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Date: 9th February 2024

Re: Update Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for Proposed Development at The Gig House, Chilton Street, Clare, Suffolk, CO10 8QS.

Introduction & Methodology

Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was instructed to undertake an update Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The assessment updates an initial Phase 1 Habitat Survey on the 8th December 2014 and an update Preliminary Ecological Appraisal on the 26th march 2020 all by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSc MCIEEM (licensed to survey for bats- level 2 and great crested newts- level 1).

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, 2023 (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2023).

This study and report complies with the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2017 Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 – 18 months.

Survey Results

All three surveys found the site in a very similar condition, though some minor works had been undertaken between the 2014 and 2020 surveys. It is understood nothing has taken placed at the site since that time.

The update survey was conducted on 6th February 2024. 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.

The site included one detached, derelict house and surrounding lawn. A small number of mature trees were present around the site, though not included in the development.

The house was a double-storey, timber frame structure with wattle and daub walls and a pitched, tiled roof. A cellar was present under the house and a brick and flint garage was attached to the southern elevation of the house.

The house and attached garage were considered potentially suitable for roosting bats. One brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus* bat was discovered behind some peeling plaster on the ground floor in 2014 & 2024. Two groupings of bat droppings (approximately 10-20 per pile), consistent in appearance to brown long-eared droppings, were observed on the first floor at the eastern and western ends of the building (2014). Fewer droppings were discovered in 2024.

Three old swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests were observed in the house during the 2014 survey, though not in 2024. Swallow are not a specially protected bird or UK priority bird, though they are an amber-listed Bird of Conservation Concern (BoCC) due to declining populations.

The green space proposed for impact (lawn) around the house was considered low in ecological value, a common and widespread habitat type and unlikely to support protected, priority or rare species. The mature trees just outside of the construction zone were of greater ecological value and are proposed for retention.

Discussion

Recommendations in the preceding reports remain valid and appropriate, however have been extrapolated and updated below, include precautionary measures to minimise the risk of impact to hedgehogs which may pass through the site occasionally for foraging.

Recommendations

Bats

A Natural England bat licence will be required for works to proceed legally. To prevent harm to bats and provide alternative roosting habitat the below should be followed:

- Demolition works commencing in weather conditions suitable for active bats (several consecutive nights above 7C), to prevent encountering hibernating bats during works;

- Prior to the commencement of development works bat boxes should be erected on nearby trees. The boxes should include three 1FD Schwegler bat boxes and one 1FW Schwegler hibernation bat box. The boxes should be positioned high on the trees (above 4m) with the 1FD boxes facing a mixture of southerly, easterly and westerly directions and the 1FW box facing a northerly direction;

- Development works should then commence with a soft strip of building under supervision by a bat licensed ecologist. The ecologist should inspect all roof areas and other potential roosting locations. If bats are discovered during the supervised soft strip they should be safely relocated into one of the installed bat boxes;

- Following building restoration two 1FR Schwegler bat tubes should be installed into the walls of the new building to provide permanent roosting habitat into the future. One tube should facing a southerly direction, the second tube should be facing a easterly direction close to vegetation. The boxes should be installed high on the new building (ideally just below the roofline) and away from light sources or doorways;

- All mature trees and hedgerows nearby should be retained and protected within the development as they form part of important foraging and commuting habitat;

- Minimisation of use of external lighting on and around the building. Any necessary lighting should use LED lamps (<3000k) with hoods to direct the light downward and prevent horizontal or vertical light spillage. Any external lighting should be on sensors with short timers and be sensitive to large moving objects only, to prevent passing bats from switching them on.

- Post development monitoring of the replacement bat roosting habitat for a minimum of one year to assess the success of the mitigation.

Please note that for the bat licence application Natural England would require three further dusk emergence surveys on the building. The surveys will need to be undertaken to Natural England and Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines in suitable weather at the appropriate time of year (May until the end of September).

Birds

It is recommended that to prevent harm to nesting birds, building demolition should commence outside of the main bird breeding season (March until the end of August). If this timescale is not possible then an ecologist should check the site for active bird nests before commencement of demolition.

If an active bird nest was found, it would be necessary to protect the nest from harm or disturbance until the bird had finished nesting.

To maintain potential for swallow nesting three Schwegler swallow nesting cups should be installed under the eaves of the new house or within an open cartlodge or other structure on the site.

The nesting cups can be purchased online through suppliers such as NHBS and The Wildlife Shop.

Hedgehogs

- Before construction/groundworks commence, the site should be cut during fine and dry weather conditions. A double-cut method should be used whereby the grass is cut to a height of approximately 15cm followed by a second cut to ground level.

- During development, waste material should be removed off site immediately and construction materials should be stored on hardstanding or off the ground on pallets, to prevent wildlife from sheltering in the materials and being harmed by movement of the materials.

- During works, the site should be well drained and ground vegetation maintained short throughout the development, to prevent attracting wildlife into harm's way.

- Any excavations for the development should be covered at night or have a roughly sawn plank placed in them to facilitate escape for any wildlife which may fall in.

- No construction/demolition works at night when hedgehogs are mostly active.

- In the unlikely event that a hedgehog or other notable wildlife is observed on the site during development, activities in that area should cease and the animal should be allowed to disperse of its own accord. If rescuing is required and ecologist should be called for advice.

- Any new boundary fencing should have gaps at the base for hedgehog movement. The gaps should be at least 13cm in diameter.

Biodiversity Enhancement

By following the below biodiversity enhancements, the development will improve the site for local wildlife and provide a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2023).

The following bat and bird boxes will be installed on the new buildings and or retained trees as biodiversity enhancement:

- 1 x Schwegler 1FF (or similar).

- 1 x Schwegler 1B Bird Box (or similar).

- 4 x Bee Bricks

The bird and bat boxes will be installed high (above 4m) on retained trees. The bird box will be installed facing a northerly direction or out of direct sunlight. The bat box will be facing a southerly direction. Bee bricks will be installed into the building walls at or above 2m in heigh facing a southerly direction.

Any new or restored grass areas can be created using a wildflower meadow mixture such as EM1 from Emorsgate Seeds;

Any other new soft landscaping will include native and or wildlife attracting species only.

To enhance the site for biodiversity net gain at least 6 new native broad-leaved trees will be planted.

A new mixed, native hedgerow should also be planted on the site boundary to infill existing boundary vegetation. The hedgerow should be planted in a double-staggered row including an even mix of at least five different species.

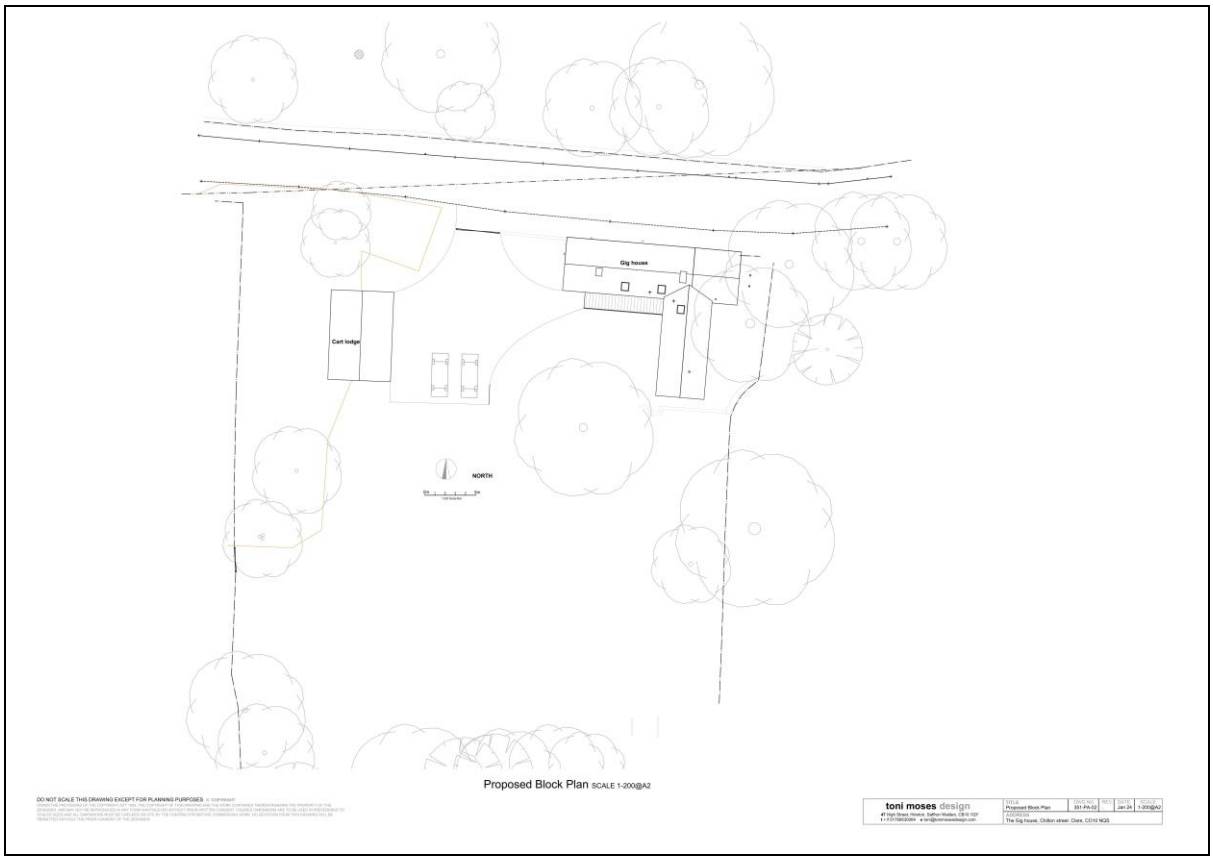
Yours sincerely,

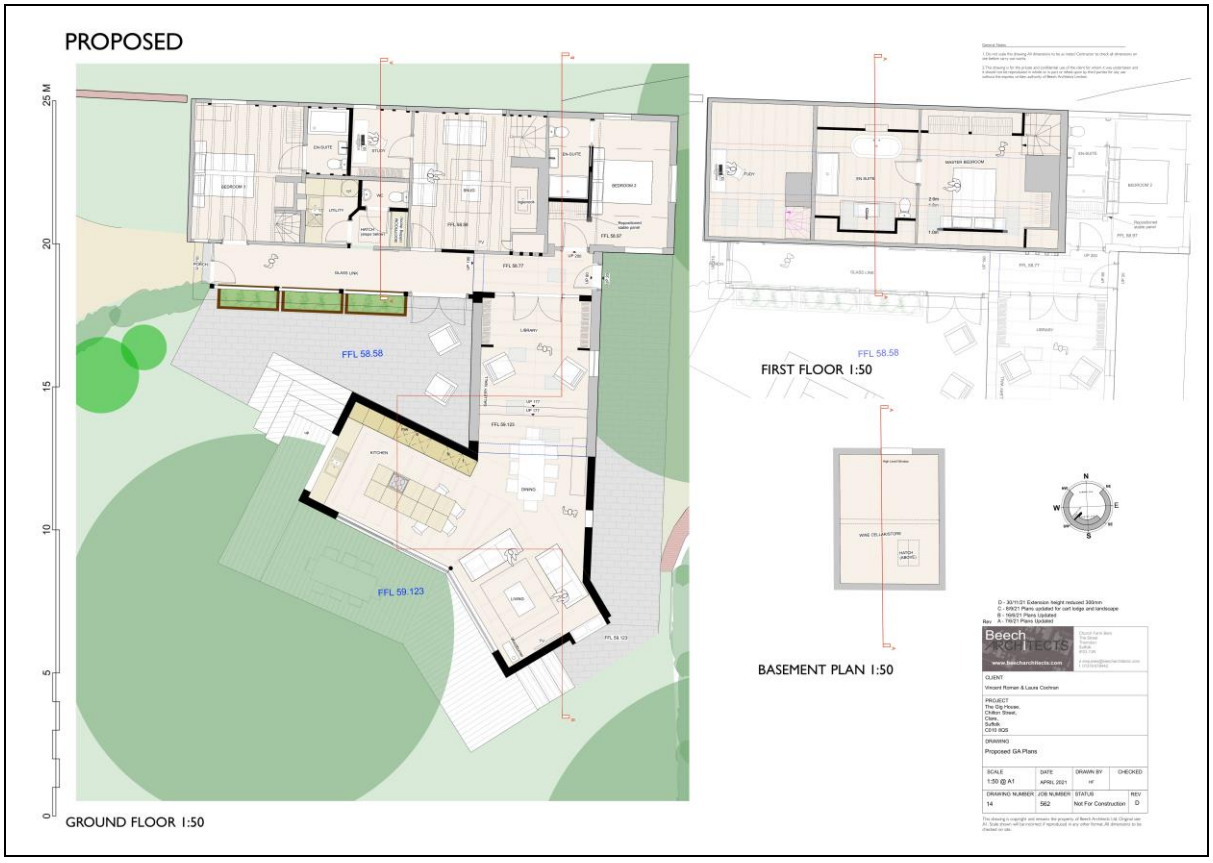
Roger Spring BSc MCIEEM

Appendix 1:

Figure 1: Habitat Map

Figure 2: Proposed Development





Photographs

Photograph 1: The Gig House site, Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 2: Green space at The Gig House site, Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 3: Inside the garage attached to The Gig House, Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 4: Roof of The Gig House and attached garage Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 5: Bat droppings inside the first floor at the western end of The Gig House, Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 6: Roosting brown long-eared bat under peeling plaster on the ground floor of The Gig House, Chilton Street. 8th December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2014

Photograph 7: Main site area at The Gig House, Chilton Street. 6th February 2024.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 8: Inside the first floor at The Gig House, Chilton Street. 6th February 2024.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 9: Bat droppings on the floor at The Gig House, Chilton Street. 6th February 2024.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2024

Photograph 10: Roosting brown long-eared bat under peeling plaster on the ground floor of The Gig House, Chilton Street. 8th of December 2014.

Photograph by Roger Spring 2024