native ecology
PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION

Preliminary ecological aPPraisal (Pea)

THE STOCK YARD

ELMSTONE, KENT

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1. SUMMARY

S.1 This report details a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken in respect of proposed development at The Stock Yard, (Lodge farm) Padbrook Lane, Elmstone, Kent, CT3 1Hf.

S.2 full proposals are not known at this time, but will include the construction of a single residential dwelling on the footprint of the existing building.

S.3 A PEA site visit was undertaken by Native Ecology on 19th July 2023.

S.4 The application site consists predominantly other neutral grassland and scrub, with an existing barn, stables and pigsties. Surrounding habitats include intensive arable farmland, interconnecting hedgerows and small residential dwellings with associated gardens.

S.5 further survey work is recommended to determine the presence / likely absence of reptiles within the Site and roosting bats in buildings to inform suitable mitigation (detailed in Section 9).

S.6 Mitigation, without the requirement for further survey work, is recommended for hedgehog, badger and birds (detailed within Section 10).

S.7 Section 11 includes recommended appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures which could be included within development proposals.

S.8 It is recommended that the results of the PEA report and any other further ecological survey work is incorporated into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) report, which should be submitted with the planning application. The EcIA report should assess the impacts of proposed development on ecological features and provide an Ecological Mitigation Strategy detailsing the measures that will be implemented to avoid, minimise and compensate for impacts.

S.9 Appendix 1 gives an overview of relevant legislation, which should be read in conjunction with this report.

S.10 Appendix 2 provides a habitat plan mapped through UKHab methodologies.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report details a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken in respect of proposed development at The Stock Yard, (Lodge farm) Padbrook Lane, Elmstone, Kent, CT3 1Hf (site centred TR 26056 60513).

2.2 figure 1, Section 3 provides a site location plan.

COMMISSION

2.3 Native Ecology was commissioned by Jennifer Coller in June 2023 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal within the application site.

APPLICATION SITE

2.4 The application site, hereafter referred to as 'the Site', comprises a single-storey garage / stables building and residential garden, access road and parking area. The Site extends to approximately 0.2ha.

2.5 figure 2, Section 4 provides an existing site plan.

PROPOSED WORKS

2.6 full proposals are not known at this time, but will include the construction of a single residential dwelling on the footprint of the existing building.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.7 This report aims to provide general advice on ecological constraints associated with proposed development within the site and includes recommendations for mitigation and further survey work, where required.

2.8 The objectives of the report are to:

- Describe the current ecological conditions present within the site.
- Identify any key ecological constraints to the proposed development both with regards protected species and sites.
- Identify where mitigation will allow significant ecological effects to be avoided or minimised wherever possible.
- Identify any further ecological surveys required in order to assess the possible impact on protected and important / notable species.
- Recommend ecological enhancements to be incorporated into the development proposals.

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Site location plan

The Stock Yard, Padbrook Lane
Elmstone, Kent
CT3 1HF

Drawing ref:	1276_DR04
Revision:	-
Date:	04/09/2023
Scale:	1:20,000 (Main canvas)
Paper size:	A3

4. EXISTING SITE PLAN

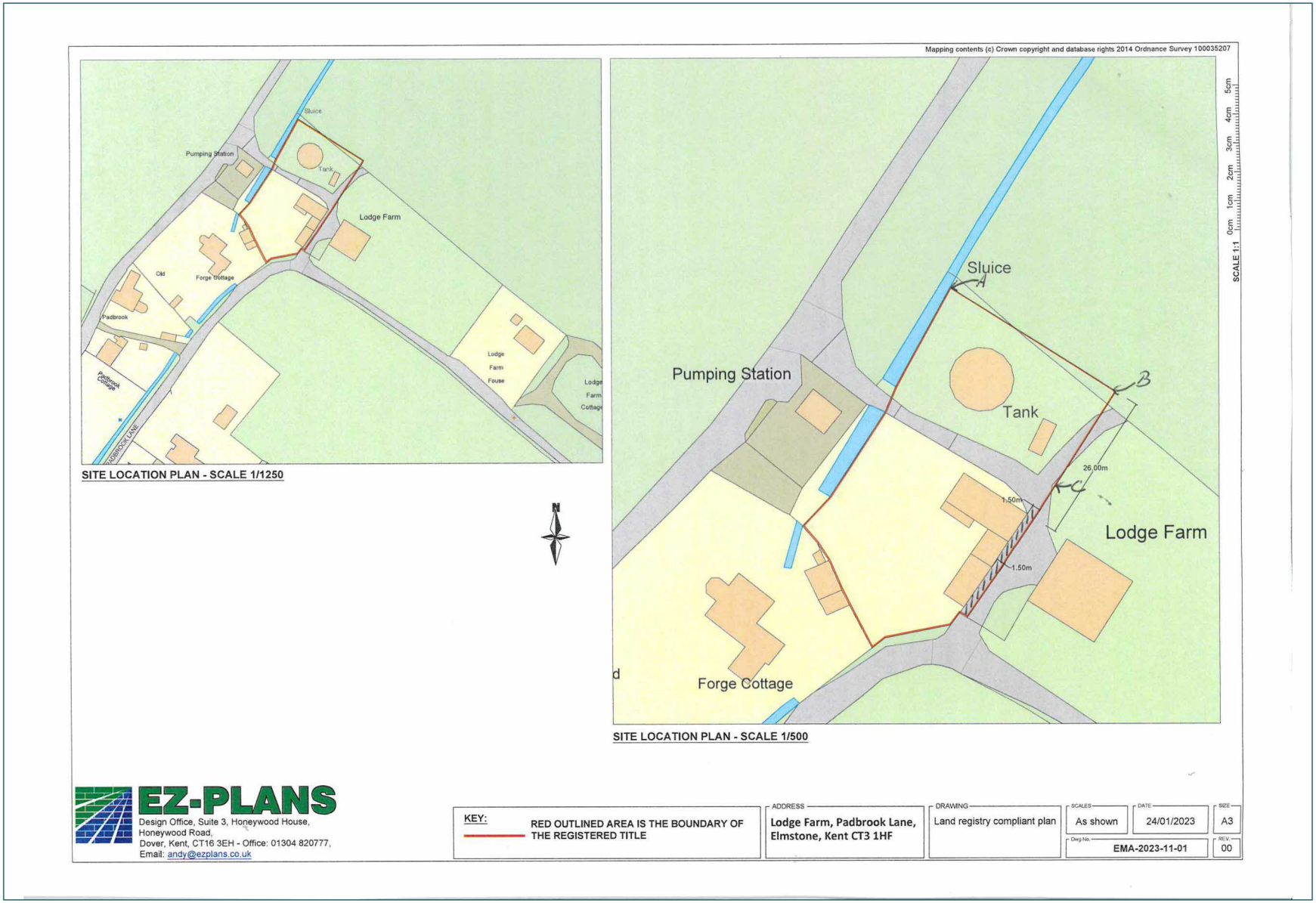

Figure 2. Existing site plan (EZ-Plans, Drawing No. EMA-2023-11-01, dated 24/01/2023).

5. METHODOLOGY

DESK STUDY

Zone of Influence

5.1 The 'zone of influence' for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities (CIEEM, 2017a). This report provides an assessment of the effects of a proposed development on protected or ecologically valuable sites, habitats or species where these effects extend beyond the development boundary of the site.

Designated sites

5.2 Potential impacts to designated sites, including National Site Network (NSN) sites and SSSIs, have been considered.

5.3 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was used to obtain information about statutory designated sites of international importance such as Special Protection Areas (SPA) within 7.2km of the Site.

5.4 Information was obtained about statutory designated sites of national importance such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR) within 2km of the Site and ancient woodland within 500m of the Site.

5.5 Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) was used to identify Local Sites, such as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), located within 1km of the Site.

Data search

5.6 Records were obtained from the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) within 1km of the Site in August 2023.

5.7 Ordnance survey maps, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website and aerial images were used to identify waterbodies within 250m of the Site boundary. MAGIC Map was also used to obtain information on locations where European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licences for great crested newt have been issued by Natural England within 1km of the Site.

FIELD STUDY

5.8 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site visit was undertaken by Miriam Anderson BSc (Hons) of Native Ecology on 19th July 2023.

Table 1. Survey details

Survey date	19th July 2023
Surveyor	Miriam Anderson BSc (Hons)
Time on site	10:00 - 11:00
Weather	23°C, 25% cloud cover, light breeze, no rain, ground wet

UK Habitat Classification

5.9 Habitats within the Site were mapped and classified in accordance with the The Professional Edition of the UK Habitat Classification.

5.10 There are 5 levels of hierarchy, which provide an increasing level of detail. for the purpose of this assessment, habitats have been mapped for Primary Habitats up to Level 4.

5.11 Secondary codes have been assigned, where appropriate. These Secondary Codes allow recording of additional information, linked to the Primary Habitats. In some cases, habitat types are defined by a Secondary Code only, where Primary Habitats do not sufficiently represent the habitat present.

Protected species and habitats

5.12 During the survey the species and habitats identified within the Site were recorded. An assessment was also made as to the presence or potential presence of protected, important or Nationally Rare species.

5.13 Protected species and habitats considered include those listed under the Schedules of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

5.14 In addition, an assessment has been made as to the possible impacts of the proposed development on nature conservation interests, in accordance with information relevant to the National Planning Policy framework and Local Planning Policy.

Bats

Preliminary Roost Assessment (bats)

5.15 A systematic search of the exterior and interior of buildings within the site was undertaken to identify potential bat access points and roosting places and to locate any evidence of bats such as bat droppings, urine staining and fur-oil staining. The inspection included exterior features of the buildings, such as sills, window panes, walls and the ground beneath potential access points to look for signs of bats, such as droppings.

5.16 A preliminary ground level roost assessment of trees within the site was undertaken to determine whether trees possessed Potential Roost features (PRFs) for bats. Where possible, trees were assessed as providing either negligible, low, moderate or high suitability for roosting bats.

5.17 The suitability of roosting habitat and foraging and commuting habitat within the site was assessed following recommendations provided within Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition, Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016) (see Appendix 2 for suitability assessment and survey effort required for structures and trees).

Reptiles

5.19 The suitability of habitats within the Site to support reptiles was assessed during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site visit. Any incidental sightings were recorded.

Great crested newt

5.20 The level of survey effort and data collection required to support a Planning Application or European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence for great crested newts is relative to the potential impact. for EPSM Licence applications, typically ponds within 250m of the construction zone are surveyed for the presence (and population assessment) of great crested newts.

5.21 following the guidance of Natural England (2021) waterbodies located beyond 250m from the development are only surveyed if all of the following conditions are met:

- ponds have potential to support a large great crested newt population;
- the development footprint contains particularly favourable habitat, especially if it constitutes the majority available locally;
- the development would have a substantial negative effect on that habitat; and
- there is an absence of dispersal barriers.

5.22 Based on the listed criteria above, a proportionate survey area for the Site includes the assessment of any ponds within 250m of the construction zone.

Habitats and Species of Principal Importance

5.23 An assessment was made as to the likely presence of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and birds on the Red and Amber lists of birds of conservation concern.

LIMITATIONS

5.24 This report aims to provide general advice on ecological constraints associated with the development of the site, it does not include detailed information on particular species or species groups but instead makes recommendations for further, species-specific surveys required.

5.25 In accordance with CIEEM guidance, consideration should be given to the validity of survey data after a period of 12 month from the date of the survey. This may require a site visit to assess whether ecological conditions within the site have changed and may require further ecological survey work due to the transient nature of some protected species.

6. CURRENT ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

DESIGNATED SITES

Statutory Sites of International Importance

6.1 There is one Special Area of Conservation (SAC), one Special Protection Area (SPA) and one RAMSAR located within 7.2km of the Site.

Table 2. Details of Statutory Sites of International Importance within 7.2km of the site boundary.

Designation	Site name	Distance and direction from site	Qualifying features
Ramsar	Stodmarsh	2.5km north-west	Qualifies under Criterion 2 for supporting 2 red data book wetland invertebrates, 2 nationally rare plants and 5 nationally scarce species. (JNCC, 1993)
SAC	Stodmarsh	2.5km north-west	Qualifies under the Habitats Directive for supporting Annex II species, the Desmoulin's whorl snail (Vertigo moulinsiana). (JNCC, 2015)
SPA	Stodmarsh	2.5km north-west	Article 4.1 of the Habitats Directive for supporting populations of European importance of over-wintering great bittern (Botaurus stellaris) and hen harrier (Circus cyaneus). Article 4.2 - of the Habitats Directive for regularly supporting breeding gadwall Anas strepera aswell as over-winterwing northern shoveller (Anas clypeata) and gadwall. Article 4.2 of the Habitats Directive for supporting a large assemblage of internationally important bird species. (JNCC, 2015a)

6.2 According to the Impact Risk Zones for Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Protection (SPA), SACs and SSSIs shown on Natural England's MAGIC map application, the planning application type means there is no requirement for the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England during the planning process regarding statutory designated sites.

6.3 'For new residential development in this area financial contributions might be required to mitigate increased recreational disturbance on coastal SPAs and Ramsar Sites. Check with Local Planning Authority.'

6.4 The development Site falls within the Stodmarsh Nutrient Impact Area.

6.5 Statutory Sites of International Importance of considered further in Section 8.

Statutory Sites of National Importance

6.6 There are no Statutory Sites of National Importance located within 2km of the survey area. No further assessment or mitigation is required for Statutory Sites of National Importance.

Non-statutory sites

Local Sites

6.7 There are no non-statutory sites, such as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) located within 1km of the Site.

6.8 No further assessment or mitigation is required for LWS.

Ancient Woodland

6.9 There are no areas of ancient woodland located within 500m of the Site boundary.

6.10 No further assessment or mitigation is proposed in relation to ancient woodland.

HABITATS WITHIN THE SITE

Habitats of Principal Importance

6.11 There are no habitats of principal importance located within the Site.

Other habitats

Buildings

6.12 There are three buildings present within the Site. Table 3 below provides photographs and building descriptions.

Table 3. Description of buildings within the Site.

Building no. & name	Description	Photograph
B1	Stable building in a moderate state of repair, now used as a storage shed. Internally the structure is in good repair. Consisting of timber frame with timber cladding on all elevations, the structure has a pitched slate roof and abuts Building B2. Previously overgrown with ivy covering the roof.	
B2	A timber frame barn in poor repair externally, due to the collapsing north elevation. The internal structure of the barn is in good condition, now used for storage of vehicles and other large objects. The barn consists of a timber frame with timber cladded elevations, and a pitched slate roof. The structure is covered with dense ivy, entwined throughout the cladding.	

Building no. & name	Description	Photograph
B3	Building B3 is a collection of three small lean-to structures in poor repair previously used as pigsties. Consisting of timber cladded elevations and corrugated tin roofs. Surrounded by overgrown vegetation including ivy growing over the roof.	

6.13 Table 4 below describes the habitats present within the Site in accordance with UK Habitat Classification.

Table 4. Habitat types present within the Site, including level (UKHab), size and description.

Habitat TyPe				Descr iPtion
Level 2 label	Level 3 label	Level 4 label	Level 5 label / Secondary codes	
Urban (u)	Built-up areas and gardens (u1)	Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	Buildings (u1b5)	See full description in Table 3.
		Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)	Track (115)	A track leads into the Site from the road consisting of crushed stone and bare ground.
Grassland (g)	Neutral grassland (g3)	Other neutral grassland (g3c)	Scattered trees (11) Ruderal / ephemeral vegetation (17)	Small areas within the Site consisted of other neutral grassland with scattered trees and self seeded saplings. Species present included; perennial rye-grass (Lolium perenne), cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata), common daisy (Bellis perennis), broadleaved plantain (Plantago major), clover (Trifolium repens), lambs ear (Stachys byzantina), thistle (Cirsium sp.), wood avens (Geum urbanum), common cleavers (Galium aparine), sowthistle (Sonchus sp.), willow herb (Epilobium sp.), and yarrow (Achillea millefolium).
Heathland and shrub (h)	Dense scrub (h3)	Mixed scrub (h3h)	Unmanaged (80)	Majority of the Site consists of mixed scrub including species such as; bramble (Rubus sp.), common nettle (Urtica dioica), buddleja (Buddleja davidii), poppy (Papaver sp.), ivy (Hedera helix), camomile daisy (Chamaemelum nobile), willow herb (Epilobium sp.), fern (Tracheophyta sp.).

SURROUNDING HABITATS

6.15 The Site is situated within the rural village of Elmstone, located approximately 10km from the centre of Canterbury. Surrounding habitats include intensive arable farmland, interconnecting hedgerows and small residential dwellings with associated gardens.

PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

Bats - Roosting habitat

Buildings - Preliminary Roost Assessment

Table 5. Results of Preliminary Roost Assessment

Building	Potential roost features	Suitability for roosting bats
B1	Multiple gaps between cladding and roof tiles could provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bats, or provide access to the internal space for species such as brown long-eared bat.	High
B2	Multiple gaps between cladding and roof tiles could provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bats. The large open barn doors and holes in the rear and side elevations could provide access to the internal space for species such as brown long-eared bat.	High
B3	The small lean-to, disused pigsties presented no potential roosting features due to the integrity and the relatively small size of the structures.	Negligible

6.16 No bats, or evidence of bats, was found during the internal inspection of the buildings.

6.17 Roosting bats in buildings are considered further in Section 8.

Roosting bats - Trees

6.18 No visible potential roost features were recorded in the trees within the Site.

6.19 No further survey work or mitigation is required for bat roosts in trees.

Foraging and commuting habitat

6.20 Habitats within the site, including grassland, scattered trees and mixed scrub offer suitable foraging habitat for bats.

6.21 foraging and commuting bats are considered further in Section 8.

Hazel dormice

6.22 According to MAGIC map application there have been no recent EPSM licences obtained for hazel dormice within 1km of the Site.

6.23 The mixed scrub within the Site provides sub-optimal habitat for hazel dormice. However, this habitat feature lacks connectivity to larger more suitable habitats, no parcels of ancient woodland are located within the surrounding landscape, reducing the likely presence of dormice within the Site.

6.24 Hazel dormice are considered further in Section 8.

Riparian mammals

6.25 There is no habitat suitable for otter, beaver or water vole within, or in close proximity the site. No further survey work or mitigation is required for riparian mammals.

[redacted]

Hedgehog

6.28 Habitats within the Site and surrounding area provide foraging opportunities for hedgehog, which may be present in the locality.

Birds

6.30 Due to the habitats present, no Schedule 1 birds are expected to nest within the Site. Though Building B2 is a timber framed barn, there are no ledges present that could be used by barn owls to nest.

6.31 The scattered trees, buildings and scrub provide suitable nesting habitat for a number of common bird species as well as red and amber listed birds such as dunnock and song thrush.

6.32 A small number of old and new nests were present within the buildings during the site visit.

6.33 Birds are considered further in Section 8.

Reptiles

6.34 Data obtained from KRAG include no recent records of reptiles within 1km of the Site. Historical records include two grass snakes recorded approximately 0.8km east in 2001. Reptile survey effort in the local area is considered below average and therefore, results should be interpreted with caution.

6.35 The unmanaged mixed scrub and grassland with ruderal / ephemeral vegetation provides moderate suitability for reptiles.

Great crested newt

6.37 According to MAGIC map application there have been no recent EPSM licences obtained for great crested newt within 1km of the Site.

6.38 Data obtained from KRAG include no records of great crested newt within 1km of the Site. However, amphibian survey effort within the local area is considered below average and therefore, results should be interpreted with caution.

6.39 There are no waterbodies present within the site. According to OS maps, MAGIC map and aerial images, there are three waterbodies present within 250m of the site boundary.

- WB1 - Directly adjacent to the north-western boundary is a small stream. At the time of the survey this stream bed was dry.
- WB2 - Approximately 0.02km south-west is a small stream; and
- WB3 - Located approximately 0.2km north is a medium sized pond.

Invertebrates

6.41 features within the Site, such as the mixed scrub, provide suitable habitat to support a range of common and widespread invertebrates. Protected or rare invertebrates are unlikely to be present due to the habitat types present.

6.42 No further survey work or mitigation is recommended for invertebrates.

flora

6.43 Due to the past and present management of the Site, the areas of habitat are unlikely to support protected plant species. No evidence of Schedule 9 plants was found during the Site survey.

6.44 No further survey work or mitigation is recommended for flora.