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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Including a Protected Species Assessment at Parsonage Farm, The Street, Preston St Mary, Suffolk. CO10 9NQ

On behalf of:

Mr G. Pryke

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Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

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0 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr G Pryke to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Parsonage Farm, The Street, Preston St Mary, Suffolk. CO10 9NQ. The report is required for a planning application for seven new dwellings with associated garages and landscaping.
- 1.1.2 The survey was conducted on 31st October 2022 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSc MCIEEM (licensed to survey for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* and licenced to survey for bats – level 2). The survey consisted of an inspection for preferred habitat types and signs and evidence of protected and priority species, such as for bats, great crested newts, reptiles, badgers *Meles meles* and nesting birds following Natural England (English Nature) Guidelines. A local biological data search is included.
- 1.1.3 The site is a working stonemason's yard dominated by gravel with scattered piles of stone, machinery, parking area and five buildings including: a timber frame barn utilised for storage and as an office, a modern corrugated sheeting barn, a modern timber frame carport, a small timber frame garden shed and a metal container clad in timber weatherboards. A mature leylandii cypress hedgerow is present on the northern and western boundaries, a very small area of short improved grass with three early mature silver birch trees (proposed for retention).
- 1.1.4 The proposed construction zone is very low in ecological value and unlikely to support protected, priority or rare species. No signs or evidence of such were recorded during the survey visit. Ponds are present locally and great crested newts have been recorded in Preston St Mary. Using the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment without non-licensable mitigation the proposed development posed a medium risk of impact to great crested newts. However, this fails to consider the presence of a road and residential housing between the site and the ponds with great crested newts and also that the majority of grassland on the site will be retained as garden space and could be protected by heras fencing during works. The remaining site is gravel and buildings unsuitable as terrestrial habitat for great crested newts.
- 1.1.5 Therefore, further ecological surveys or strict mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, precautionary measures and non-licensable mitigation for bats, hedgehogs, badgers amphibians and birds are provided in this report and should be followed.
- 1.1.6 With the recommendations followed as described, development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to local ecological value or to protected, priority or rare species and notable habitats. Biodiversity enhancement recommendations are also included in the report in accordance with national planning policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.2 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Mr G Pryke to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Parsonage Farm, The Street, Preston St Mary, Suffolk. CO10 9NQ. The report is required for a planning application for seven new dwellings with associated garages and landscaping.
- 1.1.3 Wildlife such as nesting birds, bats, reptiles and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are protected by law. Protected and priority species and habitats, are also a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (MHCLG, 2021).
- 1.1.4 This study and report complies with the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2017 Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals.
- 1.1.5 CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 and 18 months (CIEEM, 2019).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 A full 2km radius data search was ordered through the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS).
- 2.1.2 A search of the Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was also conducted, to check for statutory nature conservation sites.
- 2.1.3 These results were then combined with the findings of the site survey, to assess the risk of ecology issues, relevant to planning, occurring on the site.

2.2 Study Limitations

- 2.2.1 Botanical assessment was undertaken at a suitable time of year, though some early flowering species and annuals may not be visible or identifiable to species level.

2.3 Initial Site Survey

Habitats and Surroundings

2.3.1 The site was visited on the 31st October 2022 to survey for ecology issues. This included the following:

- Noting the suitability of habitats present on the site, with regard to protected, priority and rare species; including plants, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, nesting birds, invertebrates and protected, priority or red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC);
- Assessing the habitats surrounding the site and in the local area;
- Direct survey for evidence of protected species as far as possible, e.g. for bats, reptiles, great crested newts, badgers *Meles meles*, and nesting birds;
- Checking for invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

Bat Inspection

2.3.2 The assessment for bats was conducted by an experienced ecologist, licensed by Natural England to disturb and take bats for science and education. Buildings were internally and externally inspected for bat activity, suitability and potential for roosting following English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines, therefore considerations were:

- the availability of access to roosts for bats;
- the presence and suitability of cracks, crevices, gaps, fissures, ivy growth and other places as roosts;
- signs of bat activity or presence, such as; the bats themselves, droppings, grease marks, scratch marks, urine spatter and prey remains.

2.3.3 Equipment available for use during the survey included a ladder, high powered torch, digital camera and binoculars.

2.3.4 The availability of access to roosts was assessed based upon the presence of holes large enough to allow entry to bats and lack of cobwebs and dirt.

2.3.5 The outside and inside of buildings and outside of trees were inspected for gaps, cavities, access points and crevices, and any signs of bats (droppings, staining, urine spatter), in accordance with Natural England (English Nature) guidelines (English Nature, 2004).

Reptiles & Amphibians

2.3.6 The site was inspected for potentially suitable terrestrial habitats for foraging, sheltering or dispersing amphibians and foraging, sheltering, breeding and basking habitat for reptiles. High quality terrestrial refuges searched for, included:

- Log piles & rockeries,
- Thick leaf litter,
- Compost & manure heaps,
- Mammal burrows,
- Deep ground cracks;
- Refuse suitable for shelter;
- Tussock grassland;
- Hedgerows and any other potential habitats.

2.3.7 Two local ponds were inspected for suitability for great crested newts by undertaking a Habitat Suitability Index Assessment (HSI) as developed by Oldham *et al.* 2000.

Badgers & Other Mammals

2.3.8 Signs and evidence of badgers, and other protected, priority and rare mammal activity searched for included the following:

- Setts, holes and burrows;
- Foraging holes and other diggings;
- Latrines, droppings, spraints and scats;
- Mammal hairs;
- Paw prints and other tracks;
- Feeding remains;
- Scratch marks, bedding material and other signs.

3 RESULTS AND RISK

3.1 Site Description & Location

3.1.1 The site is a working stonemason's yard dominated by gravel with scattered piles of stone, machinery, parking area and five buildings including: a timber frame barn utilised for storage and as an office, a modern corrugated sheeting barn, a modern timber frame carport, a small timber frame garden shed and a metal container clad in timber weatherboards. A mature leylandii cypress hedgerow is present on the northern and western boundaries, a very small area of short improved grass with three early mature silver birch trees (proposed for retention).

3.1.2 The site is positioned in a semi-rural location with residential housing and gardens north, south and east and grassland west. The broader countryside is dominated by arable land.

3.1.3 Ponds identified within 250m of the site include:

- Pond 1: 70m north, medium sized garden pond (across The Street). Low population of great crested newts recorded in 2017 (Liz Lord Ecology, 2017).
- Pond 2: 80m south west, recently excavated (4 years old) deep fishing pond
- Pond 3: 100m south east (across The Street) large ornamental garden pond. No surveyed for great crested newts due to poor Habitat Suitability index assessment (Liz Lord Ecology, 2017).
- Pond 4: 120m north small garden pond. Low population of great crested newts recorded in 2017 (Liz Lord Ecology).
- Pond 5: 150m south west medium sized ornamental fish pond. Not surveyed for great crested newts in 2017 due to poor Habitat Suitability index assessment recorded (Liz Lord Ecology).
- Pond 6: 150m north west (across The Street) small garden pond absent of great crested newts during full great crested newt surveys in 2017 (Liz Lord Ecology)
- Pond 7: 200m south east a long narrow pond (possible moat) absent of great crested newts during full great crested newt surveys in 2017 (Liz Lord Ecology).
- Pond 8: 250m north a recently created wildlife pond for a new development on The Street.

3.2 Nature Conservation Sites

3.2.1 The closest statutorily designated nature conservation site is Spraggs Wood located approximately 1.1km south and designated for its ancient woodland habitats with notable flora and fauna (MAGIC, 2022).

3.3 Data Search

3.3.1 The following information is a summary of modern, local biological records collated through Suffolk Biodiversity Information Services (SBIS).

Table 1 - Summary of local biological records.

Species	Approximate Location	Year
Great crested newts (UK & EU protected)	Several records for Preston St Mary- closest 70m north (low population)	2017
Hedgehog (UK priority)	Preston St Mary	2019
Yellowhammer (UK priority)	Preston St Mary	2010
House sparrow (UK priority)	Preston St Mary	2009
Cuckoo (UK priority)	Preston St Mary	2010
Fieldfare (UK protected)	Preston St Mary	2011
Barn owl (UK protected)	Preston St Mary	2017
Linnet (UK priority)	Preston St Mary	2011
Badger (UK protected)	Preston St Mary	2004
Common pipistrelle (UK & EU protected)	Preston St Mary	2017
Brown long-eared (UK & Eu protected)	Preston St Mary	2017
Barbastelle (UK & Eu protected)	Preston St Mary	2017

3.4 Protected, Priority & Rare Species

Vegetation & Habitats

- 3.4.1 The site includes gravel hardstanding, short improved grass, early mature trees and leylandii cypress hedgerows.
- 3.4.2 Scattered ruderal herbaceous: false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, stinging nettle *Urtica dioica*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg, fleabane species *Conyza/Erigeron* sp, ivy *Hedra helix*, walnut *Juglans regia* (sapling), herb-robert *Geranium robertianum*, elder *Sambucus nigra* (sapling), bristly ox tongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common mallow *Malva sylvestris*, dovesfoot cranesbill *Geranium molle*, aspen *Populus tremula* (sapling), stonecrop species *Sedum* sp, black medic *Medicago lupulina*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, stinking iris *Iris foetidissima*, Yucca species, mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*.
- 3.4.3 Trees: silver birch *Betula pendula* (three early mature specimens).
- 3.4.4 Boundary: Leyland cypress *Cupressus x leylandii* (hedgerow) - north & west sides of site.
- 3.4.5 No protected, priority or notable plants were found. No Schedule 9 invasive plant species were observed. No UK priority habitats were found present or are proposed for impact.

Bats

- 3.4.6 The buildings present on the site included: a timber frame barn utilised for storage and as an office (Building 1), a modern corrugated sheeting barn (Building 2), a modern timber frame carport (Building 3), a small timber frame garden shed (Building 4) and a metal container clad in timber weatherboards utilised as an office (Building 5).
- 3.4.7 Building 1 did have some older timbers present, though no mortice or tenant joints with all timbers bolted together (the barn may have been created from repurposed timbers). The roof was pitched and tiled with lime mortar and battens exposed and unlined. The tiles were held in place with the lime mortar which filled gaps around the tiles. Some superficial gaps around tiles were noted though these were shallow and negligible in suitability for roosting bats. The building also had modern extensions to the north and east, though these were constructed from light timber frame and corrugated sheeting roofing negligible in suitability for roosting bats. The entire building, including the hayloft and ground floor etc. were inspected for signs or evidence of bats and none were found.

- 3.4.8 The remaining structures were all modern, constructed from either a light timber frame with corrugated sheeting roof (Buildings 3 & 4) or steel frame with corrugated sheeting roof and breezeblock plinth (Building 2) or a metal container with timber cladding (Building 5). All structures were considered negligible in suitability or potential for roosting bats. No internal or external signs or evidence of bats were found associated with these structures.
- 3.4.9 The trees on site did not support features suitable for roosting bats (hollows, crevices etc.). No signs or evidence of bats were observed on trees.
- 3.4.10 The site is relatively small and low in suitability for foraging bats, though it is likely that bats will pass through the site and possibly temporarily forage around boundaries where hedgerows and trees are present.

Other Protected & UK Priority Mammals

- 3.4.11 The site is relatively small in size and low in suitability for foraging or sheltering by other protected priority or rare mammals such as badgers *Meles meles* and hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* etc. with limited greenspace. A badger latrine was observed adjacent to the north west boundary outside of the proposed construction zone. No other signs or evidence of such species were noted during the survey. It is possible that the occasional hedgehog may cross the site for temporary foraging.

Birds

- 3.4.12 Birds observed or heard on or close to the site during the survey included; wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, jackdaw *Corvus monedula*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, green woodpecker *Picus viridis*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* and wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
- 3.4.13 No UK protected birds were recorded or were considered likely to use the site. House sparrow and starling are UK priority birds and red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC). Woodpigeon and green woodpecker are amber-listed BoCC.
- 3.4.14 The BoCC ratings are summarised as follows:
- Red-listed - highest conservation concern;
 - Amber-listed - moderate conservation concern;
 - Green-listed - least conservation concern.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

- 3.4.15 Habitats present and proposed for impact included mostly buildings and gravel unsuitable as terrestrial habitat for amphibians of any species. Two small patches of short improved grass are present along with leylandii cypress hedgerows. The grassland is low-negligible in suitability as terrestrial habitat with regular mowing preventing thick tussocks or long grass occurring suitable for shelter. The hedgerow bases may be suitable for shelter though under the leylandii cypress hedgerows, the earth was very dry reducing its suitability compared to a deciduous species hedgerow which would have thick leaf litter and moisture retention at the base. The grass areas are separated from each other with a small area to the north and second area to the south, further away from ponds identified in Preston St Mary.
- 3.4.16 The hedgerows and the majority of grass are proposed for retention which will be included into new gardens.
- 3.4.17 Two ponds (identified as Ponds 2 & 5 in paragraph 3.1.3) owned by the applicant were inspected for suitability for great crested newts using the Habitat Suitability Index assessment as developed by Oldham *et al.* 2000. Both ponds were stocked with fish. Pond 2 was recently excavated. Pond 2 was poor in suitability for great crested newts. Pond 5 was below average in suitability for great crested newts (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Habitat Suitability Index score for Ponds 2 and 5 close to the site at Parsonage Farm.

Pond	Pond 2	Pond 5
SI1 - Location	1	1
SI2 - Pond area	1	0.9
SI3 - Pond drying	0.9	0.9
SI4 - Water quality	0.33	0.67
SI4 - Shade	1	1
SI6 - Fowl	0.67	0.67
SI7 - Fish	0.01	0.01
SI8 - Ponds	1	1
SI9 - Terr'l habitat	0.33	0.67
SI10 - Macrophytes	0.3	1
HSI	0.43	0.55

HSI Pond suitability
 <0.5 = poor
 0.5 – 0.59 = below average
 0.6 – 0.69 = average
 0.7 – 0.79 = good
 > 0.8 = excellent

- 3.4.18 Great crested newts have been found in Preston St Mary in 2017 during full pond surveys by Liz Lord Ecology for a separate planning application on The Street. The report indicates that low populations of great crested newts are present in Ponds 1 and 4 (identified in paragraph 3.1.3). Pond 1 was separated from the site by The Street and residential housing. Pond 4 was beyond 100m from the site and also separated from the site by residential properties.
- 3.4.19 Amphibians were not observed during the survey visit.
- 3.4.20 To determine the risk of impact and requirement for great crested newt mitigation, the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool was consulted. Not including the gravel and buildings and based on the total area of grass and hedgerows on the site, the risk of impact was considered Amber: Offence Likely (see Table 3 below). However, excluding the hedgerow bases and retained grassland, the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool concluded the risk of impact was Green: Offence Highly Unlikely (see Table 4 below).

Table 3 – Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool Including All Greenspace.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 - 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.01
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

Table 4 – Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool Including Only Greenspace Proposed for Impact

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.05
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.001 - 0.01 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.05
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Reptiles

- 3.4.21 Habitats present were considered negligible in suitability or potential for reptiles of any species.
- 3.4.22 The survey was undertaken in suitable weather conditions for active reptiles. Reptiles were not discovered during the survey visit.

Invertebrates

- 3.4.23 The site was considered low in suitability or potential for invertebrates of conservation concern with common and widespread habitat types present in an isolated locality.
- 3.4.24 No notable invertebrates were observed during the survey.

Other Protected, Priority or rare Species

- 3.4.25 No signs or evidence of any other protected or priority species were observed on the site, nor were there any suitable habitats for such.

4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION

4.1 Protected & Priority Species

Bats

4.1.1 Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Some bats are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection;
- Deliberately disturb a bat anywhere.

4.1.2 Bats have been recorded locally and surrounding habitats were suitable for foraging bats. However, the site itself was considered low in suitability for foraging bats and negligible in suitability for roosting bats with no signs or evidence of bat activity found during the survey visit.

4.1.3 Overall, it was considered that the risk of significant impact, to bats, bat roosts or local bat populations was negligible.

4.1.4 Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, precautionary measures detailed later in the report should be followed.

Other Protected, Priority & Rare Mammals

4.1.5 The site was considered low in suitability or potential for any other protected, priority or rare mammal species. A badger latrine was observed on the northern boundary, though no setts were found anywhere near the site. No other signs or evidence of notable mammals were discovered during the survey visit. However, it could not be discounted that the occasional hedgehog may cross the site.

4.1.6 Further surveys or mitigation for any other protected, priority or rare mammals were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to hedgehogs and badgers, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Birds

- 4.1.7 Wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, with certain exceptions (e.g. pest species) in certain situations, it is an offence to intentionally:
- Kill or injure any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 4.1.8 Some bird species (such as barn owls) are also specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and others are UK priority species.
- 4.1.9 It is possible that on occasions widespread protected and priority birds, such as house sparrow and starling etc. may use the site for foraging, no signs or evidence of past nesting by such species were found associated with buildings or trees on the site.
- 4.1.10 Two old swallow nests and a converted swallow nest (likely wren) were observed in Building 1.
- 4.1.11 Overall, it was considered unnecessary to undertake further bird surveys for rare or protected birds or provide mitigation for such species. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to birds and compensate for nesting habitat loss, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

- 4.1.12 Great crested newts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Great crested newts are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:
- Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill;
 - Intentionally injure;
 - Deliberately disturb, or intentionally or recklessly disturb in a place of shelter or protection;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- 4.1.13 Great crested newts have been recorded locally, including in nearby ponds in 2017 (SBIS, 2022 & Liz Lord Ecology, 2017). The ponds with great crested newt populations were separated from the site by roads and residential housing and most ponds were beyond 100m from the site. This is important because most great crested newts stay within 100m of a breeding pond (Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook, 2001). It is also recognised that the two ponds within 250m of the site that did support great crested newts in 2017 were supporting low populations (<10).
- 4.1.14 Regarding, the terrestrial habitat on the site, the vast majority of the site is unsuitable for amphibians (buildings & gravel). The small area of greenspace is low in suitability as terrestrial habitat (lawn & dry hedgerow base). Furthermore, most of the greenspace will be retained in new gardens. The risk is that during construction the greenspace may be disturbed. This risk is controllable with suitable measures.
- 4.1.15 Also note that the piles of stone are on gravel or pallets, are regularly moved by machinery and do not provide quality amphibian refuge habitat.
- 4.1.16 Therefore, considering all factors, including the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessments, it was considered that without precautionary measures/non-licensable mitigation there was amber risk of impact to great crested newts, though with non-licensable mitigation including protecting the retained/existing grassland, this risk could be reduced to green (Highly Unlikely).
- 4.1.17 Therefore, further amphibian surveys or strict mitigation/licence were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, non-licensable mitigation/precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Reptiles

- 4.1.18 Widespread reptile species including, grass snake, adder, slow worm and common lizard, are protected from intentional killing and injuring under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are also UK priority species.
- 4.1.19 The site is relatively small and habitats proposed for impact negligible in suitability for reptiles. Therefore, the risk of significant impact or harm was considered negligible. Therefore, further reptile surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Plants & Invertebrates

- 4.1.20 No rare, protected, priority or Schedule 9 invasive plants were present.
- 4.1.21 No UK priority habitats are proposed for impact.
- 4.1.22 Further botanical surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.
- 4.1.23 Regarding invertebrates, habitats present were common, widespread and isolated from any habitat of high ecological value for invertebrates (such as woodland or species rich meadows etc.). The risk of presence of a significant assemblage of invertebrates of conservation concern was considered negligible.
- 4.1.24 Further invertebrate surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Other Protected & Priority species

- 4.1.25 No signs or evidence of other protected, priority or rare species were observed on the site and it was considered that there was a very low risk of such species occurring on the site or being impacted by the proposed development.

4.2 Other Issues

Sensitive Habitats

- 4.2.1 The site is a significant distance from any statutorily designated nature conservation sites. The risk of direct or indirect impact to such sites was considered negligible.
- 4.2.2 Further surveys or mitigation for designated nature conservation sites or other sensitive habitats were considered unnecessary.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Precautionary Measures & Compensation

Bats

- 5.1.1 To minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measures should be undertaken:
- Roof tiles should be removed by hand if at any stage bats or evidence of bats (droppings) are found works should stop and an ecologist called for advice;

- Any new proposed external lighting should be minimised. Where external lighting is required, it should be warm white LED lamps with glass glazing, rather than plastic, as these produce the least amount of heat and UV light possible, minimising the attraction effects on insects and minimising disturbance to local bats;
- Any external lighting proposed for the development should be aimed carefully, to minimise illumination of boundary habitats and avoid light spillage into the sky, or horizontally out from any buildings, by using hoods or directional lighting.

Birds

- 5.1.2 To prevent harm to actively nesting common birds, any tree/hedgerow removal and commencement of demolition on Building 1 should occur outside of the main bird nesting season (March to end of August). If this is not possible or practical, an ecologist should survey the site for active bird nests and provide advice accordingly;
- 5.1.3 If an active bird nest was found, it would require protection from impact or disturbance until the bird had finished nesting.

Hedgehogs, Badgers & Great Crested Newts

- 5.1.4 The risk of hedgehogs and great crested newts being significantly impacted by the development was very low/negligible, to minimise any residual risk of impact or harm or impact, the below recommendations should be followed:
- Before construction commences, vegetation should be maintained short with regular cutting to prevent the site improving in ecological value for wildlife;
 - Before site clearance occurs, existing grassland should be fenced off with heras fencing to ensure it is excluded from impact during works. To further exclude wildlife from the site temporary wildlife fencing should be erected on the southern, northern and western boundaries. Buildings and roads are present on the eastern boundary already providing an exclusion barrier. The wildlife fencing should be inside the heras fencing. The wildlife fencing should follow Natural England guidelines and include excavation of a 20cm deep trench, hammering in 1m stakes every 2m and attaching durable plastic sheeting to the stakes (see Figure 4 in Appendix 3). The fencing (heras fencing & wildlife fencing). Once the construction is complete the heras fencing and wildlife fencing can be removed. A suitability experienced ecologist should supervise the fencing and report back to the local planning authority accordingly;

- During works, waste materials should be removed off site immediately to prevent wildlife using the materials for shelter and being harmed by subsequent movement;
- Construction materials should be stored on hardstanding or on pallets to prevent wildlife from sheltering in the materials and being harmed by movement of the materials;
- No construction work at night when badgers, hedgehogs and amphibians are mostly active;
- Any excavations for the development should be covered at night or should have a roughly sawn plank placed in them to facilitate escape, the plank should not be placed at more than 30° and must be at least 30cm in width;
- If at any stage hedgehogs, badgers or amphibians are observed on the site, works should stop immediately, and the animal should be allowed to disperse of its own accord, or an ecologist should be contacted for advice.

5.2 Enhancements

- 5.2.1 By undertaking the following recommended biodiversity enhancements, the site will be improved for local wildlife and provide a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2021).
- 5.2.2 The addition of bat, bird and insect bricks/boxes on new buildings will increase the potential roosting and nesting sites for local bats, insects and birds. Specifically, the following boxes will be used;
- 7 x Bat Bricks by Bird Brick Houses;
 - 3 x Vivara Pro Sparrow Terrace;
 - 4 x Ibstock Swift Boxes;
 - 7 x Bee Bricks.
- 5.2.3 The boxes will be mounted high (Just below the roofline) on new buildings. The bat and bee bricks will be positioned facing a southerly aspect. The bird boxes/bricks will be facing a northerly direction or otherwise be out of direct sunlight.
- 5.2.4 Wildlife boxes can be purchased on-line.

- 5.2.5 Any new soft landscaping should include only native and/or wildlife attracting species. Prioritising fruit producing varieties is recommended.
- 5.2.6 New/restored grass areas should be sown with a wildflower meadow mixture such as EM1 from Emorsgate Seeds.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 At the time of survey, the site supported common and widespread habitats very low in ecological value. No signs or evidence of protected, priority or rare species were identified on the site, though a badger latrine was found off site. The risk of significant impact to such species or to local ecological value was considered very low.
- 6.2 Further ecological surveys or strict mitigation were considered unnecessary. Recommendations for bats, hedgehogs, badgers, great crested newts and birds are provided, including non-licensable mitigation for great crested newts.
- 6.3 With recommendations followed as described, the development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm impact to protected, priority or rare species or notable habitats.
- 6.4 With the biodiversity enhancements followed as described, the proposed development would be enhanced for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with national planning policy.

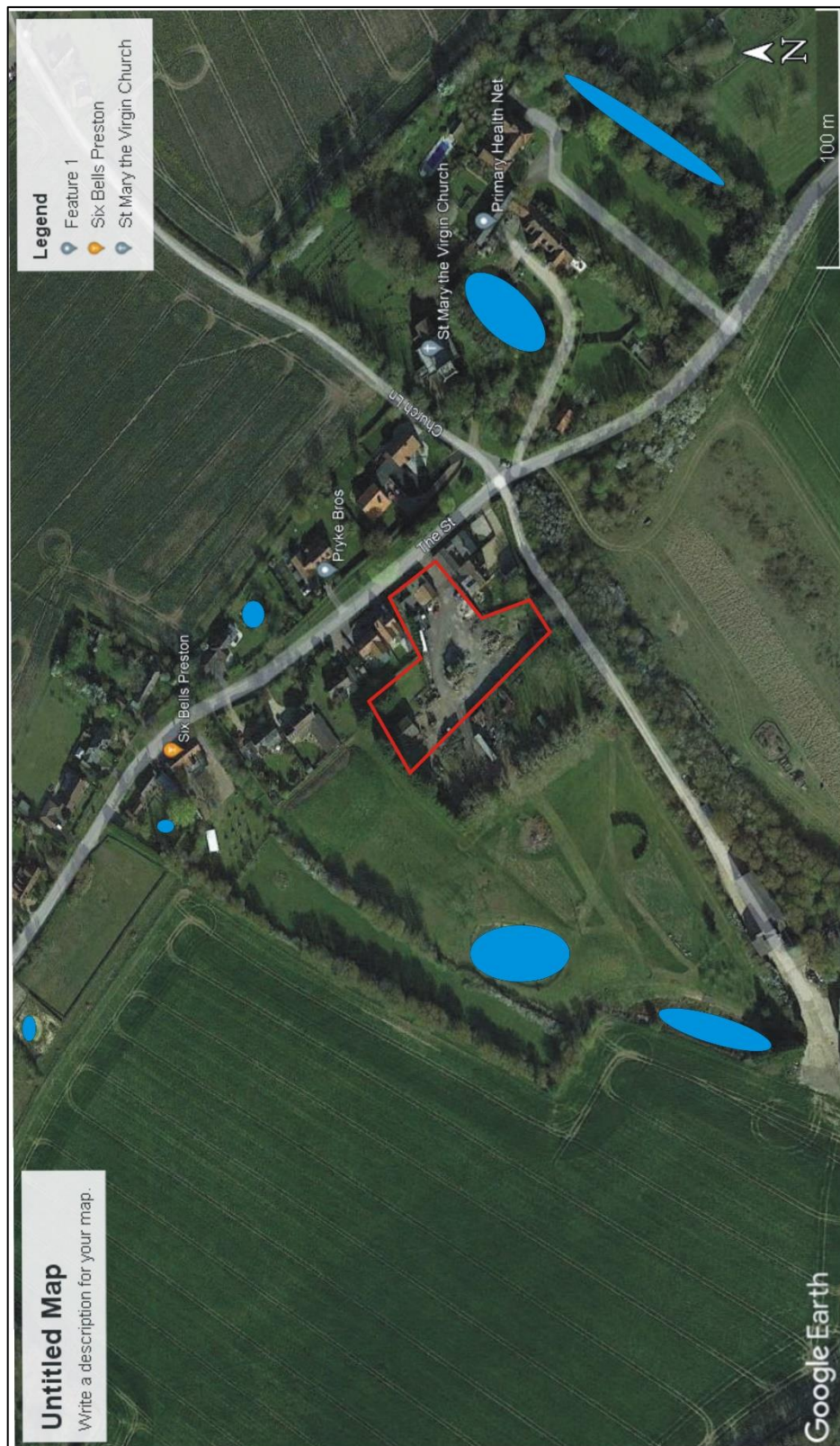
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Figure 2 – Proposed development.



Figure 3 – Ponds in relation to the site.



8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: Site entrance and Building 1 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 2: Northern elevation of Building 1 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 3: Inside the ground floor of Building 1 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 4: Inside the hayloft of Building 1 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 5: Main site area at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 6: Main site are and Building 2 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 7: Northern boundary and Building 3 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 8: Southern boundary at Building 4 at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 9: Main site area on the western boundary facing south at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 10: Small area of grassland in the north east corner of the site at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 11: Badger latrine outside of the site on the northern boundary at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 12: Pond 2 near the site at parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

Photograph 13: Pond 5 near the site at Parsonage Farm.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2022

8.3 Appendix 3: Wildlife Fencing

Figure 4: Wildlife Fencing Specification.

