

# Ecological Assessment

Parsonage Green Farm

Cockfield

Bury St Edmunds

Suffolk

Ecological Assessment  
Parsonage Green Farm  
Cockfield  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
Ref 0518/23

Ecological Assessment  
Parsonage Green Farm  
Cockfield  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk

Surveyors  
Mr P Mckenna

Report Approved  
21<sup>st</sup> August 2023



Patrick K McKenna BSc (Hons), M.C.I.E.E.M  
Company Director

# Contents

1. Summary
2. Introduction
3. Site Assessment
4. Planning Policy and Site Status
5. Planning Policy and Wildlife Legislation
6. Barn Owl Assessment
7. Bat Roost Assessment
8. Conclusion

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Statutory Conservation Designations
- Appendix 2 - Non-Statutory Conservation Designations
- Appendix 3 - Habitat Inventory
- Appendix 4 - Species data search
- Appendix 5 – Place Services Comment

# 1. Summary

- 1.1 Eco-Planning UK Ltd received instruction to complete an Ecological Assessment at Parsonage Green Farm, Cockfield, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.
- 1.2 A development planning application for this site has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. As part of the application determination the local authority consulted Place Services for ecological comment. The comments received (Appendix 5) include protected species and Priority Habitats. Eco-Plannings instruction included addressing these comments.
- 1.3 The Assessments were completed on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Access was available to all parts of the site and all buildings.
- 1.4 From the on-site surveys and assessments with desk- top and data searches it was determined that: -
  - No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation.
  - However, the site is just within a “zone of influence” for Thorpe Morieux and Bradfield Woods Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact these S.S.S.I. sites, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential, neither does it create any new access to or from
  - No part of the site has any Priority Habitat Status. There is a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and Wood Pasture Parkland to the west within the adjacent wider property. The proposed development will not impact these Habitats, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential, neither does it create any new access to or from.
  - The proposed development is all within the existing mixed farm buildings, hardstanding and access tracks already in use on site.
  - The proposed development is only associated with changes to buildings 2, 3, 6, and 11 on site.

- There is no increase in any buildings footprint, access route to or from or any associated hardstanding area. Building 11 is derelict and now no longer viable – it will be replaced like for like.
- There are 2 x adjacent ponds to the proposed development area within the same wider farm site. There are 2 x further off-site ponds.
- There is no suitable terrestrial habitat for any viable amphibian population within the proposed development area.
- The proposed development will not impact upon any of the ponds on or off the site - It will not impact upon their size, location or present condition/management or conservation value.
- The proposed development will not reduce or prevent any amphibian access to or from any of the 4 x ponds highlighted in the Site Assessment. Neither will it fragment any suitable off-site amphibian terrestrial habitat that can be accessed from the ponds.
- With no obvious possible amphibian refugia/hibernaculum on site – the likelihood of any amphibian terrestrial resting place being disturbed by the proposed development is very low.
- The proposed development will not adversely impact upon the viability of any potential off-site Great Crested Newt population.
- There is no requirement for a method statement relating to protecting amphibians as part of the sites approved development. One could be produced post approval, but it would be more box ticking than conservation provision. Significantly more valuable in relation to amphibians would be the removal of fish from one of the off-site ponds.
- There is no existing Barn Owl presence or roosting use of any of the buildings on site. There is no existing or past Barn Owl nesting site in the 2 x buildings on site. No further Barn Owl survey efforts are required – there are no Barn Owl constraints to the development of any of the buildings on site.
- There are no indicative badger field signs of any type on any part of the proposed development area. No further badger survey efforts or any badger mitigation is required.

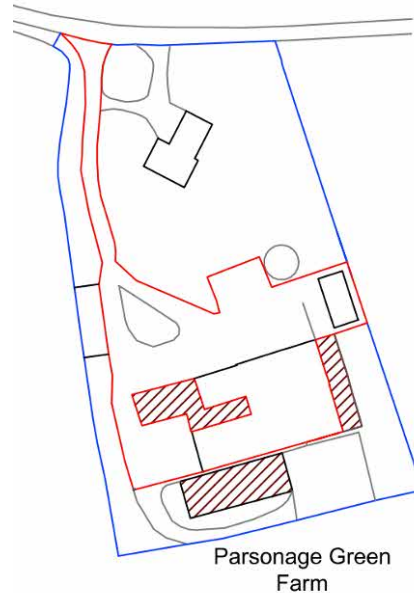
- There is no viable habitat for any reptile population within the proposed development area. No reptile presence or absence survey efforts are required and no reptile mitigation is required. There is no suitable vegetation that would be a significant part of any Hedgehogs wider habitat territory/range.
  - The sites invertebrate potential is low and no invertebrate scoping survey efforts are required.
  - The proposed area has very few nesting bird habitat features. The proposed development will have no avian impact.
- 1.5 The local planning authority with the completion of the precautionary bat roost assessment will have been provided with all relevant ecological information as part of the planning application for this site - no further ecological survey efforts are required.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework continues to require that on-site biodiversity/conservation is given full consideration at the time of a planning development application submission.
- 2.2 For any planning application for this site the Local Planning Authority would be acting in a reasonable and responsible manner under the legislation by requesting that the planning applicant completes a suitable ecological assessment and prepares/submits a subsequent report, if the Authority believes a habitat or species could be threatened by the proposed development.
- 2.3 The Ecological Assessment and associated faunal surveys along with the bat roost assessment when complete will along with this report provide all the ecological information required as part of the planning application to the local planning authority.

### 3. Site Assessment

3.1. The proposed development area (Drawing 1) is at Parsonage Green Farm, Cockfield, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.



Drawing 1



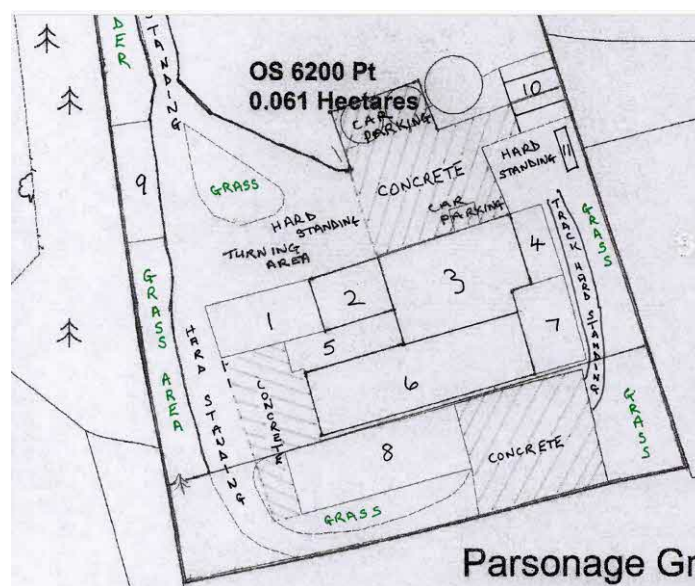
Photograph 1

3.2 To the front, rear and left flank site boundaries is an open existing agricultural landscape, to the right flank boundary a large individual property with associated gardens and wider grounds (Photograph 1).



1	Wood clad building, formerly used for storing grain, wood and for assembling products made in workshop. This building is not part of the application and will continue as farm storage.
2	Open cart shed, used for storing farm and woodwork machinery. This is part of change of use and will be used for painting products. The front to be covered in and asbestos roof to be replaced with modern cement fibre and insulated to building control standards.
3	Used as woodwork shop for over 20 years. Part of change of use. Will be used for light woodwork machining and sanding of products. Leaking asbestos roof to be replaced and insulated as shed 2.
4	Open, lean-to cart shed, not part of change of use. To continue as general storage.
5	Former pig pens used for storage of woodwork accessories. Not part of change of use.
6	Steel framed grain store, cement clad roof, with steel sheet sides. Part of change of use as main woodworking machine shop. To be equipped with an insulated lowered ceiling and insulated inner walls.
7	Lean-to cart shed formerly used for farm machinery storage. To continue as general storage. Not part of change of use.
8	Former pig shed. Now used as farm workshop. Not part of change of use.
9	Pole barn. Former combine and dryer shed. Now used for general storage. Not part of change of use.
10	4 free standing containers, formerly used for storage. Not part of change of use.
11	Dilapidated site hut. To be replaced by equivalent. Included in change of use plans.

Table 1



Drawing 2

- 3.3 The proposed development is all within the existing mixed farm buildings Table 1, hardstanding and access tracks already in use on site (Drawing 2).
- 3.5 The proposed development is only associated with changes to buildings 2, 3, 6, and 11 – see Table 1.
- 3.4 There is no increase in any buildings footprint, access route to or from or any associated hardstanding area. Building 11 is derelict and now no longer viable – it will be replaced like for like.
- 3.5 The existing access to the site is along a hard track to the right flank boundary, a wildflower nectar mix has been sown by the applicant (Photograph 2).



Photograph 2



Photograph 3

- 3.6 The access track opens into a hardstanding area to the front of buildings 1-3.
- 3.7 There will be no change to the track or hardstanding area.



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7

- 3.8 The farm buildings 1-9 have existing mixed use – Table 1, from building 3 an in-use wood working shop (Photograph 4) and building 6 a modern grain store (Photograph 5) both illuminated and in constant use – to the open ended buildings 1,4, 7, 9, used for mixed storage (Photographs 6 and 7) that are open ended with natural daylight.
- 3.9 To the flanks of the building area is a circular continuation of the access track with a hardcore surface (Photographs 8 and 9).
- 3.10 The access track opens onto a similar hardstanding area to the rear of the site that was found to the front (Photograph 10).



Photograph 8



Photograph 9

- 3.11 Again these existing tracks and hardstanding areas will remain, there will be no change in their location or increase in their size.

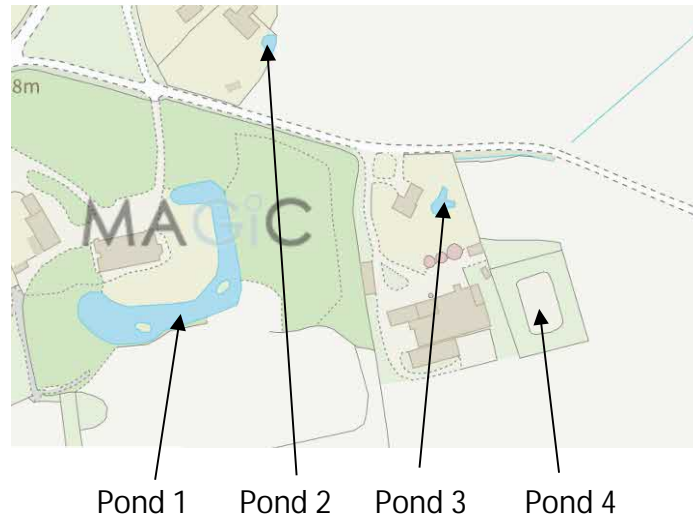
- 3.12 There is minimal vegetaion on site, there are no trees or scrub that will be impacted upon. The small areas of ruderal vegetation adjacent to the buildings and access tracks is regulary mown. It has limited floristic diversity and is not a habitat with biodiversity/conservation value.



Photograph 10

- 3.13 There are no indicative badger field signs of any type on any part of the proposed developmnet area. No further badger survey efforts or any badger mitigation is required.
- 3.14 There is no suitable habitat for any viable reptile population within the proposed developmnet area. No reptile presence or absence survey efforts are required - no reptile mitigation is required. There is no suitable vegetation that would be a significant part of any Hedgehogs wider habitat territory/range.
- 3.15 The sites invertebrate potential is low and no invertebrate scoping survey efforts are required.
- 3.16 The proposed area has very few nesting bird habitat features. The proposed development will have no avian impact.
- 3.17 There are 2 x ponds adjacent to the proposed development area within the same wider farm (Ponds 3 and 4) site, a single pond within the gardens of the residential property to the west (Pond 1), and a further pond (Pond 2) to the wider north-west (Drawing 3). Ponds 3 (Photograph 11) is a garden pond associated with the Parsonage Green Farm House, Pond 4 (Photograph 12) a

more recent creation adjacent to the proposed development areas eastern flank boundary.



3.18 Both ponds have good general aquatic habitat value with submerged, floating and emergent aquatic vegetation. Unfortunately both ponds are stocked with fish – Crucian Carp.



Pond 3  
Photograph 11



Pond 4  
Photograph 12

3.19 We are mindful that the site lies within an amber risk zone in relation to Great Crested Newts and there are several ponds within a potentially relevant distance of the site. However we have in this Site Assessment confirmed that no new footprint development will be made – no new tracks or hardstanding areas, there is no suitable terrestrial habitat for any viable amphibian

population. There are no Great Crested Newt records within the search radius of the site – Appendix 4.

- 3.20 Furthermore the proposed development will not impact upon any of the ponds on or off the site - It will not impact upon their size, location or present condition/management or conservation value.
- 3.21 The proposed development will not reduce or prevent any amphibian access to or from any of the 4 x ponds highlighted. Neither will it fragment any suitable off-site amphibian terrestrial habitat that can be accessed from the ponds.
- 3.22 With no obvious possible amphibian refugia/hibernaculum on site – the likelihood of any amphibian terrestrial resting place being disturbed by the proposed development is very low.
- 3.23 The proposed development will not adversely impact upon the viability of any potential off-site pond based Great Crested Newt population.
- 3.24 There is no requirement for a method statement relating to protecting amphibians as part of the sites approved development. One could be produced post approval but it would be more box ticking than conservation provision.
- 3.25 Significantly more valuable in relation to amphibians would be the removal of fish from one of the off-site ponds.

## 4. Planning Policy and Site Status

- 4.1 The direction to protect sites with a designated conservation status including Local Wildlife Sites is within the National Planning Policy Framework. Local Planning Authorities are required to set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development, on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas, will be judged. Planning policies should identify and map components of local ecological networks including the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity.
- 4.2 With such extensive legislative/planning policy protection of biodiversity and designated conservation sites against development, it is essential to first establish the status of any site where any ecological related assessment is being made if it is, as in this case, in relation to a feasibility study or subsequent planning application.
- 4.3 No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation (Appendix 1 and 2).
- 4.4 However, the site is just within a “zone of influence” for Thorpe Morieux and Bradfield Woods Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact these S.S.S.I. sites, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential, neither does it create any new access to or from
- 4.5 No part of the site has any Priority Habitat Status, (Appendix 3). There is a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and Wood Pasture Parkland to the west within the adjacent wider property. The proposed development will have no impact upon these Priority Habitats or their conservation value.

## 5. Planning Policy and Wildlife Legislation

- 5.1 Regardless of any planning policy or guideline change certain species are legally protected and any type of development that would injure, kill, ill-treat or intentionally damage or destroy any protected species or place of shelter would be a criminal act.
- 5.2 However some species that do not receive statutory full protection under existing ranges of legislation continue to be identified as requiring conservation action as species of principal importance in the revised (2018 and 2019) National Planning Policy Framework:
- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the protection of priority species populations.... linked to national and local targets.
  - When determining planning applications local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
  - To achieve this conservation action/protection planning authorities are instructed to refuse planning applications that cause harm to these species or their habitats if no suitable mitigation has been identified.
- 5.3 With legal responsibilities and new planning framework implications it remains essential that any ecological assessment of any feasibility/development site, including the area of this report, must determine the possible presence or absence of any protected species as part of the development process. Without this assessment the potential developer would be unable to demonstrate due diligence in his legal wildlife responsibilities.
- 5.4 Furthermore the local planning officer will not have been provided with the required information to be able to determine if the ecological based requirements of their relevant planning application for the site are being met in full. It would however be unreasonable to survey for every protected floral/faunal species. The likelihood of a protected species being present is based on the habitat type/condition and when appropriate any existing record of the species being present within a relevant distance. The 1 km species data search has been provided by Essex Field Club - Appendix 4.
- 5.5 There are numerous buildings on site with access points for a potentially roosting bat. There are no bat records within the species data search



(Appendix 4) and all the buildings have some illumination natural or artificial. However, it would not be appropriate to assume a bat absence.

- 5.6 All bat species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion on Schedule 5. They are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (which were issued under the European Communities Act 1972), through inclusion on Schedule 2. From January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, these Regulations were consolidated into the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU exit) Regulations 2019.
- 5.7 European protected animal species and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 39. It is an offence for anyone to deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal. It is also an offence to have in one's possession or control any live or dead European protected species.
- 5.8 The threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a wild animal of a European protected species has been raised. Now, a person will commit an offence only 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 abundance of that species. However, please note 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, a bat roost), disturbance and sale still apply to European protected species.
- 5.9 This legislation provides defences so that necessary operations may be carried out in places used by bats, provided the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (in England this is Natural England) is notified and allowed a reasonable time to advise on whether the proposed operation should be carried out and, if so, the approach to be used. The UK is a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, set up under the Bonn Convention. The Fundamental Obligations of Article III of this Agreement require the protection of all bats and their habitats, including the identification and protection from damage or disturbance of important feeding areas for bats.
- 5.10 Paragraph 98 of Circular 06/2005 states that 'the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to

the species or its habitat'. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF) states that 'the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by .... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity...'

- 5.11 Since August 2007, building development that affects bats or their roosts needs a Protected Species Licence under The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 administered in England by Natural England.
- 5.12 With such conservation value and legislative protection a precautionary bat roost assessment is required for those buildings that will be part of the proposed development.
- 5.13 There are several buildings with open access on site - there is a single Barn Owl record within the search radius of the proposed development site.
- 5.14 The Barn Owl is protected under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is therefore an offence to injure, kill or capture the bird, to disturb nesting birds, to take eggs, and to release captive owls into the wild without a licence. The Barn Owl is also recognised by the UK Biodiversity Group as a "Species of Conservation Concern".
- 5.15 Any Barn Owl roost or nest site would require a relevant mitigation strategy/provision as part of the planning application.
- 5.16 A precautionary Barn Owl assessment was therefore made of all the buildings on site including those that are not part of any development associated change.

## 6. Barn Owl Assessment

### Survey Methodology

- 6.1 For each of the buildings careful access was made throughout with minimal noise so not to disturb any Barn Owl presence – roosting or at nest.
- 6.2 When it had been determined that no actual owl was present in any part of each building all the buildings floor areas, access points and roof spaces were carefully searched/assessed for any Barn Owl field sign see below and (Photographs 1 and 2).



Photograph 1



Photograph 1

- Characteristic Barn Owl feathers
  - Nest debris – including egg-shell and dead chicks/remains.
  - Regurgitated pellets
  - Any prey items/remains.
  - Splashing of excreta on beams and floors - “white washing”
- 6.3 For any potential nest site - the survey efforts were to be suspended and our colleague from Stuart Elsom Ecology – a suitably licensed (Natural England CL29) Barn Owl Ecologist would continue the survey efforts.

## Survey Results

6.4 All parts of each building were suitably accessed but with great care. All buildings received some illumination – natural or artificial.

6.5 Apart from building all other buildings were in a good condition.

6.4 Following the survey efforts of all the buildings on site, it can be confirmed that:

- There is no roosting Barn Owl presence or roosting use of any building on site either now or historic.
- There is no existing or past Barn Owl nesting site in any of the buildings on site.
- No further Barn Owl survey efforts are required – there are no Barn Owl constraints to the development of the relevant buildings on this site.

## 7. Bat Roost Assessment

- 7.1 Assistance is being sought from our bat colleague at Essex Mammal Surveys – Mr. John Dobson to direct what bat roost survey efforts will be appropriate for the relevant buildings on site. His subsequent report will be provided in full.
- 7.2 The bat roost assessments will be undertaken/supervised by a suitably experienced, qualified, licensed bat ecologist (License No. 2015-15258-CLS-CLS)
- 7.3 The roost assessment and subsequent report will be undertaken/ compiled in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Survey Guidelines for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines.

Ref: Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

- 7.4 However, it must be noted that the first page of all three editions includes the following: The guidelines should be interpreted and adapted on a case-by-case basis according to site-specific factors and the professional judgement of an experienced ecologist. Where examples are used in the guidelines, they are descriptive rather than prescriptive.

### Survey Methods

- 7.5 The exterior surfaces and all interior parts of the relevant buildings will be first examined for any signs of use as bat roosts, such as the presence of droppings on walls, windows or staining around roost entrances.
- 7.6 The use of a crevice by a colony of bats produces droppings on brickwork and adjacent surfaces close to the crevice, together with an accumulation of droppings beneath the roost entrance. However, upon examination, many surfaces will have one or two droppings, randomly placed, caused by bats seeking out new roost sites.
- 7.7 An Xtend & Climb Pro Ladder and a ProVision 300 endoscope will be available/used to inspect any/all crevices in brickwork, around beams, facias etc – within and outside any of the relevant buildings.

## 8. Conclusion

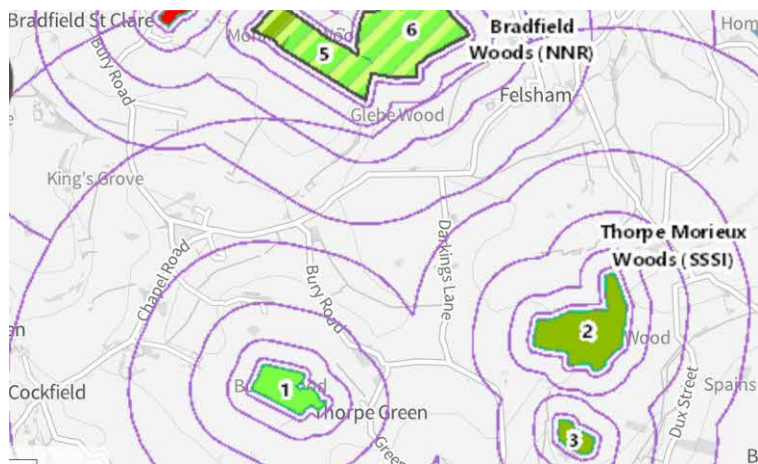
- 8.1 No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation.
- 8.2 However, the site is just within a “zone of influence” for Thorpe Morieux and Bradfield Woods Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact these S.S.S.I. sites, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential, neither does it create any new access to or from.
- 8.3 No part of the site has any Priority Habitat Status. There is a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and Wood Pasture Parkland to the west within the adjacent wider property. The proposed development will not impact these Habitats, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential, neither does it create any new access to or from.
- 8.4 The proposed development is all within the existing mixed farm buildings, hardstanding and access tracks already in use on site.
- 8.5 The proposed development is only associated with changes to buildings 2, 3, 6, and 11 on site.
- 8.6 There is no increase in any buildings footprint, access route to or from or any associated hardstanding area. Building 11 is derelict and now no longer viable – it will be replaced like for like.
- 8.7 There are 2 x adjacent ponds to the proposed development area within the same wider farm site. There are 2 x further off-site ponds.
- 8.8 There is no suitable terrestrial habitat for any viable amphibian population within the proposed development area.
- 8.9 The proposed development will not impact upon any of the ponds on or off the site - It will not impact upon their size, location or present condition/management or conservation value.
- 8.10 The proposed development will not reduce or prevent any amphibian access to or from any of the 4 x ponds highlighted in the Site Assessment. Neither will it

fragment any suitable off-site amphibian terrestrial habitat that can be accessed from the ponds.

- 8.11 With no obvious possible amphibian refugia/hibernaculum on site – the likelihood of any amphibian terrestrial resting place being disturbed by the proposed development is very low.
- 8.12 The proposed development will not adversely impact upon the viability of any potential off-site Great Crested Newt population.
- 8.13 There is no requirement for a method statement relating to protecting amphibians as part of the sites approved development. One could be produced post approval, but it would be more box ticking than conservation provision. Significantly more valuable in relation to amphibians would be the removal of fish from one of the off-site ponds.
- 8.14 There is no existing Barn Owl presence or roosting use of any of the buildings on site. There is no existing or past Barn Owl nesting site in the 2 x buildings on site. No further Barn Owl survey efforts are required – there are no Barn Owl constraints to the development of any of the buildings on site.
- 8.15 There are no indicative badger field signs of any type on any part of the proposed development area. No further badger survey efforts or any badger mitigation is required.
- 8.16 There is no viable habitat for any reptile population within the proposed development area. No reptile presence or absence survey efforts are required and no reptile mitigation is required. There is no suitable vegetation that would be a significant part of any Hedgehogs wider habitat territory/range.
- 8.17 The sites invertebrate potential is low and no invertebrate scoping survey efforts are required.
- 8.18 The proposed area has very few nesting bird habitat features. The proposed development will have no avian impact.
- 8.19 The local planning authority with the completion of the precautionary bat roost assessment will have been provided with all relevant ecological information as part of the planning application for this site - no further ecological survey efforts are required.

# Appendix 1

## Statutory Conservation Designated Sites



### Sites of Special Scientific Interest Units (England) - points

<b>Name</b>	THORPE MORIEUX WOODS
<b>Reference</b>	1066456
<b>Site Unit Condition</b>	FAVOURABLE

### National Nature Reserves (England)

<b>Name</b>	BRADFIELD WOODS
<b>Reference</b>	1006020

25 Nayland Road, Bures, Suffolk CO8 5BX  
 Tel: 01787 227432; mobile: 07770 690899  
 Email: [info@eco-planning.co.uk](mailto:info@eco-planning.co.uk)  
 Company no: 5553720 VAT Reg. No: 980 8484 75



## Appendix 2 Non-Statutory Designated Sites



## Appendix 3 Habitat Inventory



Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)	
<b>Main Habitats</b>	Deciduous woodland
<b>Habitat Codes</b>	DWOOD
<b>Habitat Feature Descriptions</b>	Null

25 Nayland Road, Bures, Suffolk CO8 5BX  
 Tel: 01787 227432; mobile: 07770 690899  
 Email: [info@eco-planning.co.uk](mailto:info@eco-planning.co.uk)  
 Company no: 5553720 VAT Reg. No: 980 8484 75

Ecological Assessment  
Parsonage Green Farm  
Cockfield  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
Ref 0518/23

<b>National Forest Inventory (GB)</b>	
<b>Category</b>	Woodland
<b>Interpreted Forest Type</b>	Broadleaved
<b>Area (hectares)</b>	1.53

<b>Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat (England)</b>	
<b>Polygon ID</b>	0102:0004827
<b>Priority habitat</b>	Wood-pasture and Parkland