducing a dual pitch roof with supporting timber posts was established in the previous approved proposal.

D External wall surfaces will have stained larch timber cladding excepting where the rubble stone facing which is to be retained.

E The windows are currently a mix of white and black UPVC. The proposal is to include black UPVC in the extension and to replace any remaining white windows and doors.

F The proposal is to include standing seam roof finishes.

THE AMOUNT

A The amount of the development is described on the plans and comprises a side extension of 4.1 metres with a rear projection of 3 metres.

B The proposal includes the demolition of an existing detached garage.

ACCESS

A Access to the development is unchanged

EVALUATION

A The scope and extent of what is proposed is less than previously approved. The rear and side element are within Permitted Development so the reality is that it is only the front overhanging roof that requires any consent

B Irrespective for the need or otherwise, this proposal like the previous approved scheme satisfies the criteria as set out by the planning officer. As stated in the officer's report, the proposal:

- 1 Has no detrimental impacts on the amenities of any neighbours**
- 2 Would not unacceptably harm the characteristics of the existing building or the character of its surroundings**
- 3 Has adequate on site parking**
- 4 Does not constitute a disproportionate addition in terms of floor space within a green belt**
- 5 Is well within the limits for additional floor space for an agricultural worker's dwelling**
- 6 Does not affect any listed building**
- 7 Has a negligible potential for bats being affected by the proposal**

C Comments from the previous approved proposal from Winford Parish Council are noted. It must therefore be of some comfort to the Parish that this proposal is substantially smaller than that it objected to before

D This proposal seeks to provide improved amenities for the applicant and her growing family, without any detrimental impacts on this part of the Green Belt, the setting of the building, and the amenities of nearby occupiers.

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