

Mr Marron

Western House Developments
Western House,
Tilehouse Street,
Hitchin,
Hertfordshire,
SG5 2DY

22nd March 2024

Lanpro Project Number – 4348



Dear Mr Marron,

Ecology verification survey in relation to Land at 1no. High & 5 -7 Valley Road, Leiston Suffolk IP16 4ET

Lanpro was commissioned by yourselves to undertake an ecology validation walkover to compare the current site situation with the 2022 report undertaken by Practical Ecology¹. The previous survey was undertaken on 22nd November 2022 and should be submitted as part of the planning application together with this letter.

The development is a non-major residential development within the grounds of 1 High Street, Leiston, Suffolk, IP16 4ET ('the Site').

Methodology

The validation walkover was undertaken on 21st March 2024 by Hannah Broughton MCIEEM, level 2 bat class licence number 2015-15635-CLS-CLS. Weather conditions were dry, 12 degrees C.

The survey was undertaken within the redline boundary of the development. All exterior areas were accessible however the interior of the derelict commercial building (to be demolished) was not accessible as it was structurally unsound with the landowner reporting that the glass roof lights were at imminent risk of collapse.

The aim of the survey was to compare the existing habitats and protected species suitability with that reported in the 2022 Practical Ecology report. Habitats were classified in accordance with UK Habitat Classification version 2 (2023), with dominant plant species recorded.

The desk study undertaken in 2022 was not repeated and is assumed to remain valid as it is less than 18 months aged.

¹ Land Adjacent to 1 High Street, Leiston. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report On Behalf of Western House Developments. Version 1 | December 2022

Results

The habitats and protected species suitability on-site largely remained the same as reported in 2022¹.

The Site consisted of a derelict commercial building and an unmanaged vegetated garden which contained unmanaged grassland, temporary structures (shipping containers, a summerhouse and a derelict caravan), unvegetated unsealed surfaces, and scattered trees. The Site was bounded by brick walls and wooden close boarded fences. Tipped building waste was scattered across the Site and a spoil pile of soil was present towards the north of the Site.

Scattered trees included a English oak (*Quercus robur*) with veteran associations on the eastern boundary, a mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) on the western boundary, and a semi-mature sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in the north eastern corner. A large mature blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) was also present in the north east corner.

The oak had two main stems, one of which was almost entirely decayed and one of which was intact with very little decay. The decayed limb was so decayed that it had very limited suitability for roosting bats, as the rotten areas were open to the elements. The intact limb had lifted bark and ivy covering, which overall had roosting suitability for individual bats only ('PRF-I').

The ash tree had a covering of ivy and had roosting suitability for individual bats only ('PRF-I'). Other scattered trees had no bat roosting suitability.

The derelict commercial building appeared similar to the previous assessment based on the survey from the exterior. Human access into the western wall had been recently created (winter 2023/4) which had only been partly covered with steel hoarding. A large gap was present above the hoarding. As such, this allowed suitable access for bats and birds into the interior of the building and increases the suitability of the building from negligible to low. However, as the gap had been created very recently and outside of the bat active season, and as the subsequent bat active season has not yet commenced, there is no reasonable likelihood that bats will have found and started to use the building as a roosting site.

The summerhouse was a derelict wooden structure with glass windows. A majority of the felt roof coverings had come away leaving the single skin wooden boards underneath exposed and the interior open to the elements. The doorway was left open. The corners of the structure had rotted near to the ground but in general the tongue-in-groove planks were tightly overlapping. All potential roosting features (e.g. areas of rot) were inspected with a torch and no evidence of roosting bats was found. The structure was classed as having no more than low suitability for roosting bats. The caravan was classified as having negligible suitability for roosting bats and the shipping containers as having no suitability.

Recommendations

No development will occur within 15m of the veteran oak tree and no lighting is planned adjacent to the tree. Aside from tree protection measures and the measures detailed within the tree survey report², there are no additional recommendations.

² Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statements, Land adjacent 1 High Street, Leiston, Suffolk. Tree Planning Solutions. TPSarb7751122 27th March 2024

The ash tree in the north west corner will be removed to facilitate the development. It is recommended this is section felled under a precautionary working method statement. The summerhouse and commercial building should also be demolished under a precautionary working method statement, aligned with paragraph 5.2.44 of the bat survey guidelines (Collins 2023). For the summerhouse, this would include a licensed bat worker being present on the day of demolition to remove the damaged / rotten features by hand. It is not safe for an ecologist to be present during the demolition of the commercial building. The demolition contractor should be provided with a toolbox talk regarding roosting bats and nesting birds and to stop works and contact an ecologist if any evidence of either is found.

The 2022 report¹ should be referred to for further assessments and recommendations regarding other protected species and habitats.

Biodiversity Net Gain Statement

The proposed development meets the thresholds of a non-major development as defined by Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Therefore, the planning application is exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements until 2nd April 2024, under the temporary exemption for non-major developments. As such, the biodiversity gain condition would not apply.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Broughton
Director of Ecology, Lanpro

Photo appendix

Oak Tree



Site looking south



Site looking north



Derelict commercial building



Derelict summerhouse

