Daniel Ahern Ecology

Woodview, Witney

Ecological Appraisal Survey Report

August 2023

Contents

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This report has been prepared for the sole use of the client. Any third party referring to this report or relying on the information contained herein, does so entirely at their own risk.

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living creatures are capable of migration and whilst protected species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on site at a later date.

The views and opinions contained within the 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 work

Executive Summary

Purpose of the report

To provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the proposed development site, involving,

- Evaluation of its conservation status based on a desktop review that summarises information collated on protected species and nature conservation designations in the area.
- Assessment of habitat composition on site, derived from a Phase 1 habitat survey.
- Assessment of the likelihood of protected, or otherwise notable, species occurring on site.

Context of the development

The proposed development:

- Demolition of property.
- Construction of a new property, and associated landscaping.

Methods

The project requirement was to assess the existing ecological value of the site, identify potential ecological issues associated with the proposed development and make recommendations for general mitigation, compensation, enhancement and further surveys, as appropriate. A desk study and a Phase 1 habitat survey were carried out.

Further surveys required

The following surveys are recommended:

- Two Bat activity surveys of the main house.

Conclusions

A BNG assessment should be prepared.

Habitat enhancement shall be laid out in the report of subsequent surveys, based on the results they present.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this document is truthful and accurate at the time of completion.

Lead ecologist & Project manager: Daniel Ahern CEnv MCIEEM FLS

Signature:

Date: 05/08/2023

Assistant Ecologist & Principal Author: Peter Allen AMRSB MSc

Signature:

Date: 03/08/2023

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. In June 2023, Daniel Ahern Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Colony Architects Ltd to undertake an ecological appraisal of a property and its surrounding land in the village of Hailey, north of the town of Witney in Oxfordshire. The purpose of the survey was to provide an assessment of the current ecological conditions and to evaluate the ecological constraints in order to inform development proposals.

1.1.2. The purpose of this report is to identify key ecological constraints, in order to inform the project planning such that significant ecological impacts are avoided or minimised. It also aims to highlight any further ecological surveys that may be required to inform any future Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), so that they can be appropriately designed. Finally, the report aims to provide the information required in order to develop appropriate mitigation or compensation measures.

1.2. Site description

1.2.1. Wood View Cottage and its surrounding land, hereafter referred to as 'the Site', measures approximately 0.066 ha (0.001km^2) and was situated on Wood Lane, to the south east of the village of Hailey (approximate OS grid reference: SP 35282 13315), see Fig. 1 below.

1.2.2. The Site is composed primarily of, improved grassland, bare ground andintroduced shrubs. There were two buildings on site; one main house and one attached outbuilding. The property at the time of the visit was in a good state of repair, however the roof void had evidence of damage, where the lyme / plaster coating had come away.

1.2.1. The proposed developments and alterations to the site are as followed:

- Demolition of buildings.
- Construction of a property.
- Clearance of vegetation.
- Disturbance of the land.

Figure 1. Site location with the red line boundary.

2. Planning & Legislation

2.1. Legislation

The following legislation informed the survey approach and considerations.

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).
- Environment Act 2021

2.2. Planning policies

2.2.1. This report is prepared with reference to the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

3. Methods

3.1. Desk study

3.1.1. The following publicly accessible websites were searched for relevant ecological information:

- http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/
- http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1376 (summary of nature conservation legislation)
- www.ukbap.org.uk (archived 2012)
- www.google.com for aerial photography
- https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx

3.1.2. Data relating to statutory & non-statutory sites and all protected species records within 2km of the site was requested from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC).

3.1.3. No previous reports relating to the site were available for review.

3.2. Field survey

3.2.1. An extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the site was undertaken with reference to the Institute of Environmental Assessment's Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1997) and the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (IEEM, 2012).

3.2.2. The survey was conducted on the 20th June 2023 by Peter Allen.

3.2.3. The weather conditions were excellent with an average temperature of 17°C.

3.2.4. During the survey, dominant plant species were recorded, and habitats were classified according to their vegetation types, as identified in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A technique for environmental audit (JNCC, 2010). Target notes (TN) were taken to denote species and habitats of conservation interest and to describe the vegetation in areas that were too small to map. Evidence or habitat suitable for any legally protected species was recorded, where appropriate.

3.2.5. The presence (if any) of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica* was also investigated during the field survey.

3.2.6. The results are presented in the standard format with habitat descriptions and a phase 1 habitat map (see Figure 5).

3.2.7. The site was inspected for direct evidence and habitat suitability for protected and notable species. Particular attention was given to those species listed under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). This included searching for signs of badger activity and habitats suitable for amphibians, dormice, bats and reptiles.

3.2.8. According to the Institute for Environmental Assessment (IEA, 1995), phase 1 surveys can be undertaken all year round in order to identify any habitats on site where protected species may potentially be present.

3.2.9. In the event that habitats suitable for protected species are identified, it may be necessary to undertake further seasonal surveys to confirm presence/absence. In the event that no suitable habitats or features are identified, a phase 1 habitat survey is sufficient to determine the potential impacts associated with a proposed development.

3.3. Limitations

3.3.1. The data provided by the online resources were not exhaustive. It is possible that species and habitats not found in the data search occur within the vicinity of the proposed development site.

3.3.2. The details within this report will remain valid for a period of 12 months; beyond that date it is advised that a review of ecological conditions is undertaken.

4. Baseline Ecological conditions

4.1. Desk study

4.1.1. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) data search confirmed that there were no statutory wildlife sites recorded within 2km of the site.

4.1.2. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) data search confirmed that there were six non- statutory wildlife sites recorded within 2km of the site. As seen in Figure 2, with the details of each in Table 1.

Figure 2. A map showing the Statutory and non-Statutory Wildlife Sites Within 2km of the site.

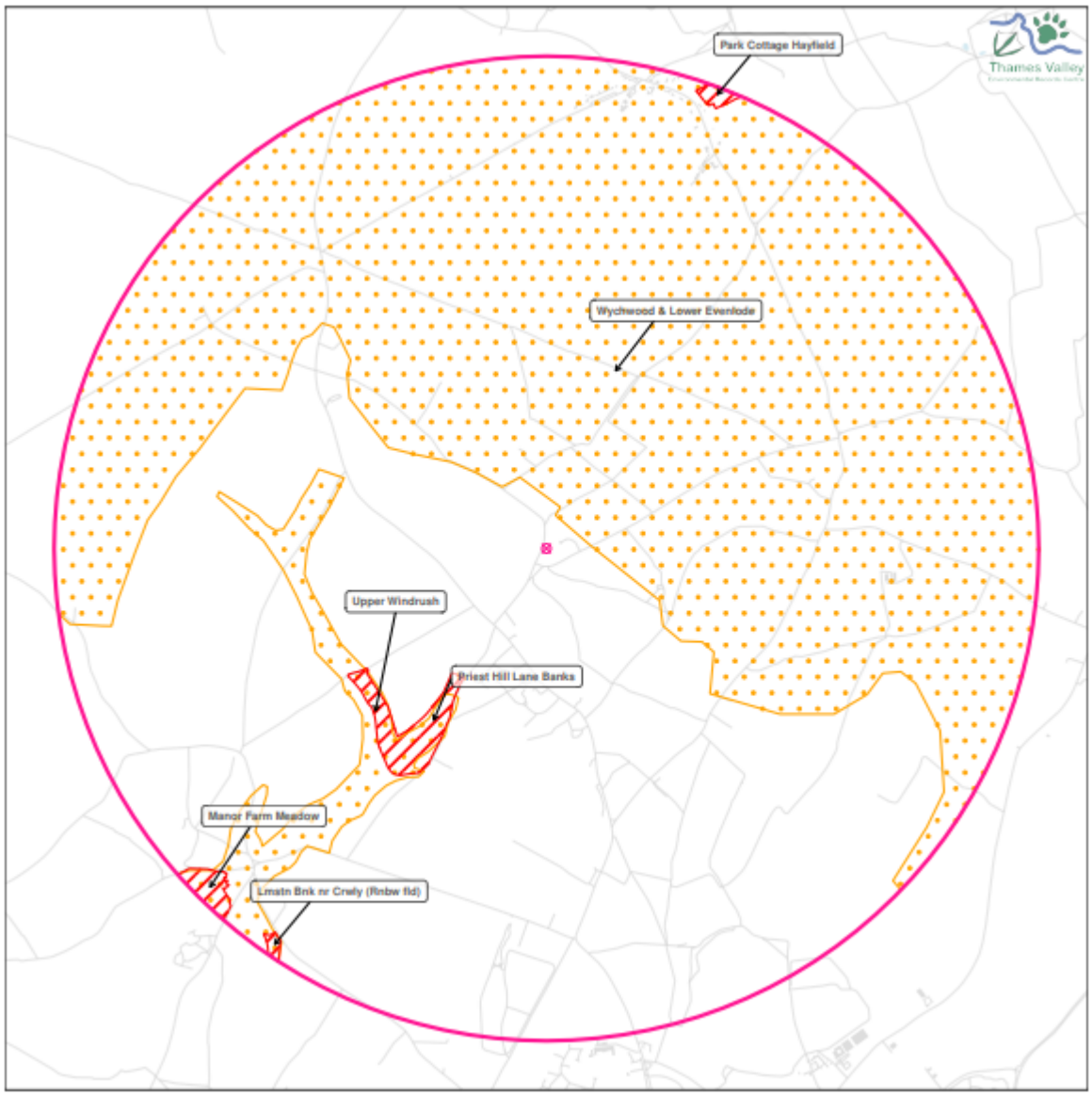


Table 1. Details of the non-Statutory Wildlife Sites Within 2km of the site.

Site name	Area ha
Wytchwood and Lower Evenlode CTA (Conservation Target Area)	4765
Upper Windrush CTA	1280
Limestone bank near crawley	0.8
manor farm meadow, crawley	6.9
Priest hill lane banks	7.2
Park cottage hayfield	2.1

4.1.3. No EPSLs had been granted for any species within 2km of the site.

4.1.4. Protected species records for the following taxa were recorded within 2 km of the site:

Amphibians:	
N/a	N/a
Bats:	
Barbastelle	Barbastella barbastellus
Brown Long-eared	*Plecotus auritus*
Common Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Noctule	Nyctalus noctula
Serotine	*Eptesicus serotinus*
Soprano Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
Whiskered bat	Myotis mystacinus
Birds:	
Corn bunting	*Emberiza calandra*
Fieldfare	*Turdus pilaris*
House *Sparrow*	*Passer domesticus*
Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus
Linnet	*Carduelis cannabina*
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*
Swift	*Apus apus*
Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*
Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
Yellowhammer	*Emberiza citrinella*
Mammals:	
Brown hare	Lepus europaeus
Eurasian Badger	*Meles meles*
Eurasian water vole	*Arvicola amphibius*
Harvest mouse	*Micromys minutus*
Reptiles:	
N/a	*N/a*

4.2. Site survey

4.2.1. A Phase 1 habitat map of the site is set out in Figure 3 below.

4.2.2. The majority of the site consisted of B4 – Improved grassland, which was used as a garden lawn which was split by a wall into a northern and southern section. The primary species present in both sections was perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*. There were a low diversity of flowering species including daisy *Bellis perennis* and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*. The sward was cut short across the site.

4.2.3. In the northern garden the northern border consisted of garden planting of introduced shrubs, behind this was a hedge consisting of box *Buxus sempervirens* and laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*. Buddleia *Buddleja davidii* was also present growing amongst the hedgerow.

4.2.4. To the northeastern corner, was a small garden pond, no larger than $2m^2$ (Target note 1).

4.2.5. To the southeastern corner of the site, behind a wooden lean too (Target note 4) which serves a car port, there was an area of scrub forming, with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* present.

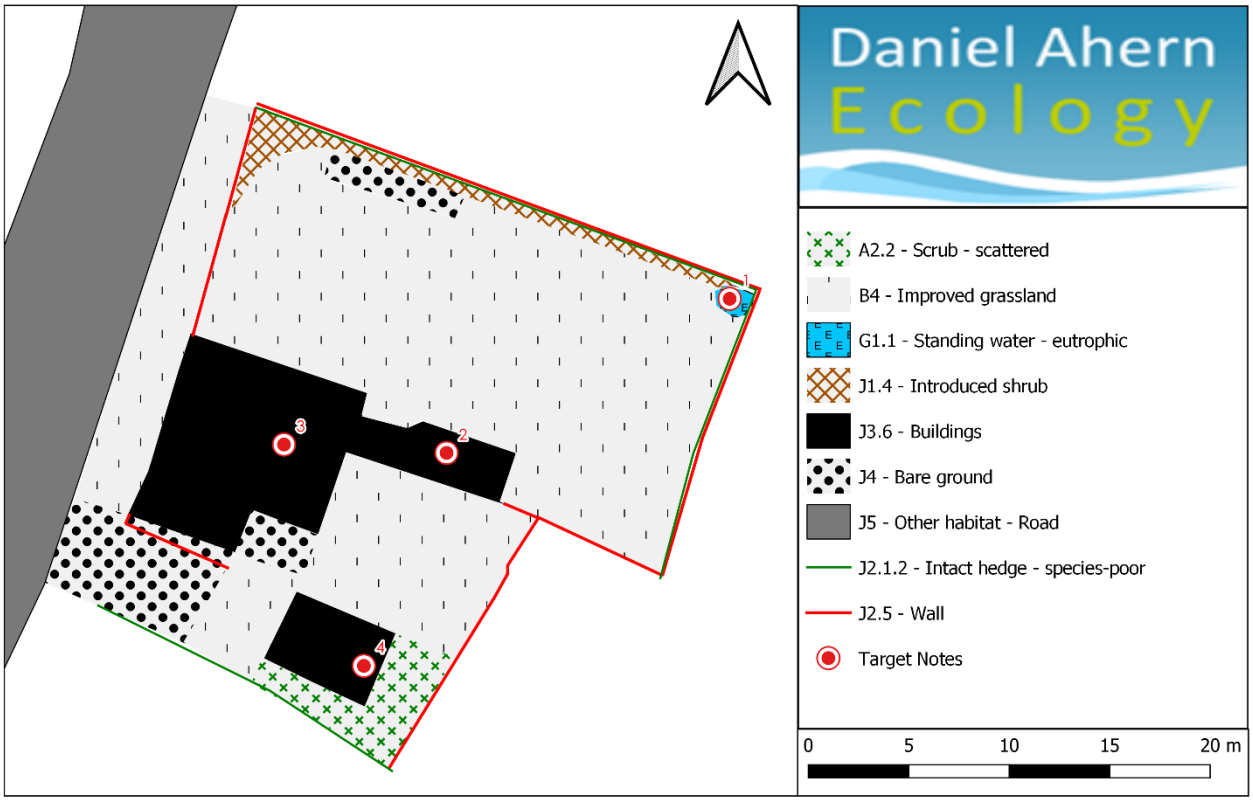
4.2.6. Target note 2, the main house, was a two-storey cottage in a moderate state of repair. The house was constructed from Cotswold stone, with the roof constructed from slates. There were potential roost features (PRF's) recorded externally, where slates had slipped. Internally the roof void was in state of disrepair, with the plaster which previously covered the wooden sarking having come away. There was gaps and holes visible in the apex of the roof structure. There were no droppings found internally. The house has MODERATE potential for bats with two surveys recommended between the 1st May and 31st August 2023.

4.2.7. Target note 3 represented a single storey adjoined garden building. The building had a single pitch roof of similar construction to the main house. The tiles were more uniform and there was no evidence of bats found internally or externally.

4.2.8. There was no evidence of any Schedule 9 invasive non-native plant species on Site.

4.2.9. A full species list from the site survey is given in Appendix 1, and target notes relating to the numbers on the Phase 1 map are given in Appendix 2.

Figure 3. Phase 1 habitat map, including numbered target notes.



4.2.10. The survey recorded the following potential for protected species and groups to be present.

- Amphibians: A small sized pond was recorded within 100m of the Site. The terrestrial habitat had LOW amphibian potential. There no record of this group found within 2km of the site.
- Badgers: LOW potential for badgers on Site, records indicate they are within 2km.
- Bats; MODERATE foraging and commuting potential within the Site boundary. The existing property was assessed has having MODERATE bat roost potential.
- Dormice: NO records found within 2km. SUB-OPTIMAL habitat connectivity.
- Otter: Sub-optimal for this species due to the lack of suitable habitat on Site. There were no records found within 2km.
- Reptiles: SUB-OPTIMAL potential for this group, a number of potential hibernacula in the areas of woodland with bare ground present onsite.
- Water vole: Sub-optimal for this species due to the abundance of suitable habitat on site. There were records found within 2km.

5. Ecological constraints and opportunities

5.1. Designated nature conservation sites

5.1.1. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) data search data search confirmed that there were no statutory wildlife sites, but there were six non-statutory wildlife sites recorded within 2km of the site.

5.1.2. No EPSLs had been granted for any species within 2km of the site.

5.2. Habitats

5.2.1. The proposed development of the site will result in the loss and modification of the current homogeneous mix of habitats recorded within the site.

5.2.2. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment should be prepared based on the results of this survey and the landscape plan for the proposed development.

5.3. Fauna

5.3.1. The site has MODERATE habitat potential for bats and breeding birds, and LOW potential for reptiles and amphibians.

5.3.2. The following surveys are recommended:

- Two Bat activity surveys of the main house.

6. Conclusions

6.1.1. A BNG assessment should be prepared.

6.1.2. Habitat enhancement is laid out in Appendix 4.

7. References

English Nature (now Natural England) (2002) *Badgers and Development;* English Nature, Peterborough, UK

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IEEM (2000) *In Practice: Guidelines for Ecological Assessment*; ReNew Matt

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JNCC (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*; JNCC, Peterborough

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Rose, F. (1989) *Colour Identification Guide to the Grasses, Sedges, Rushes and Ferns of the British Isles and North Western Europe*; Viking

8. Appendices

Appendix 1

Common name	**Latin name**
bramble	*Rubus fruticosus*
common daisy	*Bellis perennis*
creeping buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
ivy	*Hedera helix*
perennial ryegrass	*Lolium perenne*

Appendix 2

Target note	**Target note comments**
1	A small garden pond less than 2m^2, a maximum depth of 50cm.
2	A single storey attached outbuilding, which was used as garden storage / garage. NEGLIGIBLE bat roost potential.
3	A two storey Cotswold cottage, with MODERATE bat roost potential. Two bat activity surveys between 1st May and 31st August are recommended.
4	A wooden lean-to which was used as a car port. NEGLIGIBLE bat roost potential.

Appendix 3

Photo 1–

Photo 2 –

Photo 3 –

Photo 4 –

Photo 5 –.

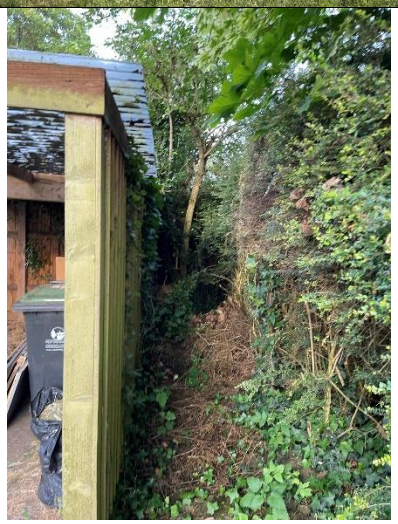

Photo 6 –

Appendix 4

Species Mitigation and Enhancement

Bat Mitigation & Habitat Enhancement

Works to be Undertaken by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist – Bats

1.1.1. Briefing to contractors – A toolbox talk will be delivered to contractors in advance of works commencing on site. This will include information on relevant legislation relating to birds and contractor's responsibilities. A bat box will be installed on a pre-agreed structure before any works start, see Figure 6 for the location.

1.1.2. Pre-clearance Check – A pre-demolition survey will be undertaken in advance of works commencing on site. Any trees to be removed will be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist on the day of clearance prior to any works taking place.

1.1.3. If the PRFs in trees on site cannot be fully checked during the pre-demolition survey the tree should be soft-felled. All limbs with PRFS should be felled and left grounded overnight to allow any bats present to leave before the timber is then further processed.

Works to be Undertaken by the Landowner/Developer – Bats

1.1.4. A single multi-chamber bat box will be installed on Site. the bat box will need to be installed at least 3m above the ground and in unlit location on a northern or western elevation.

1.1.5. There will be no external lighting installed which will cause spill within 5m of the boundary vegetation. This will ensure a dark corridor is maintained for bat use.

Figure 4 – Large, multi-chamber bat box.

Bird Mitigation & Habitat Enhancement

Works to be Undertaken by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist – Birds

1.1.6. Briefing to contractors – A toolbox talk will be delivered to contractors in advance of works commencing on site. This will include information on relevant legislation relating to birds and contractor's responsibilities.

1.1.7. Where practicable all works which may impact breeding birds eg vegetation clearance should take place outside of the breeding bird season ie **the works should take place between 1st October and 31st March**. Should this not be possible adopt recommendations in #1.11.3.

1.1.8. Pre-clearance Check – A pre-demolition survey will be undertaken in advance of works commencing on site. Any scrub or woodland vegetation to be removed will be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist on the day of clearance prior to any works taking place.

1.1.9. Any active bird's nests will be flagged by attaching a 1/2m length of bright coloured material to the plant containing the nest. Site clearance contractors will be made aware that there is a 5m buffer set up around the nest, inside which no vegetation clearance can take place until the ecologist confirms any young in the nest have fledged and the nest is inactive.

Works to be Undertaken by the Landowner/Developer – Birds

1.1.10. Two bird boxes will be installed within the site, either on trees or the buildings. These should be installed at least 3m above the ground and NOT on a southern elevation.

Figure 5 – A bird box.

Invertebrate Mitigation & Habitat Enhancement

Works to be Undertaken by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist – Invertebrates

1.1.11. None

Works to be Undertaken by the Landowner/Developer – Invertebrates

1.1.12. A single invertebrate "hotel" will be installed on Site. See Figure 6 below.

1.1.13. These should be installed at a height of 1.5m above ground level on a southern elevation.

Figure 6, Bug "hotel".