



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Tekels Park – Church Site

November 2023

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Executive Summary

Development Ecology Ltd has been commissioned by FHM Architectural Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Tekels Park, Camberley, Surrey. The ecological assessment has been carried out in order to inform a planning application for the erection of a single residential dwelling.

The survey has identified that the site primarily comprises habitats of negligible to low ecological value, dominated by modified grassland.

While no features of value to roosting bats are present within the site, a sensitive lighting scheme is recommended as a precautionary measure should roosting bats be present within the nearby church. It is also recommended that bat and bird boxes are incorporated into the proposed development.

1 Introduction

1.1 Authorship and instruction

1.1.1 This report has been written by James Smith BSc MCIEEM on behalf of Development Ecology Consulting Ltd. This report has been produced at the request of FHM Architectural Ltd.

1.2 Scope of this document

1.2.1 The aim of this report is to provide the following information to the project team:

- the potential ecological baseline associated with the site;
- determination of potential ecological features and constraints; and
- measures required to protect and mitigate for ecological features and constraints

1.2.2 Specific reference is paid to protected habitats, protected species and invasive species. Further detailed surveys will be recommended where more information is required for impact assessment and formulation of appropriate mitigation strategies.

1.3 The Site and Development Proposals

1.3.1 The site is located at OS Grid Reference SU 88208 59889 in Tekels Park, Camberley, Surrey. The location of the site is presented at Figure 1 below.

1.3.2 It is proposed that a planning application will be submitted to Surrey Heath Borough Council for the erection of a single residential dwelling within the site.

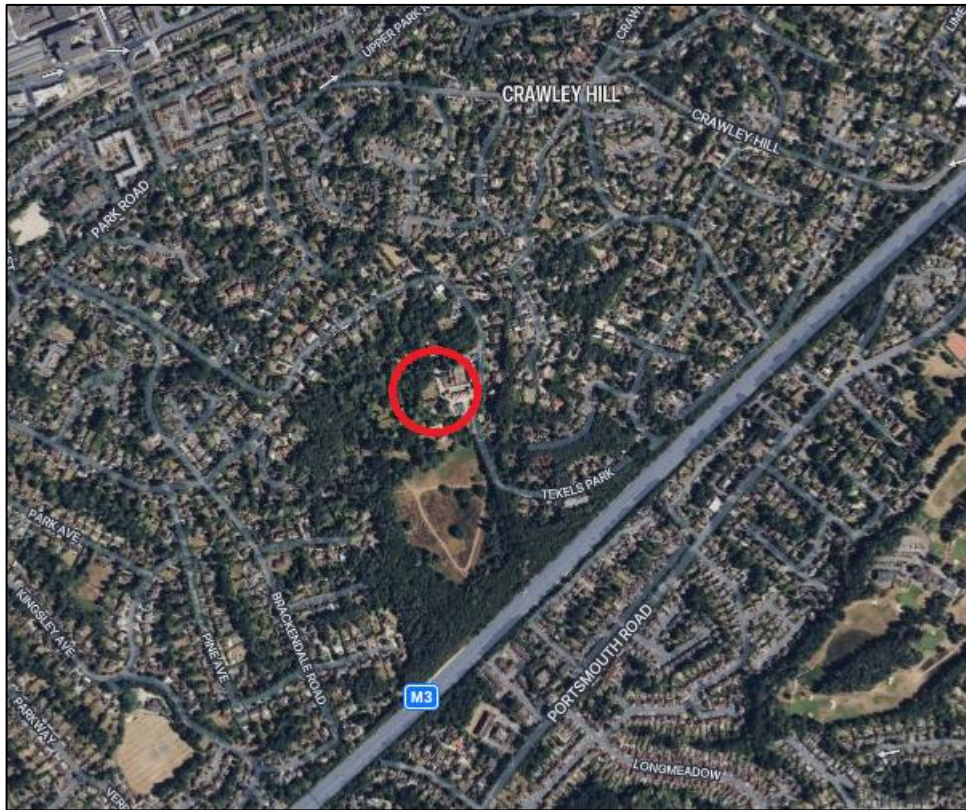


Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2. Site plan

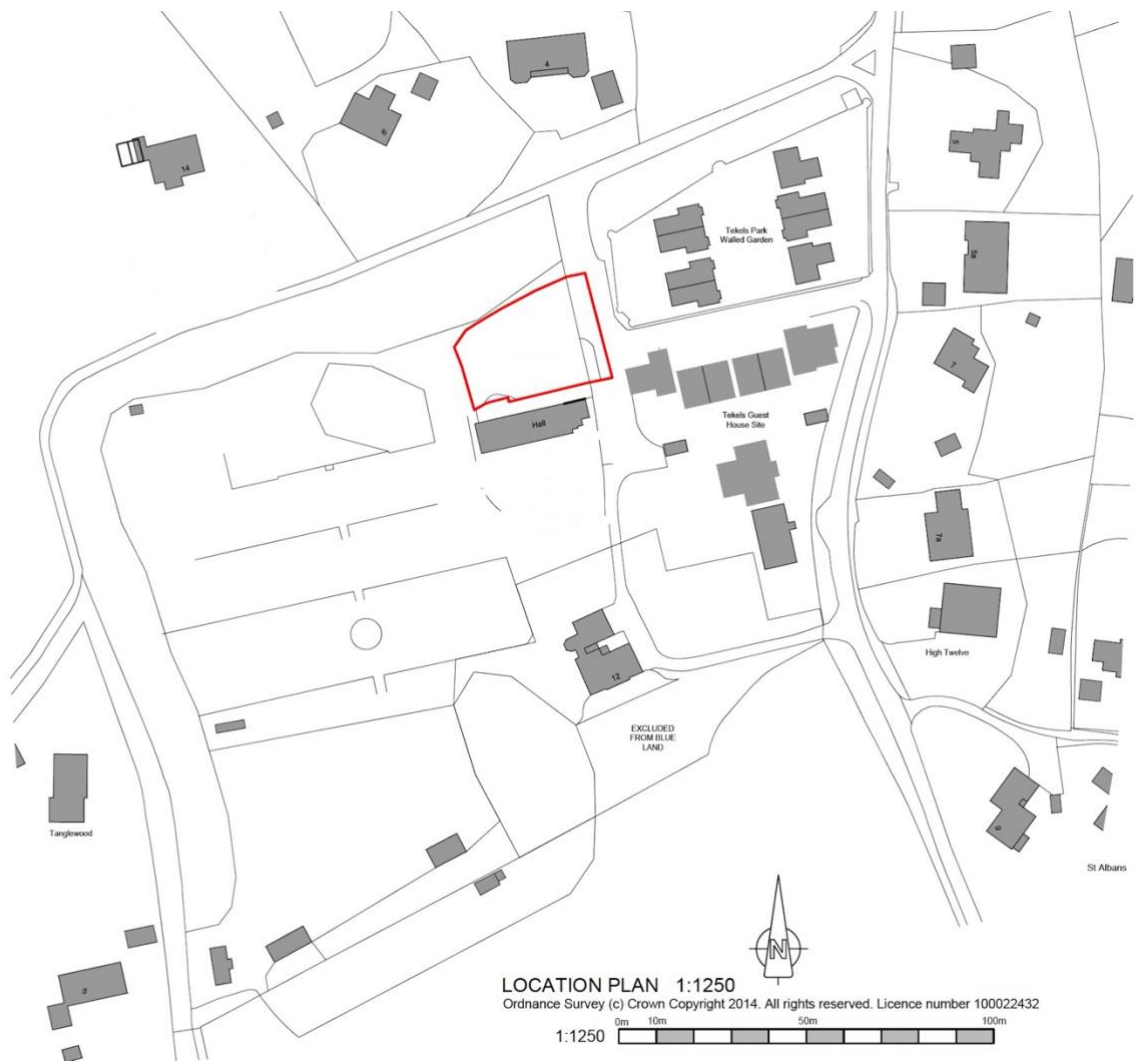


Figure 3. Site plan

2 Relevant Legislation and Policy

2.1 Legislative framework

2.1.1 The following list provides the legislative framework for the protection of ecological features in England and Wales:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992*
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996*
- Invasive Alien Species Regulation 2014 (as amended)
- Protection of Birds Act 1954
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended)
- Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000

2.1.2 An overview is provided below for legislation above marked with an asterisk*.

2.2 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Protected Species

2.2.1 Species protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) are listed on Schedule 2 of the regulations and are known as European Protected Species. Under these regulations, a Schedule 2 animal is protected under Section 41 of the regulations in such a way that a person who-

- deliberately captures, injures or kills a European Protected Species,
- deliberately disturbs such an animal,
- deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or
- damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,

is guilty of an offence. In defining what constitutes disturbance in the above provision, the regulations state that a disturbance is something likely to-

-
- impair their ability-
 - to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or nurture their young, or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Protected Sites

2.2.2 Part 2 of the regulations contain the details regarding European Sites. A Special Protection Area is a site protected under this legislation. Section 19 of the regulations states that the Nature Conservation Body shall serve a notification on European sites that restricts the operations that may take place in such a way as to prohibit any operations that are likely to damage the important features of the site. Section 20 sets out that the owner or occupier must not carry out or cause to permit any operation specified in the notification unless –

- the appropriate nature conservation body has been given written notice of the operation, specifying the nature where the proposal is to be carried out; and
- one of the following conditions is fulfilled.
 - That the operation is carried out with the written consent of the appropriate nature conservation body;
 - That the operation is carried out in accordance with the terms of a management agreement;
 - That four months have passed since the notice was given to the nature conservation body

2.2.3 Section 21 says that where it appears to the nature conservation body that an application for consent relates to an operation that –

- is likely to have a significant impact on a European site; and
- is not directly related to the management of that site,

that an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site is made in view of that site's conservation objectives. Consent for the operation may then only be granted once it has been ascertained that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

2.3 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Protected Species

2.3.1 Section 1 of the Act details the protection afforded to wild birds. The provisions state that a person is guilty of an offence if that person intentionally

–

- kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
- takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird.

2.3.2 Species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are listed on Schedule 5 of the Act. Under this act, a Schedule 5 animal is protected by the provisions of Section 9 of the act in that it is an offence if a person intentionally kills, injures or takes any Schedule 5 animal, or if a person intentionally or recklessly-

- damages or destroys any structure or place which a Schedule 5 animal uses for shelter or protection,
- disturbs any such an animal while it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection; or
- obstructs access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Invasive Species

2.3.3 Part 2 of Schedule 9 lists plants that are invasive and non-native and to which section 14 of the Act applies. Section 14 states that if a person plants or otherwise causes to grow in the wild any plant listed on Schedule 9, that person shall be guilty of an offence. However, it shall be a defence to prove

that all reasonable steps were taken and all due diligence was exercised to avoid committing the offence.

Protected Sites

2.3.4 Section 28 of the Act relates to the management of operations within or affecting a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Statutory Authority shall serve notice on any land constituting a SSSI that specifies operations that must not be carried out within a SSSI or that may have an adverse impact on a SSSI. The owner or occupier must not cause or permit to be carried out any operation specified in the notification unless –

- notice of a proposal to carry out the operation has been given to the Statutory Authority specifying the nature and location of the proposal; and
- one of the following conditions is fulfilled.
 - That the operation is carried out with the written consent of the Statutory Authority,
 - That the operation is carried out in accordance with the terms of an agreement,
 - That the operation is carried out in accordance with a management scheme or management notice.

2.3.5 A consent may be given subject to conditions and for a limited period. If the Statutory Authority do not consent, they shall give notice saying so to the person who applied for the consent. Network Rail, as Statutory Undertaker and Section 28G Authority, is required to give notice, in the exercise of its functions, of any operations likely to cause damage to the features of interest of a SSSI. The Statutory Authority then has 28 days to either provide assent or decline assent to the proposed operations. No response from the Statutory Authority after 28 days has elapsed from the date that the notice is served shall be considered that assent is declined. Where assent is declined, provisions allow for the work to be carried out, provided that certain conditions are met, as defined in the legislation.

2.4 Protection of Badgers Act 1992

2.4.1 Under Section 3 of the Act, it is an offence to interfere with a badger sett if this was done intentionally or recklessly. Elements constituting interference are –

- damaging a badger sett or any part of it,
- destroying a badger sett
- obstructing access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett, and
- disturbing a badger when it is occupying a sett.

2.5 Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

2.5.1 Section 1 of the Act stipulates that it is an offence to intentionally inflict unnecessary suffering on any wild animal. This includes the crushing or asphyxiating of wild mammals. An exception is provided if the killing is undertaken in a swift and humane manner and had been taken in the course of lawful pest control activity. Under this legislation, it is not acceptable to excavate ground containing rabbits or foxes without first taking measures to address the presence of these animals.

2.6 National Planning Policy Framework 2023(NPPF)

2.6.1 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that 'when determining a planning application, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity 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; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'

2.7 Surrey Heath Borough Council Local Plan

2.7.1 The Surrey Heath Local Plan provides the local policy framework for the Borough against which planning applications will be assessed. The adopted Plan currently consists of:

- The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2012 and The Policies Map 2012;
- The 2000 Local Plan (extant saved policies); and
- Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan (2011-2028) and Policies Map.

Core Strategy

2.7.2 The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document sets out the key policies that will be used to determine the location, amount, type and timing of new development within the Borough in the period up to 2028. The Council adopted the Core Strategy on 1st February 2012. Those policies of relevance to ecology are detailed below:

CP13 Green Infrastructure

2.7.3 The Borough Council, in partnership with other organisations, will plan for a network of accessible and integrated green infrastructure across the Borough of Surrey Heath and linked to neighbouring areas. The Council will seek to strengthen the role of the Green Infrastructure network.

2.7.4 In considering proposals for any new development the Borough Council will encourage schemes which contribute toward, or provide, opportunities to enhance the function of existing green infrastructure, increase provision and improve connectivity. Development which results in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of green infrastructure will be resisted.

2.7.5 Green infrastructure of strategic importance will include those areas designated as European sites and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) required to avoid and mitigate impacts to the European sites.

CP14A Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

-
- 2.7.6 The Borough Council will seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity within Surrey Heath. Working with partners, new opportunities for habitat creation and protection will be explored in particular on biodiversity opportunity areas. Development that results in harm to or loss of features of interest for biodiversity will not be permitted.
- 2.7.7 Particular regard will be had to the following hierarchy of important sites and habitats within the Borough:
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) (European)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (National)
 - Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), other Ancient Woodland not identified in (ii) above (Local)
- 2.7.8 Outside of these areas, new development will where appropriate be required to contribute to the protection, management and enhancement of biodiversity. On locally designated sites this will include those habitats and species listed in the Surrey Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 2.7.9 Within locally designated sites development will not be permitted unless it is necessary for appropriate on-site management measures and can demonstrate no adverse impact to the integrity of the nature conservation interest. Development adjacent to locally designated sites will not be permitted where it has an adverse impact on the integrity of the nature conservation interest.
- 2.7.10 The Council will work in partnership to restore and enhance Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in particular those also designated as SPA or SAC which are of strategic importance.

CP14B European Sites

- 2.7.11 The Council will only permit development where it is satisfied that this will not give rise to likely significant adverse effect upon the integrity of the Thames

Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and/or the Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham Common Special Area of Conservation.

2.7.12 All new residential (net) development within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is considered to give rise to the possibility of likely significant effect. Accordingly, only new development that complies with the following requirements will be permitted.

- No (net) new residential development will be permitted within 400m of the SPA.
- Non-residential development within 400m of the SPA will be required to demonstrate that it is not likely to have a significant effect either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

2.7.13 Proposals for residential development elsewhere in the Borough will be required to provide appropriate measures to avoid adverse effects upon the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area in accordance with the Borough Councils adopted Avoidance Strategy (or as subsequently amended).

2.7.14 Such measures shall include:

- All net new residential development shall provide or contribute toward the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs);
- SANGS will be provided at a standard of at least 8ha per 1,000 new occupants;
- Developments of 10 or more net new dwellings will only be permitted within the identified catchment areas of SANGs; and
- All net new residential development shall contribute toward strategic access management and monitoring (SAMM) measures.

2.7.15 The effective avoidance of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of the development.'

3 Methodology

3.1 Scope of study

3.1.1 The zone of influence (Zoi) of the site has been determined to consist of the footprint of the proposed work area and immediate surroundings.

3.2 Desktop study

3.2.1 The Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre (SBIC) was consulted as part of this assessment. The desk study provides details of statutory and non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest and protected species within 2km of the site.

3.3 Field survey methods and Biodiversity Net Gain

3.3.1 A survey using the UKHab Classification System was conducted. The UKHab Classification system has five hierarchical levels and includes the identification of priority habitats (Habitats of Principal Importance) and Annex I habitats as listed in the Habitats Directive.

3.3.2 The dominant and readily identified species of higher plant species from each habitat type within the survey area were recorded and their abundance was assessed on the DAFOR scale:

D Dominant

A Abundant

F Frequent

O Occasional

R Rare

3.3.3 These scores represent the abundance within the defined area only and do not reflect national or regional abundances. Plant species nomenclature follows Stace (2010).

3.3.4 Incidental records of fauna were also made during the survey and the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support protected species and other species of conservation concern, including priority species. However, no specific faunal surveys were undertaken.

3.3.5 The site visit was carried out by James Smith BSc MCIEEM. James holds a degree in Environmental Science and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. James holds the position of Technical Director at Development Ecology Consulting Ltd and has been practising ecological consultancy since 2004.

3.3.6 The survey was conducted on the 19th October 2023 during a day shift. The weather during the survey was dry with good visibility.

3.4 Limitations

3.4.1 The survey was carried out in October, which is outside the optimal period for botanical assessment. Given the nature of the habitats present within the site, the timing of the survey is however not considered to be a constraint.

4 Results

4.1 Designated and Non-Designated Sites

4.1.1 The statutory designated and non-designated sites located within 2km of the site are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Statutory designated and non-designated sites within 2km

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Site (km)	Description
Statutory Sites			
Thames Basin Heaths	SPA	2.7	Classified under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive) as it is regularly used by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex 1 in any season: Nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>); 7.8% Great Britain population, Woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>); 9.9% Great Britain population, Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>); 27.8% Great Britain population.
Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths	SSSI	1.7	A Site of Special Scientific Interest notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Notified in 1985. Revised 2000. "This site has an extensive mosaic of broadleaved woodland, coniferous plantation, dry and wet heathland, valley mire, a series of base-poor ponds and a scarce breeding invertebrate assemblage. In particular, the heathland and coniferous plantation supports internationally important populations of Woodlark, Nightjar (<i>Camprimulgus europaeus</i>) and Dartford Warbler and have a nationally important dragonfly and damselfly population. The site includes the valley bogs of Broadmoor Bottom and Wishmoor Bottom which form the most important remaining examples of this type of habitat in the area."
Non-statutory Sites			
Tekels Park	SNCI	0.1km	The site is selected for its unimproved acid grassland and small patches of heath. It is rare to find a parkland landscape like this with such a large area of managed Wavy-hair grass (<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>) grassland. 21 plant species typical of grassland of conservation interest in Surrey have been recorded on the site.
Camberley Heath Golf Course, Camberley	SNCI	0.8km	The site is selected for areas of heath and acid grassland, and for the potential of the woodland to be restored to heath. The Surrey

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Site (km)	Description
			Scarce Bristle Bent (<i>Agrostis curtisii</i>) has been recorded on the site.
Sandhurst Royal Military Academy	SNCI	1.4km	The site is selected for its heath and mire habitats. There is a small area of heath on the site plus a large area of woodland that has regenerated from former heathland and has potential to be restored to heath. 23 plant species typical of grassland of conservation interest in Surrey have been recorded on the site. Brown Trout (<i>Salmo trutta fario</i>), a UK BAP priority species, has been recorded in the Wish Stream. The site is adjacent to the Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI, which is part of a large expanse of heathland and woodland between Camberley and Bracknell in the north.
College Common	SNCI	1.4km	The site is selected for its heathland habitat. Much of the woodland was originally heathland and has the potential to be restored to heath. The Surrey Scarce Bristle Bent has been recorded in the open heathland and woodland areas. The site is adjacent to Broadmoor to Bagshot Heaths SSSI and forms part of a large ecological unit. The heathland in Area (3) blends almost seamlessly with the SSSI, and it is likely that birds and other animals of the SSSI visit the site. It also forms an important buffer between two housing estates and the rest of Camberley below the London Road.
Whitehill Farm	SNCI	1.6km	Mire. Whilst the whole site contains features that are of high ecological value, the further survey information shows that the mire is of county importance, being a feature lacking in the adjacent SSSI (Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods & Heaths)
Frimley Fuel Allotments	SNCI	1.4km	The site is selected for its large area of heathland, which includes some H3 <i>Ulex minor-Agrostis curtisii</i> heath, a community uncommon in Surrey. Much of the woodland was originally heathland, and it is likely that it has the potential to be restored to heath. The Surrey Scarce Bristle Bent has been recorded on the site. The site is close to Colony Bog SSSI and forms part of a large ecological unit made up of semi-natural woodland and heathland that stretches all along the Chobham Ridges.
Frith Hill	SNCI	1.6km	The site is selected for its large area of heathland, which includes H3 <i>Ulex minor-Agrostis curtisii</i> heath, a community uncommon in Surrey. Much of the woodland was originally heathland and has the

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Site (km)	Description
			potential to be restored to heath. Sparrowhawks (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>) are thought to be breeding on the site. The site is close to Colony Bog SSSI and forms part of a large ecological unit made up of seminatural woodland and heathland that stretches all along the Chobham Ridges.

(SPA = Special Protection Area, SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest, SNCI = Site of Nature Conservation Interest)

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 A summary of protected species recorded within 2km of the site is provided in Table 2 below. This does not provide an exhaustive list of all species records; numerous bird species have also been recorded however these have not been detailed below. In accordance with the terms and conditions in respect of confidentiality provided by SBIC, the full report cannot be published within this report, however a summary of findings is presented where relevant.

Table 2: Summary of protected species within 2km

Common Name	Latin Name	Distance from Site of closest record (km)	Number of Records
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	1.5	4
Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	0.8	5
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	0.9	10
Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	0.8	2
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	1.5	1
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	0.9	1
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	0.3	6
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	0.4	85

4.2 Habitats

4.2.1 The site largely comprises mown modified grassland with a boundary of introduced shrubs. Ornamental planting present include *Rhododendron* sp.

and Portugal laurel *Prunus lusitanica*, with some cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and holly *Ilex aquifolium* along the western boundary.

4.2.2 Three trees overhang the site; English oak *Quercus robur*, European beech *Fagus sylvatica* and a northern red oak *Quercus rubra*.

4.2.3 To the south of the site, a boundary is shared with a small church built in the early 20th century. The main body of the structure comprises a pitched roof, with two small flat roof extensions; one on either side of the original structure. The boundary is demarcated by a small brick wall. The western boundary is shared with a road and is planted with introduced shrubs, including azalea *Rhododendron sp.*, *Hydrangea sp.*, *Fuchsia sp.* and *Yucca sp.*



Image 1. Showing the site and rhododendron shrub along the northern boundary

[Biodiversity Enhancements](#)

4.2.4 The application for planning permission for this development is being made prior to 1st April 2024 and so qualifies for an exemption from the statutory

biodiversity net gain requirements, when the governing legislation comes into force.

4.3 Fauna

Badgers

4.3.1 No evidence of badger activity was recorded during the survey.

Bats

4.3.2 No features of value to roosting bats were identified during the survey within the site. The adjacent church has the potential to provide features suitable for roosting bats, however the development will have no impact upon the church or any off-site feature.

Birds

4.3.3 The boundary trees offer potential to support nesting birds. No evidence of nesting activity was recorded during the survey, however the survey was undertaken outside the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive).

Dormouse

4.3.4 The habitats within the site are considered sub-optimal for dormouse, comprising a habitat structure and composition not favoured by the species.

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

4.3.5 There is no suitable network of waterbodies within 250m of the site to support Great Crested Newt, therefore it is considered unlikely that the species will be present within the site during its terrestrial phase.

Otter and Water Vole

4.3.6 The site and immediate vicinity offer no potential to support otter or water vole with no suitable aquatic habitats available.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 4.3.7 The grassland offers some, albeit limited, potential to support common reptile and amphibian species. However the managed nature of the site reduces its suitability to offer foraging and refuge habitat.

5 Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Designated and Non-Designated Sites

5.1.1 The proposed development comprises the erection of a single residential dwelling only. The sites identified during the desk study are located sufficiently far from the proposed development, therefore it is considered highly unlikely that there will be any negative impact upon any site designated for its nature conservation interest.

5.2 Habitats

5.2.1 Overall, the habitats within the site are of negligible to low ecological value, save for boundary trees, which will not be affected by the proposed development.

5.3 Fauna

5.3.1 The site is likely to support common species of bird and mammal, offering limited opportunities for amphibians and reptiles, given the highly managed nature of the grassland.

5.3.2 No features of value to roosting bats are present within the site itself, however as a precautionary measure, should bats be present within the off-site church, a sensitive lighting scheme is recommended to prevent light-spill onto features which may support bat roosts. Additionally, it is recommended that new artificial features are provided for wildlife, including bat and bird boxes, which can be secured via planning conditions.

6 References

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