

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGY SURVEY

BARN CONVERSION and LAND  
at WHELP STREET , PRESTON ST MARY  
CO10 9NG

ON BEHALF OF

PHIL COBBOLD PLANNING LTD

FOR

RODNEY ELSDEN

OCTOBER 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022

TCW/FE/ 909022

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A Member of the Suffolk Bat Group

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## 1 INSTRUCTION

PHIL COBBOLD  
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Confirmation 5/9/2022

### CLIENT:

Mr R Elsdon

### PROPOSAL.

Part Q Barn Conversion - Agricultural to Residential.

## 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises of some 700 square metres of roadside scrub and mature trees , running South of Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL951 497

The land rises sharply by some 2.5 metres immediately from the roadside before joining the area of scrub and building, which edge a gently rising arable landscape to the South.

The building is of Nissen Hut type some nineteen metres long by five metres in width , to a height of some 3.5 metres. The buildings sides and roof area is heavily ivy clad with immediately butting mature trees.

A wooden structured building cocooned in dense bramble, mature hedge and trees of the residential gardens of Dingley Dell boundary the area, to the West.

Roadside field margins and scrubby hedging continue from the site to the East, alongside Whelp street.

The site does not contain wetland habitats or any form of ephemeral drainage system.

### 3 SITE VISIT - OBJECTIVES

An inspection of the was made by Tim Watts - an independent, qualified ecologist with over forty years experience as a professional habitat consultant.

A site visit and survey was made on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2022 with habitat conditions in early autumn phase boosted by recent rain. The site and proposed building conversion was fully accessible to judge presence / habitat suitability of EPS / LPS.

Objective to establish the possible presence and habitat suitability of protected species within the area of impact. Consideration was given to the land area of physical works and that of surrounding landmass – within viable / relevant distance with regard to particular species mobility.

The proposed development area and that of the neighbouring landscape areas of hedge / corridor, trees, gardens and arable landmass were inspected for evidence of protected - conservation concern species - Bats, Owls, Nesting birds, Amphibians, Reptiles – and consideration given to the sites relevance as connecting corridor to local wildlife.

#### 4 OBJECTIVE – LEGISLATION / CONSIDERATIONS

The objective was to investigate for species which have specific protection within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, European Habitats Directive on Conservation of Natural Habitats of Wild fauna and Flora 1994 and subsequent amendments to Conservation of Habitats and species regulations 2010 Consideration of National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraphs 174 – 188 .

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

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

Survey consideration given to:

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

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

The Survey was carried out with consideration of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 " Crow Act " and amendments to the species protection measures provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. With particular reference to Great crested newts.

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

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

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

## 5 SPECIES OF LEGAL PROTECTION

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

Species covered by Statutory Instrument – Schedule 2EHD

Great Crested Newt (*triturus cristatus*)

Otter (*lutra lutra*)

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

Dormouse (*muscardinus avellanarius*)

SPECIES COVERED BY LOCAL ACTION PLANS AND THE WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 ---- SPECIALIST CONSERVATION / PRIORITY SPECIES.

Barn Owl (*tyto alba*)

Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

Water vole (*arvicola terrestris*)

Hazel Dormouse (*muscardinus avellanarius*)

Hedgehog (*erinaceus europaeus*)

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

Polecat (*mustela putorius*)

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

All reptiles.

All wild birds nests and eggs

Specimen and specialist flora

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



## IMPLICATIONS OF LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

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

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

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

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

## 6 BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION

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

Protected / SAP species identified Bat species- Brown Long Eared, Pipistrelle, Natterer's, Serotine - Badger , Hedgehog, Amphibians - Smooth Newt. Trees - Black Poplar -populus nigra.

The site is not connected to particular Special Protection areas or local County Wildlife sites.

## 7 FIELD SURVEY - HABITAT DESCRIPTION

- 7.1 Site access is via a steep incline of stoned track from Whelp Street culminating in an original concrete 'pad' area west of the Building.
- 7.2 A dense bramble thicket -*rubus fruticosus* with occasional Elder – *sambucus* has developed immediately to the east of the access way ( West of the building )
- 7.3 The west side of the access track backs on the the residential gardens of Dingley Dell with bramble backed by Hazel – *corylus avellana* and Common Hawthorn – *crataegus monogyna* of an historic hedge line backed by mature *Leylandii*- *cypressus leylandii*.
- 7.4 A small wooden shed can be seen cocooned within inaccessible bramble and Blackthorn - *prunus spinosa* immediately South of the access way and outside the development area proposal.
- 7.5 Recently cultivated arable land span the Southern side of the building with some three metre division of mown / scrub clearance.

- 7.6 The three metre field margin continues to the east narrowing to join the 'gappy' roadside hedge of mature Ash – *fraxinus excelsior*, Hazel - clad with Traveler's joy – *clematis vitalba*, Blackthorn and Field maple – *acer campestre*.
- 7.7 The roadside hedge is some six metres from the northeast corner of the proposed building works. The ancient hedge marks the building area's steep drop off of some 2.5 metres to the roadside edge, North of the building.
- 7.8 This hedging of understory Hazel, Crab apple – *malus sylvestris* is shaded by a dominant canopy of mature Ash.
- 7.9 This area immediately to the North of the building widens to some fifteen metres to the West. It is devoid of growth other than Ivy – *hedra helix*, which dominated in this shaded environment.
- 7.10 Two stands of mature Ash have established on the buildings northern edge with girths 1 / 1.2m.
- 7.11 A further two stands of mature Ash of similar size have established on the buildings, South facing immediate perimeter. This shading and production of leaf litter has provided nutrition for the buildings envelopment by parasitic Ivy.

7.12 Two inactive birds nests were found within the external ivy  
- Black bird and Stock Dove.

7.13 The building is of classic Nissen hut design, a dense concrete breeze block plinth and ends, to accommodate double doors, and a curved convex corrugated roof structure. The concrete plinth to height of one metre and ceiling height of some three point six metres.

7.14 The building is effectively closed but enables wildlife access via numerous breaks in the roof sheet cladding, broken concrete structure and beneath the wooden doors of the eastern end.

7.15 The interior is heavily cobwebbed from trailing dead growth of ivy.

7.16 The building is divided by one mid way support wall and there is one remaining collapsed area of ceiling cavity. The remainder is single skinned and there is regular illumination from breakage.

7.17 The Eastern end of the building has some missing gable block work that has allowed successful ivy establishment into the interior, and an inactive birds nest is present.

7.18 The base of the doors on the eastern end have been chewed to allow mammal access. There is evidence of fresh rabbit droppings over the internal floor areas.

7.19 Although the building is littered with various agricultural materials the floor areas are sufficiently clear to identify evidence of bat or bird droppings.

7.20 There is no evidence of regular access or occupancy of the roof or wall areas -i.e clearance of cobwebs, abrasion, staining or oiling that would indicate regular access is being made to the building by other creatures other than rabbits, at present.

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

8.1 Buildings / barns in general would be considered possible refuge / roost / nesting habitat for protected and local species of conservation concern - Bats and Barn Owls, specifically.

No evidence was found that would indicate the presence or historic use has been made of the structure by these species.

8.2 Particular conservation species as mentioned in Section 6 identified Bats, Badgers and Amphibians within the river valley to the East – 1km and to the South -- 1 km but these have poor connectivity to the site.

8.3 There is evidence of recent bird nesting activity of common / farmland bird species attached and within the building structure. All active bird nests are protected.

8.4 There is high quality bird nest habitat within bramble scrub and adjoining hedges of the roadside and mature trees.

8.5 The bramble scrub and hedge line understory provided terrestrial habitat for amphibians, reptiles and small mammals. However the areas close proximity to the road and division by the large immediately adjoining block of arable land create a lack of connectivity to other habitats of specific merit within the area.

8.6 Opening of the buildings existing canopy could provide an increase of light and the promotion / enhancement of the roadside hedging with additional planting and 'gapping up.'

8.7 This small scale proposal will effect any historic flyway within the valley / street ( Whelp street ) corridor for Bats. The retention and enhancement of hedge line habitat will maintain the terrestrial corridor for other local wildlife.

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

### 9.1 AMPHIBIANS

No wetland habitats were found on the site and there is a lack of viable connectivity to those within the valley floor to the east..

The site is effectively surrounded by road hazards and an intensively managed arable landscape, with little merit other than those of the private gardens to the West and a sparse roadside hedge line.

### 9.2 REPTILES

No evidence of reptiles was found.

The adjoining understory to the building of bramble thicket provides good habitat conditions.

The site lacks safe and effective corridors to areas of substantial habitat.

### 9.3 BATS

The site's building was inspected following Bat Conservation Trust - Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) PRA Preliminary Roost Assessment techniques.

All external surfaces carefully checked for evidence of potential and actual entry / exit points and roost places. This with the aid of 4.7 m Wolfwise Telescopic ladder and Led lenser head torch with red filter.

Investigations made for live or dead specimens, droppings, urine splashes, fur-oil staining and any noise / squeaking that could be attributed to the presence of bats.



### 9.3 BATS

A thorough search was made of external wall bases and ivy cladding, block work, and old chimney ports. Vision aided by the use of a 1,500,000 CP red filtered floodlight.

A systematic search was made of the internal areas of the buildings entering via the wooden double doors at the west end of the building.

The search carried out carefully and quietly to listen for any squeaking of bats.

An initial appraisal was made in darkness to establish any access points. All points of breaches / cracks of the roofing sheet and block work showing light were examined for evidence of access, abrasion, oiling or staining. Heavy cobwebbing extending from the ceilings hanging ivy root showed that no activity had taken place within the roof void.

The floor surfaces of the building were inspected for droppings, live or dead specimens, feeding remains – moth wings or staining.

Immediately adjacent mature Ash trees, to the building and hedge line showed no specific roost features of cracks or crevasses.

No evidence of roosting or bat activity were identified.

The roadside hedge and treelines following the arable field margin from the mature gardens and properties of Whelp Street to the valley to the east is likely to be a flyway to any local population.

#### 9.4 BARN OWL

There are no signs of white excreta splashing, pellets or feathers that would indicate barn owls have entered the building, in the past or presently using the building as roost or nesting area.

#### 9.5 BADGERS

There are no excavations / holes that could be attributed to Badgers on the site.

There is clear evidence of rabbits entering the buildings eastern end and regular activity and droppings on the floor areas of the building.

#### 9.6 HEDGEHOGS

The sites small area of roadside habitat would not provide a sustainable habitat for hedgehogs.

#### 9.7 OTTERS and WATER VOLES

The site does not provide habitat for these species.

## 9.8 HAZEL DOORMOUSE

The site is not sufficiently connected to larger areas of woodland to create viability of its roadside hedges or bramble thicket.

## 9.9 BIRDS AND BIRDS NESTS.

The sites roadside hedge line and mature trees provide bird nest habitat. Nests of wood pigeon and blackbird were identified.

The building shows evidence of bird nesting both external and internal.

## 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 10.1

Retaining the vegetation of scrub and thorn to west of the access drive with seasonal trimming to retain a dense habitat and conservation area for local wildlife, bird nest and terrestrial habitat for small mammals.

The longer vegetation of bramble that immediately fronts the building which may require clearance to enable the building works, should be trimmed down to ground level manually using a two stage cut.

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

The bramble clearance, first cut circa 150 mm and then ground inspected prior to cutting to ground level.

If animals are present then they should be left to move on their own into the adjoining retained scrub and hedge to the West, before the task is completed.

### 10.2

Any planned removal of the Ash trees growing immediately adjacent to the building will require a felling licence.

### 10.3

'Gapping Up' Planting of native hedging - Hawthorn, Black thorn, and Field maple should be undertaken on the roadside bank / original hedge line opposite the building if and when the Ash trees are removed. This will improve the hedge structure and prevent erosion.

#### 10.4

An additional hedge line should be created along the existing field margin ( along the Southern edge of the plot ) and reinforced via post and rail.

This to connect to the existing neck of hedge / and scrub to the east of the building and that of the retained habitat to the west.

This to provide an enhancement of vegetation and corridor for wildlife away from the road hazard and buffer the site from arable farming operations.

#### 10.5

A bird nest survey should be undertaken a maximum of seven days prior to any ivy removal / demolition work as the bird nesting species noted may nest within the structure outside the general nesting periods of March to September.

#### 10.6

Secluded roof areas of any future building design should be fitted with two bird nest boxes.

#### 10.7

Any future building design should avoid lighting that would illuminate the hedge and mature woodland of garden edge to the West.

## 11 REFERENCES

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The Barn Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL 951 497  
3 / 9 / 2022  
Site access from Whelp Street.



The Barn Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL 951 497  
3 / 9 / 2022  
South face edge of the building.





The Barn Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL 951 497  
3 / 9 / 2022  
North west corner of the building.



The Barn Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL 951 497  
3 / 9 / 2022

The north east corner of the building showing the area between  
the building and the road.



The Barn Whelp Street, Preston St Mary TL 951 497  
3 / 9 / 2022

Showing the interior of the west end and the green growth /  
illumination of the buildings eastern end, though the central doorway.