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# baseline habitat condition assessment

COLT COTTAGE

CAPEL, TONBRIDGE

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CONTENTS

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report details a Habitat survey and Condition Assessment undertaken in respect of proposed development at Colt Cottage, Postern Lane, Capel, Tonbridge, TN11 0QU (site centred TQ 60747 46261).

## COMMISSION

1.2 Native Ecology was commissioned by mr and mrs Tennant in march 2023 to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain feasibility Assessment of the site, including a Baseline Habitat Condition Assessment.

## APPLICATION SITE

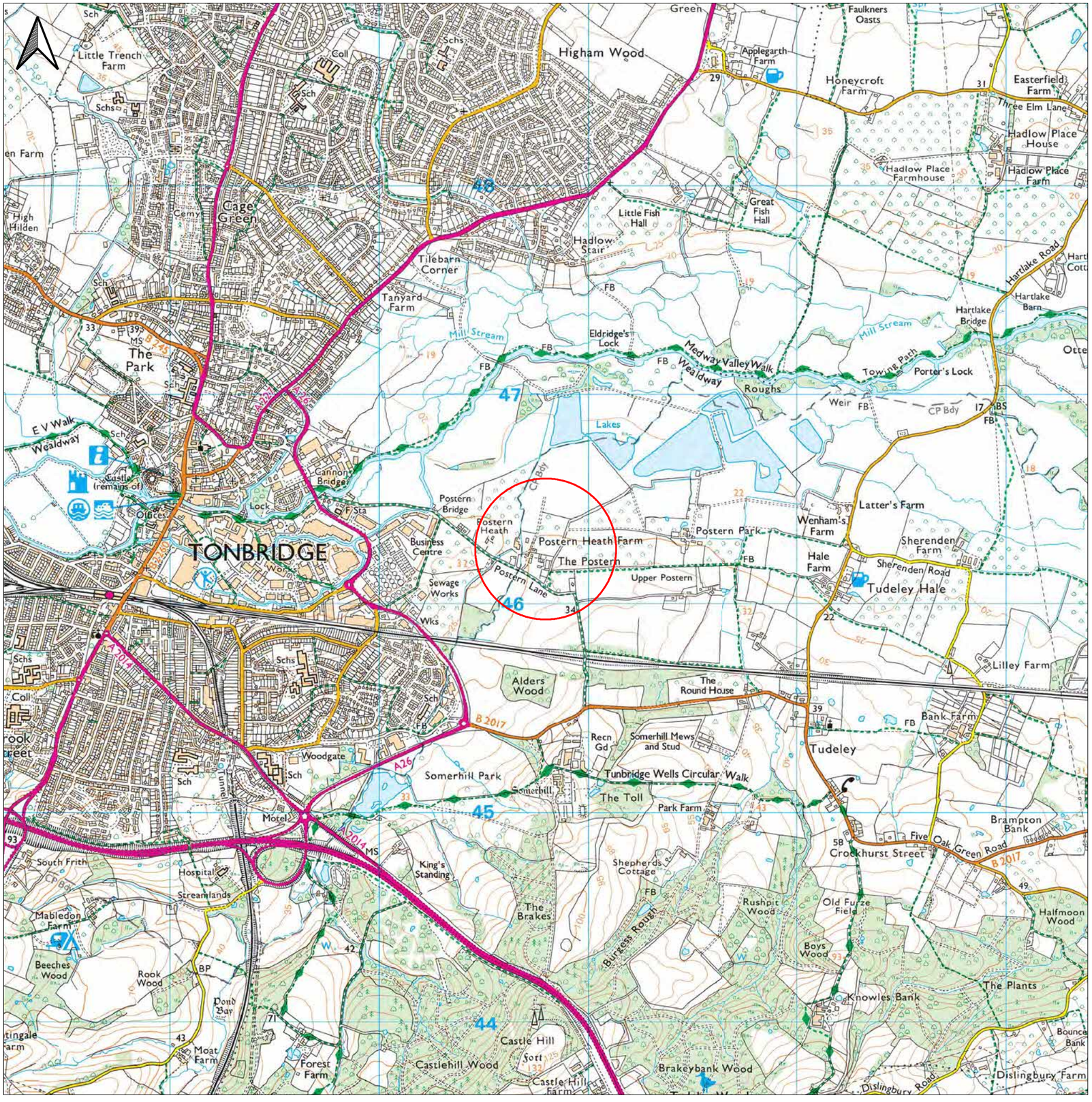
1.3 The application site, hereafter referred to as 'the site', comprises a two-storey residential dwelling, residential garden and parking area. The site extends to approximately 0.2ha.

1.4 A site location plan is provided in section 2.

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.5 The objectives of the report are to:

- Provide a Condition Assessment for baseline habitat types identified during a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- Assign each habitat parcel a unique reference ID based on habitat type and condition;
- Inform the baseline biodiversity unit calculations within the metric;
- Inform habitat design, creation and enhancement measures by defining baseline conditions; and,
- Provide a baseline on which to assess future management and maintenance plans associated with the restoration or enhancement of habitats through improvement of condition.




0 1 2 3 km

0 20 40 60 80 100 m

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Site location plan

Colt Cottage
Postern Lane, Capel
Tonbridge

| | |
|---|---|
| Drawing ref: | 1239_DR01 |
| Revision: | - |
| Date: | 27/03/2023 |
| Scale: | 1:20,000 (Main canvas) |
| Paper size: | A3 |

# 3. METHODOLOGY

## DESK STUDY

### Data search

3.1 mAGIC map was used to identify any pre-assigned habitat types within and adjacent to the site, including Habitats of Principal Importance and irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland. In addition the search included any statutory and non-statutory designated sites within and adjacent to the site.

3.2 Current Google Earth aerial images were used to identify recent and historic land use of the site, as well as to identify any recent or historic damage to the habitats within and around the site which might impact the condition of baseline habitats.

## FIELD STUDY

3.3 A site visit was undertaken by James madden and Thomas Hurst of Native Ecology on 28th march 2023.

### Table 1. Survey details

| | |
|---|---|
| survey date | 28th march 2023 |
| surveyor | James madden Bsc msc ACIEEm<br>and Thomas Hurst Bsc (Hons) |
| Time on site | 09:00 - 11:00 |
| Weather | 5ɑC, 100% cloud cover, light breeze, no rain, ground damp |

### Habitat survey

3.4 Habitats within the site were mapped and classified in accordance with the The Professional Edition of the UK Habitat Classification during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site visit (Native Ecology, 2023). The condition assessment of habitats present was also undertaken during this survey.

3.5 Habitat features were recorded in areas, lines and points, with each feature allocated a single primary habitat from the UKHAB hierarchy, along with secondary codes that are used to describe that feature in more depth.

3.6 The UKHAB hierarchy comprises of 5 levels, which provide an increasing level of detail. for this site assessment, habitats have been mapped for Primary Habitats up to Level 4 in line with Biodiversity metric 4.0. Where the metric 4.0 categories for habitat type go beyond Level 4, these habitats are then used for the baseline condition assessment.

3.7 A detailed botanical species list was recorded for each habitat parcel by an experienced ecologist during the site visit.

### Digital mapping

3.8 All relevant site data was collated on the digital mapping program 'Input' which was then synchronised to the geographical mapping system 'QGIs' in order to be refined and measure habitat parcels.

3.9 The fine scale minimum mapping Unit (mmU) was used to complete the dataset. This includes area habitats from 25m$^2$ and 5m for linear features. This fine scale method allows subtle habitat differences to be considered.

3.10 Anything smaller than the mmU was mapped as a point and identified with a target note.

### Habitat Condition Assessment

3.11 The Habitat Condition Assessment was carried out following the technical guidance that accompanies Defra Biodiversity metric 4.0 (march, 2023).

3.12 Individual habitat parcels were assessed against the criterion for each indicator of condition and the results recorded as 'pass' or 'fail' for each, or for woodland, a score of 1, 2 or 3 was assigned. These scores were then totalled and the scoring instructions within each condition sheet used to give an outcome for the condition assessment of each habitat parcel as either 'Good', 'moderate' or 'Poor' condition.

3.13 Certain habitats are allocated a fixed condition score and do not need to be assessed. These are marked 'No assessment required – condition fixed at 'Poor'' for some Low distinctiveness habitats.

3.14 Habitats with very Low distinctiveness are listed as N/A.

3.15 The condition of hedgerows were assessed using the appropriate condition sheets. Condition is assessed against defined attributes and determined according to the number of 'fails' generated from each functional group. Groups are based on key ecological and physical characteristics of hedgerows and trees.

3.16 The location and extent of each habitat parcel and linear feature was digitally mapped in the field to produce a Habitat Condition Assessment Plan (shown in section 4).

## LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

3.17 The survey was carried out in march. At this time of year some species of grass and annual wildflowers can be difficult to identify to species, or may not be present. This can produce an inaccurate assessment of habitat condition.


**Legend**

- Site boundary
- Modified grassland
- Vegetated garden
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Native Hedgerow

Note:

Habitats mapped based on UK Habitat Classification following Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site visit undertaken on 28/03/2023.

Numbers refer to area parcel references. 'H' numbers refer to hedgerow.

Habitat Condition
* poor habitat condition
** moderate habitat conition
*** good habitat condition
n/a condition assessment not applicable

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Biodiversity Net Gain Baseline Habitat Plan

Colt Cottage
Postern Lane, Tonbridge

| | |
|---|---|
| Drawing ref: | 1239_DR04 |
| Revision: | - |
| Date: | 31/07/2023 |
| Scale: | 1:200 |
| Paper size: | A3 |

# 5. RESULTS

## HABITAT DESCRIPTION & CONDITION ASSESSMENT

5.1 Table 2, below describes the area and linear habitats present in accordance with UKHab / Defra metric 4.0.

5.2 Condition assessment results for each habitat parcel are also provided below. Grading criteria are in accordance the Defra metric 4.0 Condition Assessment sheets.

5.3 The full Condition Assessment results are provided in the accompanying Habitat Condition Assessment sheets Proforma.

Table 2. Habitat Descriptions and Condition Assessment

| Parcel No. | Area (Ha)/ length (Km) | Metric 4.0 Habitat Category | Description | Condition |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0.016 | Developed land, sealed surface | A two storey residential dwelling is present on site with a number of concrete pathways and a parking area in the western portion of the site. | N/A |
| 2 | 0.101 | modified grassland | An area of regularly mown grassland is present surrounding building B1. species include; perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne), Yorkshire fog (Holcus lanatus), daisy (Bellis perennis), dandelion (Taraxacum officinale), cleavers (Galium aparine), creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens), and ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata). | moderate |
| 3 | 0.004 | Vegetated garden | Two small areas of vegetated garden are present within the site. species include; spindle (Euonymus europaeus), cotoneaster (Cotoneaster sp.), heather (Calluna spp.), conifer (Pinophyta spp.), beech (Fagus sylvatica), snow drop (Galanthus), cypressus (Cupressus spp.), clematis (Clematis vitalba), rose (Rosa sp.) and cleavers (Galium aparine). | N/A |
| H1 | 0.068 | Native hedgerow with trees | A short hedgerow is present to the west of the site. species include; privet (Ligustrum vulgare), yew (Taxus baccata), honeysuckle (Lonicera periclymenum), lilac (Syringa sp.) and ivy (Hedera helix). | Good |

5.5 The full Condition Assessment results are provided in the accompanying Habitat Condition Assessment sheets Proforma.

# 6. REFERENCES


- CIEEm (2019). Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development. A practical guide.
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