

Outline Ecological Assessment

Holton Hall Farm
Holton St Mary
Suffolk

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Ref 019/24

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Site surveyors
Mr Patrick McKenna

Report Approved
12th February 2024



Patrick K McKenna BSc (Hons),
M.C.I.E.E.M Company Director

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1. Summary

1.1 Eco-Planning UK Ltd received instruction to complete an Outline Ecological Assessment for an existing grain store and adjacent area at Holton Hall Farm, Holton St Mary in Suffolk.

1.2 The Assessment will be part of a planning application for the site that will be submitted to the local authority.

1.3 The Assessments were completed on Thursday 8th February 2024. Access was available to all parts of the proposed development area. The weather was overcast, dry, with a light wind that did not impact upon the survey efforts.

1.4 From the on-site Ecological Assessments and desk top study it was determined that: -

- No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation.
- However, the site is within a “zone of influence” for the Cattawade Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact upon this conservation area its size or conservation status, nor affect its management regimes or future ecological potential.
- The site is also within a “zone of influence” for the Stour and Orwell RAMSAR, S.A.C and S.P.A conservation sites. The proposed development will not impact upon these Natura 2000 conservation areas, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential.
- No part of the site has any Priority Habitat Status. There is a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland to the south and east of the survey area. The proposed development will not impact upon these conservation areas – their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential.
- To the west of the grain barn where a change of use is being sought is a short, mown sward of amenity grassland with no associated flora diversity or structure, it has no conservation value.

- Internally the grain barn is illuminated and in constant use. It is a well-maintained building with no access in any part of the roof or ridge line.
-
- There are no bat field signs in any part of the building, there is no bat roost feature, there are no bats.
-
- There is no pond on or adjacent to the site.
-
- However, there are 2 x ponds within 100 metres of the proposed change of use development.
- The proposed development will not impact upon any off-site ponds – their size management or conservation value.
- It will not prevent any amphibian accessing any off-site pond or habitat, neither will it fragment or restrict access to any terrestrial amphibian habitat.
- There will be no disturbance or loss of any amphibian resting place.
- No Amphibian survey efforts are required.
- A simple amphibian construction method statement for the small parking area within the amenity managed lawn post planning approval will be sufficient mitigation to prevent any amphibian trespass during construction.

1.5 This Outline Ecological Assessment and report will address all relevant ecological/conservation related issues as part of the planning application process for this site.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework continues to require that on-site biodiversity/conservation is given full consideration at the time of a planning development application submission.
- 2.2 For any planning application for this site the Local Planning Authority would be acting in a reasonable and responsible manner under the legislation by requesting that the planning applicant completes a suitable ecological assessment and prepares/submits a subsequent report, if the Authority believes a habitat or species could be threatened by the proposed development.
- 2.3 The Outline Ecological Assessment and this report will address all relevant biodiversity concerns the local planning authority may have in relation to this proposed development.

3. Site Assessment

3.1. The relevant survey area is an existing modern grain store, existing access road and small area of amenity lawn/landscape grassed area at Holton Fram, Holton St Mary, in Suffolk - Drawing 1 red line boundary.



Drawing 1



Photograph 1

3.2 To the north and east is the wider farmyard and associated buildings, to the south an area of broadleaf Priority Habitat Woodland, to the west improved grassland/amenity area with numerous mobile homes (Photograph 1).

3.3 To the west of the grain barn where a change of use is being sought is a short, mown sward of amenity grassland with no associated flora diversity or structure, it has no conservation value (Photograph 2).

3.4 To the rear of the grain barn is a bare earth rutted access track (Photograph 3), with an area of broadleaf Priority Woodland beyond.



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5

3.5 To the east of the grain barn is a concrete surfaced farmyard and the main barn access (Photograph 4). To the north is a narrow gap between the relevant and adjacent barn buildings (Photograph 5).

3.6 Internally the grain barn is illuminated and in constant use (Photograph 6). It is a well-maintained building with no access in any part of the roof or ridge line.

3.7 For such grain buildings it is essential that any fauna is excluded so that the grain cannot be contaminated.

3.8 There is no bat field sign in any part of the building, there is no bat roost feature, there are no bats.



Photograph 6

3.9 There is no pond within the planning application area. However, there are 2 x ponds off site to the north – Drawing 2.



Drawing 2

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Company no: 5553720 VAT Reg. No: 980 8484 75

3.10 The larger of the 2 x ponds is an ornamental water feature in the grounds of the adjacent property, access to this pond was not available.

3.11 The smaller pond (Photograph 7), has conservation value and possible amphibian potential. Its origin/history is not known. It has been regularly managed and has no significant silt deposits. It may be a recent swale type creation as part of a previous planning application.



Photograph 7

3.12 The wider site has no badger field signs of any type, there is no badger sett. No badger mitigation is required.

3.13 The proposed development site has no invertebrate potential that requires a scoping assessment.

3.14 There is no reptile suitable habitat on or adjacent to the proposed change of use development area. No reptile presence or absence survey is required.

4. Planning Policy and Site Status

- 4.1 The direction to protect sites with a designated conservation status including Local Wildlife Sites is within the National Planning Policy Framework. Local Planning Authorities are required to set criteria-based policies against which proposals for any development, on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas, will be judged. Planning policies should identify and map components of local ecological networks including the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity.
- 4.2 With such extensive legislative/planning policy protection of biodiversity and designated conservation sites against development, it is essential to first establish the status of any site where any ecological related assessment is being made if it is, as in this case, in relation to a feasibility study or subsequent planning application.
- 4.3 No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation (Appendix 1 and 2).
- 4.4 However, the site is within a “zone of influence” for the Cattawade Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact upon this conservation area its size or conservation status, nor affect its management regimes or future ecological potential.
- 4.5 The site is also within a “zone of influence” for the Stour and Orwell RAMSAR, S.A.C and S.P.A conservation sites – Appendix 1 . The proposed development will not impact upon these Natura 2000 conservation areas, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential.
- 4.5 No part of the site has any Priority Habitat Status. There is a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland to the south and east of the survey area. The proposed development will not impact upon these conservation areas – their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential.

5. Planning Policy and Wildlife Legislation

5.1 Regardless of any planning policy or guideline change certain species are legally protected and any type of development that would injure, kill, ill-treat or intentionally damage or destroy any protected species or place of shelter would be a criminal act. However, some species that do not receive statutory full protection under existing ranges of legislation continue to be identified as requiring conservation action as species of principal importance in the revised (2018 and 2019) National Planning Policy Framework:

- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the protection of priority species populations... linked to national and local targets.
- When determining planning applications local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- To achieve this conservation action/protection planning authorities are instructed to refuse planning applications that cause harm to these species or their habitats if no suitable mitigation has been identified.

5.2 With legal responsibilities and new planning framework implications it remains essential that any ecological assessment of any feasibility/development site, including the area of this report, must determine the possible presence or absence of any protected species as part of the development process. Without this assessment the potential developer would be unable to demonstrate due diligence in his legal wildlife responsibilities.

5.4 Furthermore the local planning officer will not have been provided with the required information to be able to determine if the ecological based requirements of their relevant planning application for the site are being met in full. It would however be unreasonable to survey for every protected floral/faunal species. The likelihood of a protected species being present is based on the habitat type/condition and when appropriate any existing record of the species being present within a relevant distance Appendix 4 Essex Field Club data search.

5.5 The Site Assessment determined that the proposed development area is an existing modern maintained illuminated in constant use grain store and a small area of adjacent mown short sward amenity grassland with no biodiversity value.

- 5.6 The grain store had no bat roost value, and no further bat related survey effort is required.
- 5.7 The small area of close mown amenity grassland had no biodiversity value – no further faunal survey efforts are required.
- 5.8 There is no pond on or adjacent to the site.
- 5.8 However, there are 2 x ponds within 100 metres of the proposed change of use development.
- 5.9 The proposed development will not impact upon any off-site ponds – their size management or conservation value.
- 5.10 It will not prevent any amphibian accessing any off-site pond or habitat, neither will it fragment or restrict access to any terrestrial amphibian habitat.
- 5.11 There will be no disturbance or loss of any amphibian resting place.
- 5.12 No Amphibian survey efforts are required.
- 5.13 A simple amphibian construction method statement for the small parking area within the amenity managed lawn post planning approval will be sufficient mitigation to prevent any amphibian trespass during construction.

6. Conclusion

6.1 No part of the proposed development site has any type of statutory or non-statutory conservation designation.

6.2 However, the site is within a “zone of influence” for the Cattawade Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not impact upon this conservation area its size or conservation status, nor affect its management regimes or future ecological potential.

6.3 The site is also within a “zone of influence” for the Stour and Orwell RAMSAR, S.A.C and S.P.A conservation sites. The proposed development will not impact upon these Natura 2000 conservation areas, their size or conservation status, nor affect their management regimes or future ecological potential.

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6.5 To the west of the grain barn where a change of use is being sought is a short, mown sward of amenity grassland with no associated flora diversity or structure, it has no conservation value.

6.6 Internally the grain barn is illuminated and in constant use. It is a well-maintained building with no access in any part of the roof or ridge line.

6.7 There are no bat field signs in any part of the building, there is no bat roost feature, there are no bats.

6.8 There is no pond on or adjacent to the site.

6.9 However, there are 2 x ponds within 100 metres of the proposed change of use development.

6.10 The proposed development will not impact upon any off-site ponds – their size management or conservation value.

6.11 It will not prevent any amphibian accessing any off-site pond or habitat, neither will it fragment or restrict access to any terrestrial amphibian habitat.

6.12 There will be no disturbance or loss of any amphibian resting place.

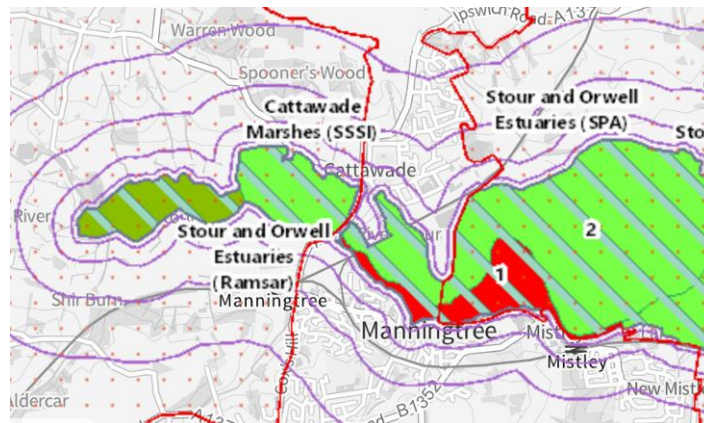
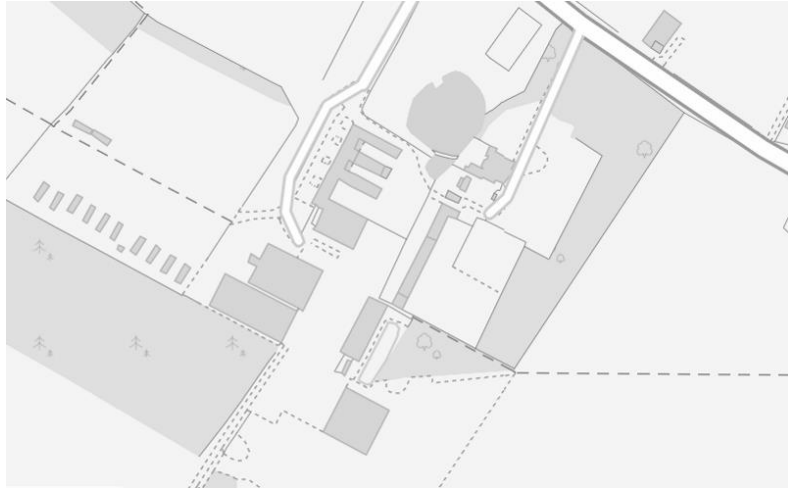
6.13 No Amphibian survey efforts are required.

6.14 A simple amphibian construction method statement for the small parking area within the amenity managed lawn post planning approval will be sufficient mitigation to prevent any amphibian trespass during construction.

6.15 This Outline Ecological Assessment and report will address all relevant ecological/conservation related issues as part of the planning application process for this site.

Appendix 1

Statutory Conservation Designated Sites



Ramsar Sites (England)

Name	STOUR AND ORWELL ESTUARIES
Reference	UK11067
Hectares	3672.57

Sites of Special Scientific Interest Units (England)

Name	CATTAWADE MARSHES
Reference	1064357
Site Unit Condition	FAVOURABLE
Citation	1005173
Hectares	47.98

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Special Protection Areas (England)

Name	STOUR AND ORWELL ESTUARIES
Reference	UK9009121
Hectares	3672.57

Appendix 2

Non-Statutory Designated Sites



Appendix 3

Habitat Inventory



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Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)

Main Habitats	Deciduous woodland
Habitat Codes	DWOOD

Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat (England)

Polygon ID	0102:0004225
Priority habitat	Wood-pasture and Parkland
Reliability of interpretation	Low