




Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and
Bat Roost Assessment

Meeting Hall, Otford Lane, Sevenoaks,
TN14 7EG

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing. Whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date. This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats that are densely vegetated, only dominant species may be recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Robinson Escott to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Bat Internal / External Bat Assessment on land at Meeting Hall, Otford Lane, TN14 7EG.

1.2 The key objectives of a PEA (CIEEM 2017) are to:

Identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project;

Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required, following the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' (CIEEM 2016; BSI 2013, Clause 5.2);

Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA); and

Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.

1.3 This report comprises the:

Legislative and planning context (Section 1);

Assessment methodologies (Section 2);

Results (Section 3);

Implications for development (Section 4);

An impact assessment (Section 5); and

Conclusions (Section 6).

Site Context

1.4 The site (TQ49666056) lies to the west of the M25 and to the east of Halstead, located on the northern aspect of Otford Lane. The site consists of a single building, an old meeting hall, with hardstanding and tree lines and hedgerows surrounding the site.

1.5 To the north and west of the site are open fields, to the east a light weight industrial unit and to the south fields, woodlands and scattered residential units. The red line boundary is shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Approximate location of the red-line boundary

Description of Proposed Development

- 1.6 The proposed works include the renovation of the building, which includes re roofing and internal upgrades.

Planning Policies

- 1.7 The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure the proposals were compliant with relevant planning policy and legislation. Policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) as well as the Sevenoaks Core Strategy which was adopted in 2011. Local policies relating to ecology include:
- Policy SP 10: Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision
 - Policy SP 11: Biodiversity
- 1.8 The Environment Bill (Environment Act 2021) received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021 and is now an Act of Parliament (Law). The Environment Act 2021 outlines the

requirement for granted developments to provide a biodiversity value post-development which exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least 10%. Proposals also need to provide a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the NPPF (2021).

1.9 This report addresses the site in relation to nature conservation and wildlife and indeed to the local planning requirements as well as national planning and nature conservation legislation.

1.10 The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure compliance with national and local plan policies. The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM 2017) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practise for Planning and Development.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Desktop Study

2.1 A desktop study was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and an internet-based aerial mapping service (maps.google.co.uk) was used to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features (ponds, woodlands, etc.) within the wider landscape.

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

2.2 A site survey was undertaken on 26th July 2023 by The Ecology Partnership ecologist Alexia Tamblyn. The surveyor identified the habitats present, following the standard 'Phase 1 habitat survey' auditing method developed by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC). The site was surveyed on foot and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on an appropriately scaled map (JNCC 2010). In addition, the dominant plant species in each habitat were recorded. The potential for the site to support protected species was also assessed.

Bat Internal and External Survey

- 2.3 The buildings on site were internally and externally assessed for their suitability for roosting bats. The survey was undertaken on the 26th July 2023 by The Ecology Partnership ecologist Natural England bat licence holder Alexia Tamblyn MA (Oxon) MSc CEol CEnv MCIEEM FRGS.
- 2.4 The surveyors assessed the building visually and searched for evidence such as:
- Staining beneath or around a hole caused by natural oils in bat fur.
 - Bat droppings beneath a hole, roost or resting area.
 - Bat droppings and/or insect remains beneath a feeding area.
 - Audible squeaking from within a hole.
 - Insects (especially flies) around a hole.
 - Dead bats.
- 2.5 Buildings that are considered to have a higher potential to support roosting bats would include the following:
- Agricultural buildings (e.g. farmhouses, barns and outbuildings) of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed beams;
 - Buildings with weatherboarding and/or hanging tiles that are within 200m of woodland and/or water;
 - Pre-1960s detached buildings and structures within 200m of woodland and/or water;
 - Pre-1914 buildings within 400m of woodland and/or water;
 - Pre-1914 buildings with gable ends or slate roofs regardless of location;
 - Buildings which are located within or immediately adjacent to woodland and/or immediately adjacent to water;
 - Dutch barns or livestock buildings with a single skin roof and board and gap or Yorkshire boarding if, following a preliminary roost assessment the site appears to be particularly suited to bats.

Additional Protected Species Assessments

- 2.6 Any evidence of additional protected species was recorded. Standard methods of search and measures of presence, or likely presence based on habitat suitability were used for bats in trees (Collins 2016), breeding birds (BTO 2020), hazel dormice (Bright

et al. 2006), great crested newts (ARG 2010), reptiles (Froglife 2015), badgers (Creswell et al. 1990) and water voles (Strachan et al. 2011).

Limitations

2.7 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The site was visited over the period of one site visit, as such seasonal variations cannot be observed and potentially only a selection of all species that potentially occur within the site have been recorded. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.

2.8 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time when the survey was carried out. Additional surveys may be recommended if, on the basis of this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

3.0 RESULTS

Desktop Study

3.1 The site does not fall within any statutory or non statutory designated sites. There are no sites within 2km of the redline boundary, as shown in Figure 2 below.

3.2 The site lies within several impact risk zones (IRZs) of SSSIs in the wider landscape. These include Downe Bank and High Elms SSSI, located over 5km from the site, Lullingstone Park SSSI, approximately 3.4km from the site, Otford to Shoreham Downs SSSI, over 3km to the east of the site. Whilst the site falls within the impact risk zones of these SSSI, the redevelopment of the meeting hall falls outside any of the listed developments that would impact the integrity of any of the SSSIs.

3.3 There are numerous areas of ancient woodland in the local landscape (Figure 3 below) and include Broomfield Wood to the south and Chalkhurst Wood to the north west.

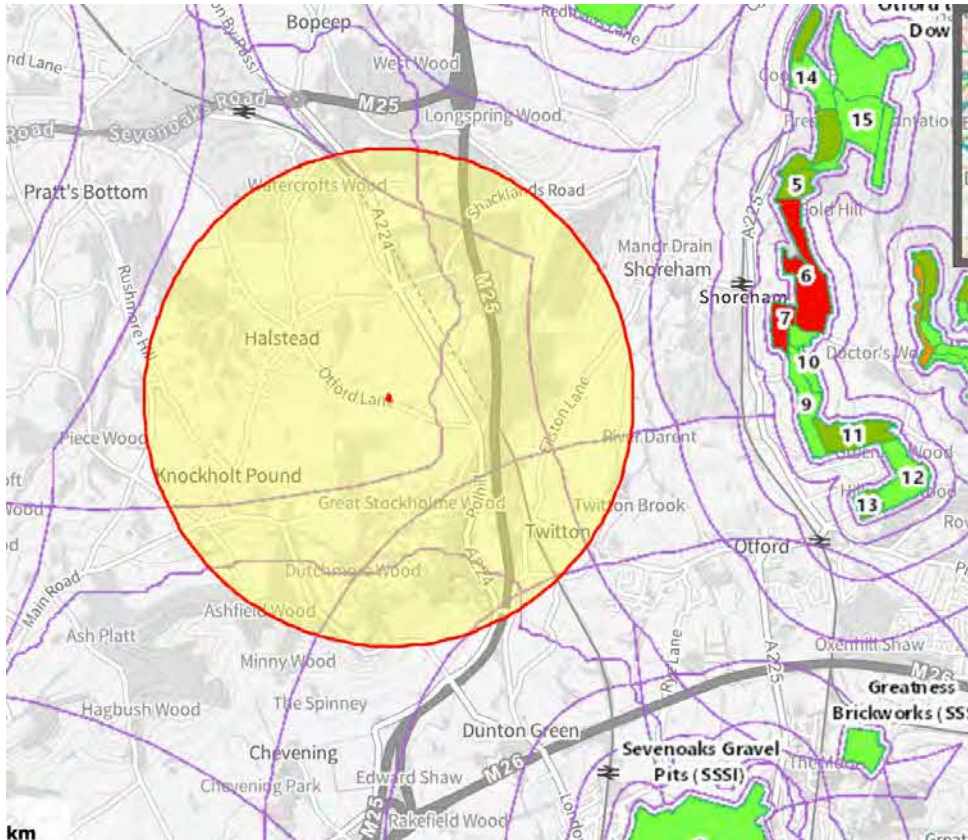


Figure 2: The site in relation to Designated Sites (2km buffer shown)

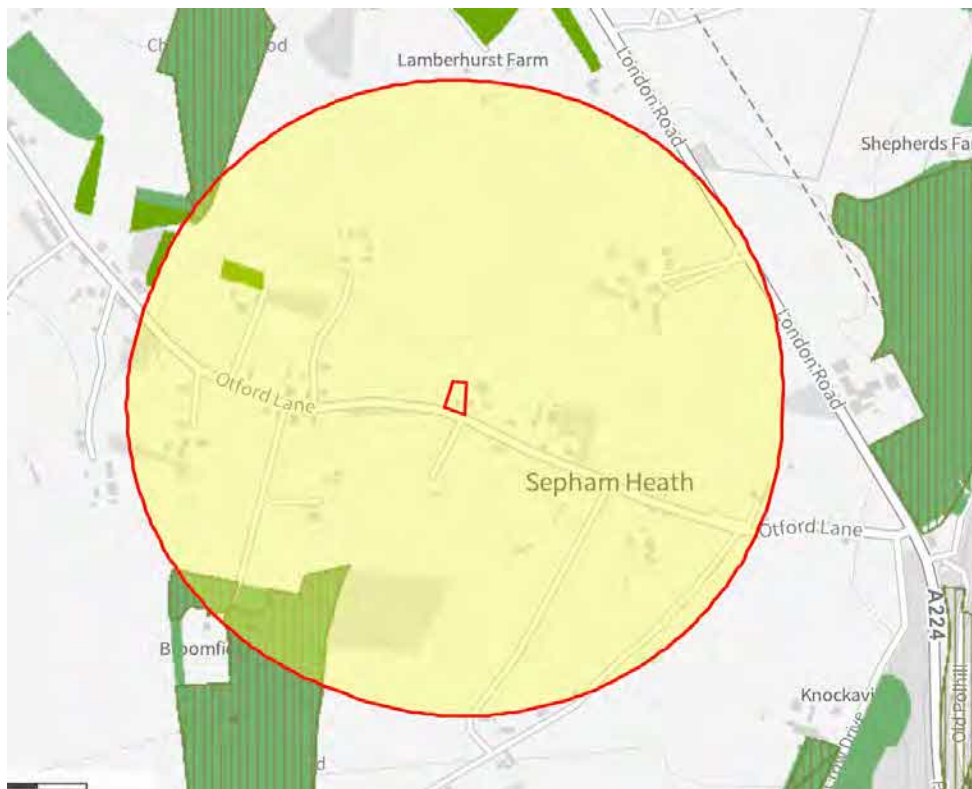


Figure 3: Ancient woodland habitats within 500m of the red line boundary

3.4 A single local wildlife sites are present within 1km of the site; Woodlands West of Shoreham (which span the M25) to the east of the site.

3.5 There are a number of protected species licences within 2km of the red line boundary (Figure 4 below).

EPSM 2009-694 for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long eared bat located 1.6km north west

EPSM 2014-4523-EPS-MIT common pipistrelle located 1.8km south west

EPSM 2014-3939-EPS-MIT for common pipistrelles located 1.2km south

EPSM 2018-35851-EPS-MIT for common pipistrelle located 1.6km south east

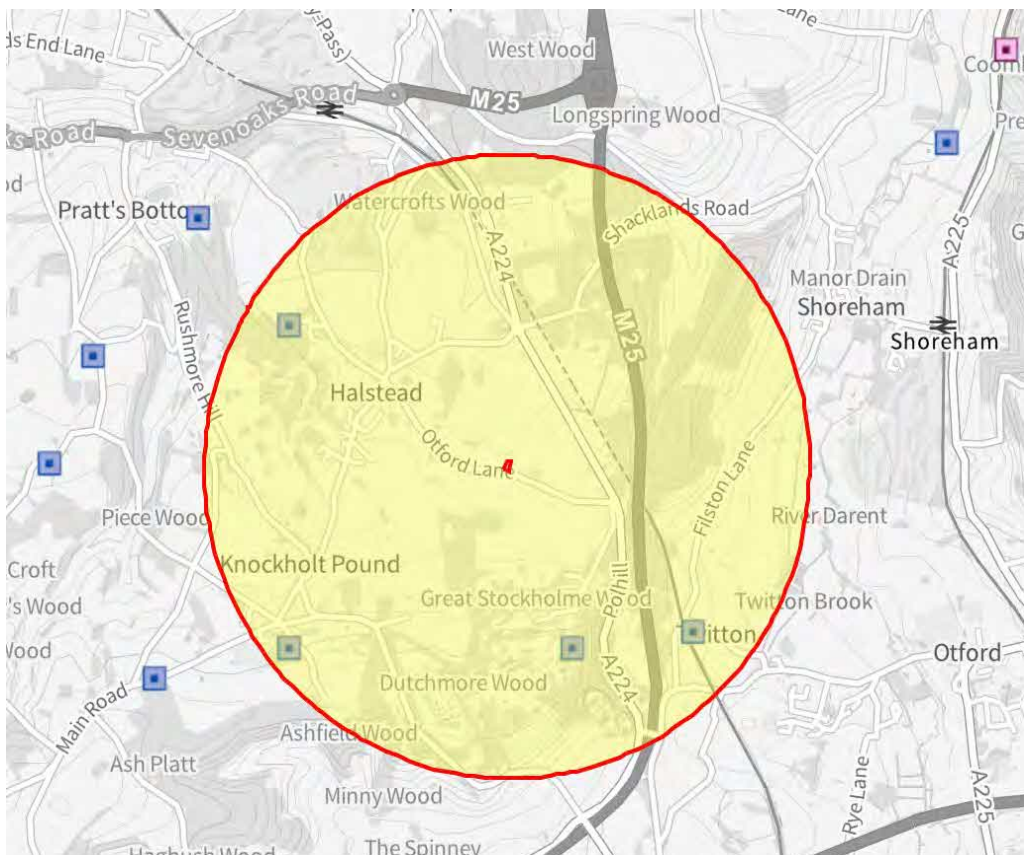


Figure 4: Protected species licences within 2km of the site

3.6 Other Natural England licences are present in the wider landscape and include dormice licences to the north east of the site (Figure 4 pink square) and other bat licences (Blue squares).

3.7 There are no ponds within 250m of the red line boundary of the site, as shown in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: No ponds located within 250m of the red line boundary

3.8 A 2km radius data search was requested from KMBRC. Notable protected species from this search are outlined below (Table 1). Only records from within the last ten years and those closest to site have been included.

Table 1: Biological Records from KMBRC within 1km of the site from the past 10 years¹

Species	Status	Approx. distance and direction of closest record
Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5; NERC Act (2006) Section 41	c. 1km northeast (2011)
Grass snake <i>Natrix natrix</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5; NERC Act (2006) Section 41	Within 1km (2016)
[REDACTED]		
Hazel Dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife	Within 1km (2023)

¹ *Additional species are present within the biological records but may be older than 10 years or outside our search radius. Some species have not been included due to the likelihood of presence on site due to habitat types.

	and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	
Roman snail <i>Helix pomatia</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	Within 1km (2021)
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5. NERC Act (2006) Section 41	Within 1km (2021)
Brown Long-Eared Bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5. NERC Act (2006) Section 41	Within 1km (2016)
Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5;	Within 1km (2021)
Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5; NERC Act (2006) Section 41	Within 1km (2021)
Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5;	Within 1km (2021)
<i>Myotis</i> sp Whiskered / Brandts/ Alcathose bat	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Schedule 2; Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4; Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5.	Within 1km (2021)

Phase 1 Habitat Survey

3.9 The site contains a single building, an old meeting hall, hardstanding and some ruderal edge habitat. There is a hedgerow on the western aspect of the site and a tree line on the eastern aspect. A ruderal area to the north is also present.

3.10 The habitat map is presented in Appendix 1. Photographs of the site are shown in Appendix 2 of this report.

Tree Line

3.11 The tree line is located on the eastern aspect of the site. Mature trees included oak (*Quercus robur*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) with ivy (*Hedera helix*) present. Cypress trees are present along a section of the tree line.

Hedgerow

3.12 One hedgerow is present on the western aspect of the site and was considered to be off site / immediately adjacent. The hedgerow supported blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), with ivy covering. Ruderal species under the hedgerow including common nettles (*Urtica dioica*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), willowherb (*Epilobium tetragonum*), spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*), red shank (*Persicaria maculosa*), bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), doves foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*).

3.13 There is a small section of hedgerow on site on the eastern aspect, attached to the tree line. This supports species such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), ivy, bramble, herb Robert, dock (*Rumex crispus*) and several log piles.

Ruderal Edge / Scrub

3.14 A section on the northern edge of the site supported a mixture of ruderal and scrub species, and showed signs of disturbance and tree removal. Species included bramble and common nettle, with scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), sycamore saplings and creeping thistle.

Building

- 3.15 There was one building on site. This was an old meeting hall which was surrounded by scaffolding. This built with a brick base and wooden boards across all aspects. The meeting hall supported a porch at the front of the building (southern aspect) and an office / storage section to the north of the building.
- 3.16 The roof supported interlocking tiles across the whole structure.

Protected Species

Bats

- 3.17 The majority of the building had a clay tile interlocking roof that is in mainly good condition. On the eastern aspect much of the roof was covered in moss, essentially sealing the tiles. No obvious gaps were present. On the western aspect, again, most of the tiles were well sealed. There were several tiles which were lifted on the southern aspect, but the gaps were limited and the extent of the gaps appeared minimal.
- 3.18 A small void was present above the hall. This could not be accessed internally, but as scaffolding was present, this void could be viewed from a small gap in the weatherboard on the southern aspect. However, when viewing, a section of the weatherboarding moved as was rotten allowing the internal void to be better viewed. Otherwise the void appeared to be well sealed from the external environment. No evidence of bats was recorded within the void, where viewing was possible. The void was cramped and narrow, no more than 0.5m in height and was considered to have limited suitability for void dwelling bats.
- 3.19 Due to the presence of a small void and some small sections of lifted tiles on the southern aspect, the building was considered to have 'low' potential for roosting bats, and it was recommended that a single emergence survey was conducted to ensure that the building was fully assessed for its potential for bats.
- 3.20 As the building was considered to have 'low' potential a bat emergence survey was conducted on the 9th August 2023. Sunset was at 20.35, with the survey commencing at 20.00. The temperature conditions were warm at 20 degrees, with a slight wind. The surveyor was positioned on the southern aspect of the building, facing the opening of the void area and the lifted tiles.

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- 3.21 The first bat recorded was a common pipistrelle at 21.03, further common pipistrelles were recorded throughout the survey, albeit in low numbers, at 21.10, 21.12 and then intermittently throughout the survey period. These bats were moving down the hedgerows along the road and foraging along the eastern tree line. A brown long eared bat was recorded at 21.13 and again at 21.16 briefly foraging along the hedgerow along the west. A noctule was also recorded at 21.38 flying over the site.
- 3.22 No bats were recorded emerging from the roof structure or hole in the weatherboarding.
- 3.23 The trees along the eastern tree line have some areas of ivy cover. However, the trees do not have the complex growth features which would be suitable for supporting roosting bats and therefore were considered to have 'negligible' potential to support roosting bats owing to their small stature and/or lack of suitable roosting features. The blackthorn along the western edge was not considered suitable for roosting bats and as such was considered to have 'negligible' potential to support roosting bats
- 3.24 The hedgerows and tree lines on site provide linear commuting corridors for bats in addition to foraging opportunities.



Great Crested Newts

- 3.26 There are no ponds within 250m of the site and the habitats are considered to be suboptimal for GCNs. Considering the lack of any potential breeding ponds within 250m of the site, GCNs are not considered to be present within the site boundaries and are not considered further within the report.

Hazel Dormice

- 3.27 There are local records for dormice and as such dormice are known to be present within the landscape.

- 3.28 Whilst there is a hedgerow on the western aspect of the site, this is largely hawthorn dominated and leggy, lacking in species diversity. Furthermore, the hedgerow is fragmented from areas of optimal habitat. Due to the limited nature of the hedgerow and the extent of the hedgerow and the lack of other suitable features within the site boundary, dormice are not considered to be present on site. This species is not considered further and no mitigation or further surveys are recommended.

Reptiles

- 3.29 The majority of the site is not suitable for reptiles with the site largely dominated by hardstanding. The edges under the tree line and the area of scrub and ruderals to the north had some potential to provide suitable foraging habitat for common reptile species, and the extensive network of linear features in the local area connect the site to other areas of suitable reptile habitat.

Nesting Birds

- 3.30 No evidence of nesting birds was recorded on the site or in the building on site. Nesting and foraging birds would likely utilise any mature trees and hedgerow on site.

Other species

- 3.31 The site is considered suitable for hedgehogs, although no direct evidence was recorded and it is considered that hedgehogs would not be reliant on the habitat within the site, given the surrounding habitat. Log piles were present which might provide some interest.
- 3.32 The hedgerows and edges of the site are considered to provide some suitable habitat for Roman snails. No snails were identified during the survey, albeit weather conditions were not suitable at the time for active snails to be recorded. Log piles may provide some interest to this species.
- 3.33 Due to a lack of suitable habitat, the site was not considered suitable for other protected species, such as water voles and otters.

4.0 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The following paragraphs consider the effects of the development on designated sites, priority habitats and protected and priority species. Where the desk study and Phase

1 survey provide sufficient evidence for an assessment of effects on any of these groups to be taken through planning, these are detailed below, the need for additional surveys and when and how these should be completed are summarised, if required.

- 4.2 Provisional recommendations are also given for means to achieve net biodiversity gain, following the principle (CIEEM et al. 2016) of following the mitigation hierarchy of; avoidance, minimisation of loss, compensation on site and biodiversity offset.

Effects on designated sites

- 4.3 The site does not fall within any statutory designated site, and there are none within 2km of the site. Whilst there are numerous SSSIs in the wider landscape, and the site falls within Impact Risk Zones of these, the renovation of the building, is not considered to impact the integrity of any designated sites in the wider landscape. No impacts resulting from the development are therefore predicted.

- 4.4 The closest non-statutory site is located within 1km of the site. Given that the proposals are limited in nature and extent it is considered that the local wildlife site will not be directly affected.

- 4.5 Indirect impacts, such as impacts relating to root protection, impacts relating to dust and impacts relating to light level alteration and habitat changes, are not considered to impact upon the wider landscape.

Effects on priority habitats

- 4.6 There are a number of priority habitats within the wider landscape, which are all habitats of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. This includes ancient woodland and lowland deciduous woodland.

- 4.7 Given the scale of the proposed works and the lack of any related habitat being removed, it is considered that there will be no impacts on priority habitats as a result of the development.

Effect on on-site habitats

- 4.8 The proposed development is for the renovation of the building on site and the retention of the tree line and hedgerow. The hardstanding area will be retained as hardstanding and used for parking. It is considered that the renovation works will not impact the remaining on site habitats however, enhancements have been recommended below to further increase the ecological value of the proposed development to further increase the biodiversity of the site post-development.
- 4.9 The log piles present on the eastern aspect, should be removed if required, and re-established where they would be away from any disturbance. This should be done sensitively in case species such as hedgehogs are present. Log piles provide interest for invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians, and therefore should be left within the edges of the site.

Effects on Protected Species

Bats

- 4.10 As the meeting hall was identified as having 'low' potential to support roosting bats, a single bat emergence surveys was conducted. This was due to the identification of a small void, which could not be fully accessed due to the cramped nature and unsafe access. However, where access was possible, no evidence of bats was recorded. Furthermore, there were a couple of slightly lifted tiles on the southern aspect. These features were considered to have some, albeit limited potential.
- 4.11 The survey was undertaken when bats are most active, which is between May and August, the optimum time for surveys, on the 9th August 2023.. During the survey three species were recorded using the site / flying over the site, with common pipistrelles being the most recorded species, foraging around the tree line, and notably the oak tree, on the eastern side of the site. Brown long eared bats and a single pass by a noctule, were also recorded.
- 4.12 No bats were recorded emerging from the building, the void entrance or the lifted tiles, and as such, it is considered highly unlikely that bats are using the building as a roost.

- 4.13 However, as the building is to be retiled, it is recommended if any evidence of bats is found, or indeed a live bat, then all works must cease and a suitably qualified ecologists contacted.
- 4.14 The trees affected by proposals on site were assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats, and therefore no further survey is required.
- 4.15 The overall suitability of the site for foraging and commuting bats is limited to the hedgerows and tree lines which provide potential commuting corridors for bats and will be retained as part of the proposed development.
- 4.16 According to Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, it is important that proportionality is employed when recommending further survey work for bat species on a proposed development site. As stated within section 8.2.7 of the latest survey guidelines (2016), the following points need to be taken into account with regard to planning activity surveys:
- Likelihood of bats being present;
 - Likely species concerned;
 - Number of individuals;
 - Type of habitat affected;
 - Predicted impacts of the proposed development on bats;
 - Type and scale of proposed development.
- 4.17 Current proposals will involve the renovation of the building. There will also be associated access and some scope for various ecological enhancements through native species planting.
- 4.18 Considering the above and the small scale of the proposals, it is considered that transect and activity surveys for bats would not be required. Furthermore, it is considered that the development of the site would not impact upon the ecological functionality of the local landscape.
- 4.19 Any proposed lighting scheme as part of the development will have to take into account bats in the surrounding area as well as on site. All bat species are nocturnal, resting in dark conditions in the day and emerging at night to feed. Bats are known to be affected by light levels which can affect both their roosting behaviour as well as

their foraging behaviour. This needs to be taken into account, with a sympathetic lighting scheme for the development.

4.20 Recommendations include:

Lighting should only be installed if there is a significant need;

Lighting should be avoided near hedgerows and tree-lines, with light angled away from these areas, bats use linear features such as hedgerows to commute across the landscape to forage;

Lights should have focussed luminance on their target area, preventing light spill and pollution into other areas of the site and local area.

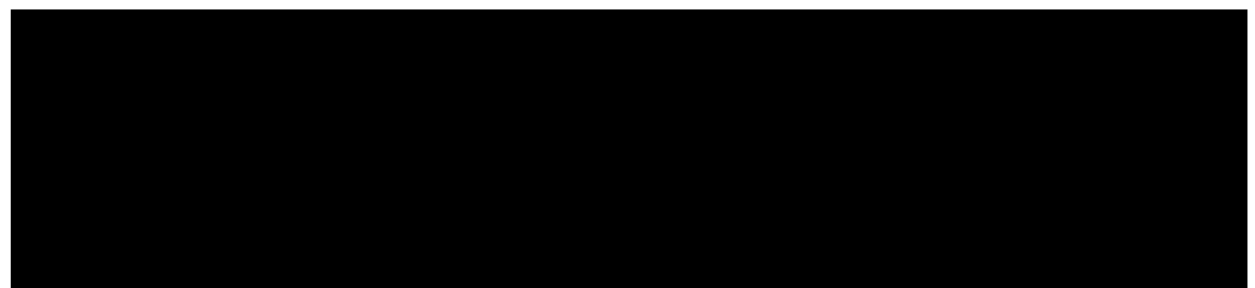
Dark buffer zones can be used as a good way to separate habitats or features from lighting by forming a dark perimeter around them. Buffer zones rely on ensuring light levels within a certain distance of a feature do not exceed certain defined limits; and

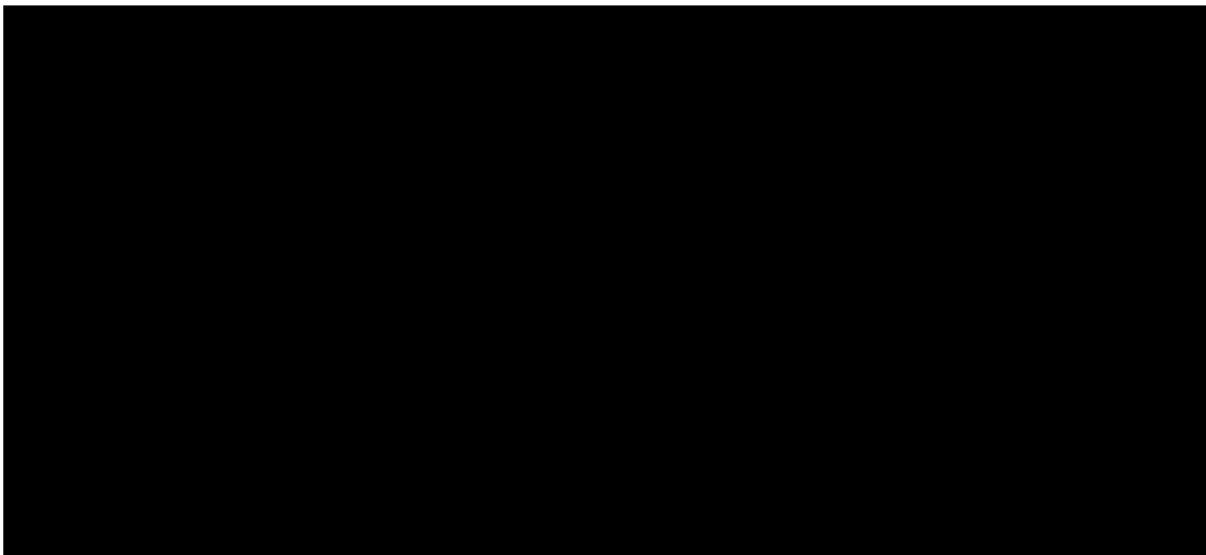
Light levels should be kept low. All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured and metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used. LED luminaires should be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.

Reptiles

4.21 The site was largely considered unsuitable for reptiles due to the presence of hardstanding. Some site edges could provide some habitat for common reptile species but lacked basking opportunities. In addition, there are some basking opportunities for reptiles within the scrub and ruderal northern aspect.

4.22 Overall, the site is not considered to support a significant reptile population, however the ruderal and scrub edges, if cleared, must be cleared sensitively to allow any reptiles present to move to safer areas such as the site boundaries. As the boundaries are to be left untouched by the development they are considered to be a safe refuge for any reptiles present.





Other Species

- 4.25 Birds are likely to use the trees and hedgerows on site and along the boundaries for foraging and breeding. Any tree removal should be implemented outside the breeding bird season (March-September) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If active nests are identified, works in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest
- 4.26 The site has potential to support hedgehog. Whilst receiving no specific legal protection, they are protected from certain forms of harm under the wild mammals (Protection) Act 1996. There is a risk that without mitigation, vegetation clearance on site may result in mutilation or crushing of hedgehog nesting in brash piles or within the greenhouses. As such, it is recommended that areas if any dense vegetation needs clearing, it is cut in two stages, the first to 300mm, then then the second to ground level after the area has been searched for hedgehog. If any are found, they will be safely move to a suitable brash pile outside the clearance area.
- 4.27 The site has some potential to support Roman snails on the very edges of the site. This habitat is to be retained, and therefore no impacts are considered likely. If small areas of habitat are to be removed, it is recommended this is undertaken sensitively under ecological supervision. Licences for Roman snails may be required if there is intention to move the snails. However, as edge habitats are limited and are to be retained, it is considered unlikely that any impacts would occur.
- 4.28 Dormice and great crested newts are not considered to be present on site. No specific surveys or mitigation measures are recommended.

Ecological Enhancements

- 4.29 A number of enhancements have been recommended in order to enhance the ecological value of the site.
- 4.30 New planting along the edges of the site should include a mixture of native species including blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, holly, elder, guelder rose, dog rose and spindle. Seeds that are tolerant of semi-shade and are suitable for sowing beneath newly planted or established garden would provide benefit to a range of invertebrates.
- 4.31 Bat boxes should be hung on mature trees around the site to create new roosting opportunities on site. Recommended boxes include:

Vivara Pro WoodStone Bat Box – A general purpose bat box that supports a range of species (Figure 6). These can be hung on trees in a variety of heights and aspects in order to provide a variety of micro-climates.

Large Multi Chamber WoodStone Bat Box – This is a multipurpose box designed for larger colonies and a range of bat species including pipistrelles, noctules and brown long-eared bats. These should be hung on mature trees around the site (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Vivara Pro WoodStone Bat Box (left) and Large Multi Chamber WoodStone Bat Box (right)

- 4.32 The siting of bat boxes is important and have the best rate of occupancy when they are situated within or adjacent to bat-friendly features, such as treelines. The bat boxes should be situated where they are sheltered from strong winds and should be exposed to the sun for most of the day, therefore southern aspects are favourable. Multiple boxes may be hung on one large tree, facing different aspects. Bat boxes should be

hung as high as possible, preferably around 5m high, although lower boxes may also be used by brown long-eared bats.

- 4.33 Sweet nectar and protein-rich pollen, especially night-scented flowers, are bait to encourage insects, a food source for bats. These species should be incorporated into the development where possible:

Evenings primrose (*Oenothera biennis*)

Field poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*)

Knapweed (*Centaurea* sp.)

Night-scented stock (*Matthiola longipetala*)

Red campion (*Silene dioica*)

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)

Sweet williams (*Dianthus barbatus*)

Angelica species

Wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*)

Lavenders (*Lavandula* sp)

- 4.34 Bird nesting opportunity can be installed within existing trees on site. Again, hardwearing woodcrete boxes, or similar, are recommended. Figure 7 gives examples of suitable bird boxes, of which these or similar, could be installed onto the brickwork of the auction house or on existing retained trees. The boxes should be positioned on a north or east facing aspect and at least 2m above the ground if possible. These would cater for species such as house sparrows and wagtails.



Figure 7: Examples of suitable bird boxes which could be installed on site – Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box (left), Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box (centre) and Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box (right)

- 4.35 There is also suitable habitat on site for hedgehogs within the site boundaries. As such, ecological enhancements for hedgehogs are recommended. Hedgehog homes could also be placed across the site (Figure 8). These provide areas of shelter for hedgehogs within the site, helping support the local population.



Figure 8: Example of a hedgehog house that can be utilised on site

- 4.36 It is recommended that log piles are created for use as refugia by amphibians as well as reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates (Figure 9). These can be located in a variety of locations, such as damp places with some situated in sunnier locations. They can be placed within the middle of the new herbaceous or wildflower planting. These

should be stacked and perhaps some leaf litter added. Planting around log piles with species such as honeysuckle or clematis can also add value.



Figure 9: Examples of log piles which should be created on site

4.32 Roman snails are present within the landscape. The retention of the habitat edges and planting of native species, will provide this species with the ecological niches required. Overgrown areas of the site should be left unmanaged, to provide wild areas for such species to colonise.

5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 This section of the report forms an EcIA (Ecological Impact Assessment) and is designed to quantify and evaluate the potential impacts of the development on habitats and species present on site, or within the local area.

Methodology

5.2 The approach to this assessment accords with guidance presented within the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM 2018). In essence, an EcIA assesses the activities associated with a proposed scheme that are likely to generate changes within identified zones of influence, on identified ecological features and receptors. The proposals are subsequently reviewed and mitigation and compensation measures are outlined which help to reduce negative impacts.

5.6 Table 2 below summarises the impacts and required mitigation for each receptor as previously detailed in the discussion.

Table 2: Assessment of effects from the proposal after mitigation and compensation

Feature	Scale of Importance	Mitigation/Compensation Required	Residual Effect
Statutory Designated Sites	National	None required – given the scale of the proposed works.	Not significant
Non-Statutory Designated Sites	National	None required – given the scale of the proposed works.	Not significant
Bats (roosting)	Local	A single emergence conducted did not identify roosting bats. Building therefore not considered a bat roost. Enhancements have been included in this report.	Not significant
Bats (foraging and commuting)	Site	The site provides limited foraging and commuting opportunities. Those that exist are not being removed.	Not significant
Nesting Birds	Site	Mitigating direct harm to nests by removal of any suitable nesting habitat outside of nesting bird season or after a check by a suitably qualified ecologist. Compensation in the form of the installation of bird boxes.	Not significant
Reptiles	Site	Suitable habitat present on the edges. This is to be retained. Sensitive clearance if some areas need to be removed.	Not significant
Hedgehogs, roman snails	Site	Some suitable habitat present on the edges of the site. This habitat is to be retained. Enhancements for the retained habitats include the use of log piles and native planting.	Not significant

Other Species - GCNs, dormice	N/A	The site does not support suitable habitats for these species considered unlikely that these species would be present within the site.	Not significant
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6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The site does not lie adjacent to any designate site or is of the size or scale that would impact designated sites within the wider landscape. No impacts from the renovation of the meting hall is predicted on any designated sites, local wildlife sites or priority habitats.

6.2 The building supported a couple of lifted tiles and a small opening to an otherwise sealed loft void. A single bat emergence survey conducted in August, did not record any bats emerging from the building and as such it is not considered a bat roost. No further surveys are required, however, if evidence of bats is found during renovation works, then works must cease and advice from an ecologist sought.

6.3 Bats were recorded during the survey. As such lighting must be sensitive or avoided within the scheme. Enhancements have been recommended. The trees on site were considered to have 'negligible' potential for roosting bats.

6.4 Birds may use the introduced shrubs, hedgerows, and trees on site to nest within. Any works to these features should therefore be undertaken outside of bird nesting season (March – September inclusive) or after a nesting bird check by a qualified ecologist.

6.5 The site supported some ruderal edges along the hedgerow (adjacent but off site) and the tree line. These edges provided some potential for reptiles, hedgehogs and Roman snails. These are to be retained within the proposals, however, if clearance is required, then this should be undertaken in a sensitive manner. The removal and replacement of the log piles on site should also be conducted sensitively to ensure any species present will not be harmed.

6.6 The site does not support suitable habitat for dormice and GCNs and no evidence of badger activity was recorded within the site. As such, no further surveys for these species are required.

6.7 Recommendations for enhancements have been made within this report, aimed at improving the ecological value of the site and providing a net gain in biodiversity post-development.

7.0 REFERENCES

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Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.google.co.uk/maps

Magic Interactive Map: www.magic.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Habitat Map



Appendix 2: Site Photographs

Photograph 1: The hall view from the road






Photograph 2: Inside the building, well sealed



Photograph 3: Another view of the roof structure



<p>Photograph 4: Largely well sealed tiles across the roof</p>	
<p>Photograph 5: The other face of the roof. Again, largely well sealed across the roof</p>	
<p>Photograph 6: One of the boards moved during investigation of the void</p>	

Photograph 7: View inside the void. Full entry into void was not possible. It was narrow and cramped. No evidence of bats where viewing was possible



Photograph 8: The read of the site



Photograph 9: The side of the plot



Photograph 10: Northern ruderal area



Photograph 11: Northern tree line / hedgerow



Appendix 3: Records Summary

Our Reference: **ENQ/23/353**
Your Reference: **Meeting Hall**

Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre
report regarding
The Meeting Hall, Otford Lane. TN14 7EG

on behalf of
Alexia Tamblyn
The Ecology Partnership

08/08/2023

This report is not a comprehensive ecological survey of the area in question, but can usefully form part of desktop studies to assist competent persons in ecological assessments to determine species and/or habitats reasonably likely to be present in a particular area.

This report was compiled using data held at KMBRC at the time of printing. The KMBRC takes data validation seriously but cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the data included in this report.

Enclosed within this report is the following information specific to the enquiry site :

- Protected Species Inventory
- Kent Rare and Scarce Species Inventory
- Conservation Concern Species Inventory
- Invasive Species List
- SSSI Risk Zones map and report
- Bird List
- Bat List
- Bat Roost Map
- Designated Areas Map
- Kent Habitat Survey Map
- Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat Map

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