



BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Totford Farm, Totford, Northington, Alresford
SO249TJ

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The evidence which has prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the guidance of The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

The findings of this study are valid for a period of 12 months from the date of survey. If works have not commenced by this date, it may be necessary to undertake an updated survey to allow any changes in the status of bats on site to be assessed, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

Introduction and instructions

Site location

- Totford Farm is located in Northington near Alresford.
- The barns to be converted are in the grounds of a larger farm/home. The surrounding home is a brick-built period property with a tiled roof and a larger barn which has been previously converted.
- 100m to the south-east there is a small stream.
- Surrounding the site is agricultural land.

Current enhancement projects around Totford Farm

- Installed two owl boxes one of which shows sign of habitation.
- Two swift boxes installed along with a number of swallow cups.
- Reduction of sheep flock to avoid overgrazing along with hay cut leaving large margins for butterflies and small mammals.
- Trees planted both in fields and along stream to create wildlife corridor.
- Bat boxes to be placed in trees surrounding farm.
- Sensitive stream management in consultation with EA to clear silt and dead vegetation.
- Host numerous university study groups looking at invertebrate life in the stream.
- Possible restoration of water meadow sluices in conjunction with Hampshire and IOW wildlife trust.
- Continue to try to create habitat conducive to lapwing breeding sites.
- Haybales and corrugated iron left out to encourage adders and grass snakes with some success.
- Hedgerow cutting restricted to early spring once the berries have all fallen.

Proposed works

The purpose of the report is to provide an ecological enhancement plan and information to support the planning application, including a bat survey of three buildings at Totford Farm. The client would like to convert, repair and refurbish the existing animal barn, extend the garage wing, and relocate stables.

Legislative Framework

Specific habitats and species receive legal protection in the UK under various pieces of legislation, including:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Badger Protection Act 1992;
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010;
- The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006; and
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

Where relevant, the ecological assessment takes account of the legislative protection afforded to specific habitats and species where applicable.

National Planning Policy Framework – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published by the government in March 2012 (and replaces Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9)) outlines the Government's commitment to the conservation of wildlife and natural features. Policies set out in NPPF are taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of regional spatial strategies, and by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development documents. They may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;
- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these Areas

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually

or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

- development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;
- opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;
- planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss; and
- the following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as European sites. Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation, listed or proposed Ramsar sites and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

TheNaturalEnvironmentandRuralCommunitiesAct2006

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on the Secretary of State to publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitat in England that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving English biodiversity. It also requires the Secretary of State to take, and promote the taking of, steps to further the conservation of the listed organisms and habitats. The current list of species and habitats is largely the same as those listed with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and includes all reptile species, the hedgehog and a number of bat and bird species.

Environmental Enhancement Measures

Birds

- Conversion of the buildings will not be carried out between April and September unless it can be proved that breeding birds and their young are absent when works commence. Consequently, an inspection of the building will be carried out by an ecologist prior to work commencing during this period to assess the status of any nesting sites. If nesting birds are observed when a qualified ecologist is not present, work will stop and they will be contacted for advice.
- Five bird nesting boxes (2 x 28mm and 3 x 32mm – e.g. Vivara Pro Seville 3, WoodStone Nest Boxes) will be installed on the north-facing sides of trees nearest to the barn.
- In addition to the current swallow cups, 3 more swallow nest bowls will be installed on the barn and the ancillary building.

Reptiles

- The client currently has an area specifically maintained with reptiles in mind. On recent visits, secluded areas away from the main buildings currently have tall grasses, corrugated iron sheeting and hay bales positioned to encourage reptiles which are frequently seen.

Bats

- The development provides the opportunity to further increase the number of roosting opportunities on site for bats. It is recommended that multipurpose bat boxes are to be installed on trees adjacent to target a range of bat species. It is proposed that 3 bat boxes are installed on the mature trees surrounding the main buildings. The recommended bat boxes are detailed below:

1FF Schwegler Bat Box with built-in Wooden Rear Panel

Material: Schwegler Woodcrete

The Schwegler 1FF bat box is spacious enough for bats to use as a summer roost or nursery sites and is open at the bottom, allowing droppings to fall out so it does not need cleaning. The 1FF is manufactured from long-lasting Woodcrete, which is a blend of wood, concrete and clay which will not rot, leak, crack or warp, and will last for at least 20 - 25 years.



1FS Schwegler Large Colony Bat Box

The Schwegler 1FS Large Colony Box provides bats with a very large internal space. This allows high numbers of bats to congregate together and makes it very popular for accommodating large colonies in summer. It is particularly attractive to Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*) and Common Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and nurseries containing 70-100 bats have been observed. The large internal space and variety of hanging places makes it ideal for bats to use as a nursing area.

The front panel consists of three grooved wooden panels and the special roof panel with an insulated grill is ideal for bats to cling to. A special panel is fitted on the inside of the roof, with an insulated grille onto which the bats can easily grip or hang on to.

Schwegler bat boxes are backed by conservation organisations, government agencies and forestry experts and have the highest occupation rates of all nest boxes. They are carefully designed to mimic natural roost sites and provide a stable environment.



Vivara Pro Seville

Constructed from a mix of concrete and wood fibres, WoodStone® nest boxes safeguard against attacks from predators including woodpeckers, cats and squirrels. The material insulates the nest which creates a more consistent internal temperature than an ordinary wooden box. This is especially important during the breeding season and ensures that young birds have a greater chance of survival.



ECOLOGICAL MONITORING

In order to monitor the success of the consented enhancement measures detailed in this plan, post-construction monitoring will be undertaken post development.

Bird Boxes

Nest features are to be checked annually between November and February inclusive and any repairs or modifications undertaken. There are no legal issues associated with the installation of bird boxes. When the nest box is occupied, all wild birds, their nests and eggs, are protected by law. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is illegal to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, if un-hatched eggs are found in the box, they can only legally be removed from October to January inclusive. The eggs must be destroyed, as it is illegal to keep them.

Bat Boxes

Bat boxes are to be checked in October by a licensed bat worker and any repairs or modifications undertaken. There are no legal issues associated with the installation of bat boxes. However, once occupied, it is illegal to disturb any bat when it is roosting, or to kill, injure or handle a bat without a licence under the Habitats Regulations 2010 (as amended). If a sick or injured bat is found, the local Wildlife Trust or bat group should be contacted for further advice. If maintenance of the bat boxes is required a licensed bat worker or local bat group should be consulted.