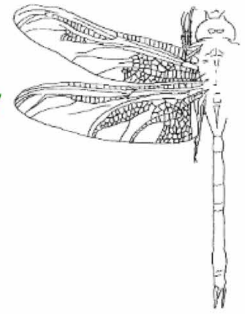


Huckle  
Ecology



## Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy: information to discharge Condition 6

Land at Manor Road, Clopton, Suffolk


Planning Ref: DC/23/2102/FUL : Use of land for stationing 2 shepherds huts  
for holiday use together with office/store

Mrs Becky Finch

April 2024

20358 R1 v2

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20358 R1 v1	Draft for Client Review
20358 R1 v2	Final report for issue

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Report prepared by Dr J. Huckle for Huckle Ecology Ltd

Declaration: The information and advice which we have prepared and presented it true and has been developed in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that any opinions expressed are our own and my true and bona fide opinions.

Digital Signature:



Dr Jon Huckle CEnv MCIEEM MSc BSc (Hons)

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Terms of Reference

- 1.1.1 Huckle Ecology was commissioned to prepare ecological information required for the discharge of a planning condition attached to the planning decision notice that granted permission for the "Use of land for stationing of 2 shepherds huts for holiday use together with office/store". The planning permission was granted following a planning application submitted to East Suffolk Council in 2023 (Ref DC/23/2012/FUL) and determined on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- 1.1.2 A Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (CEMP) is required in relation to Condition 6 that was attached to the Decision notice, and which states:

6. No development shall take place (including any demolition, ground works, site clearance) until a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The content of the Plan shall be in accordance with the recommendations within the Ecological Assessment Report (Huckle Ecology, May 2023) and shall include the:

- purpose and objectives for the proposed works;
- detailed design(s) and/or working method(s) necessary to achieve stated objectives (including, where relevant, type and source of materials to be used);
- extent and location of proposed works shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;
- timetable for implementation, demonstrating that works are aligned with the proposed phasing of construction;
- persons responsible for implementing the works;
- initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant);
- disposal of any wastes arising from works.

The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.  
Reason: To ensure that ecological receptors are adequately protected as part of the development

### 1.2 Aim of this report


- 1.2.1 This report provides the information required to discharge Condition 6 set out above, which requires to be discharged prior to commencement of the development.
- 1.2.2 Two other conditions relating to ecology and biodiversity were also attached to the decision notice:
- Condition 4 – relating to ecological avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures; and
  - Condition 5 – relating to there being no external lighting unless a 'lighting design strategy for biodiversity' has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority.
- 1.2.3 While Condition 4 overlaps to a large degree with the requirement of Condition 6, these conditions are not required to be approved "...prior to commencement of development" and are not specifically covered in this report.

## 2 Review of Ecological Assessment Report (Huckle Ecology, May 2023)

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This section summarises the potential ecological effects identified within the Ecological Assessment Report

(Huckle Ecology, May 2023) that included the results of an extended Phase 1 Habitats Survey undertaken in March 2023; the ecological assessment concluded that the habitats present within the site comprised three main habitat types: broad-leaved woodland, scrub and concrete hard standing. Of these the scrub and broad-leaved woodland are of local ecological value although have developed naturally through colonisation of the site following the demolition of the previous huts and abandonment of the site.

- 2.1.2 It was noted that the design of the scheme had been developed to minimise potential effects on the semi-natural woodland with the intention of creating a woodland destination that is off-grid and utilises the existing concrete pads and infrastructure to avoid impact on the semi-natural habitats present within the site. The proposed development will incorporate as much off-grid infrastructure as possible, with a minimal level of ground work and excavations required.
- 2.1.3 The development was designed to avoid the loss of woodland habitats, with all huts located on existing concrete hard standing and avoided activities with the greatest risk of impacting on ecological important receptors.
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## 2.2 Potential Ecological Effects on Woodland Habitats

- 2.2.1 The Ecological Assessment Report noted that as the installation of shepherds huts and office/workshop was on existing concrete pads, that there was not direct loss of woodland and no broadleaved trees were required to be removed to facilitate the development (the proposed design was subsequently scaled down from three to two shepherds huts). However, it was recognised that potential localised disturbance to the woodland may occur during both the 'construction phase' (installation of the huts) and the operational use of the huts as short term holiday lets.
- 2.2.2 To offset this limited level of disturbance, the BMEP scheme outline above will incorporate best practice woodland management practices appropriate for Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, that will aim to improve the condition of the existing woodland habitat and enhance the structural and species diversity of the woodland plant species present.

## 2.3 Bats

- 2.3.1 The habitats present within the Site were evaluated as providing:
- Potential Roosting Habitats – most trees were of Negligible potential bat roosting habitat, with a small number of trees with evidence of decay or damage considered to provide Potential Roost Features and assessed as providing **Low** to **Moderate** Suitability for bats.
  - Foraging and Commuting Habitats for Bats – High Suitability despite being small in extent.
  - proposed development was not considered likely to result in potential effects on bats; the buildings and trees within the site provided negligible potential habitat for roosting bats and the site provided a small area of low value foraging or commuting habitat for bats.
- 2.3.2 However, no trees were required to be removed as part of the proposed development, with all the shepherds huts being located on existing concrete foundation pads, and accessed using existing infrastructure. It is recommended that all trees with identified PRFs (see above) are retained and protected within the site and that

in the event that arboricultural works are required, that a tree inspection is undertaken of any trees to ensure that no potential bat roosts are damaged or destroyed. Furthermore, no lighting of the proposed buildings is proposed and consequently there is unlikely to be a significant adverse effect on the potential foraging and commuting habitats.

- 2.3.3 Regardless of the non-significant nature of the potential impacts on bats, measures designed to minimise the potential effects of the scheme on bats and provide potential habitat enhancements for local bat populations were recommended.

## 2.4 Potential Effects on Breeding Birds

- 2.4.1 The habitats present within the site provide multiple nesting locations, associated with the scrub and trees present within the site. Several birds' nests were observed in scrub vegetation including a solitary corvid nest at the top of one of the trees in the centre of the site, and several small disused passerine nests in areas of scrub.

- 2.4.2 However, as the extent of the Site was small and the proposed works would affect a relatively small proportion of the site associated with such suitable tree and scrub habitats, the potential impacts were not likely to result in significant effects on the local bird assemblage.

- 2.4.3 However, as breeding birds are statutorily protected, to avoid impacts on breeding birds and committing an offence, removal of any structures or woody vegetation (such as hedgerows or trees) should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March – July inclusive). Should this not be possible then all areas identified for clearance must be checked for nests by an ecologist prior to clearance. If any nests are identified, then this area should be clearly delineated, and no works allowed until after chicks have fledged and the nest has been abandoned.

2.6.3 The woodland habitats remained in a comparable state and condition to those surveyed in March 2023. A small number of ash trees had been felled consistent with the recommended woodland management and other than some minor changes in the use of the site, there were not significant variations in the habitats present or their potential to support protected species.

### 3 Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan (BMEP)

3.1.1 Section 5 of the Ecological Assessment Report recommended that a BMEP would provide assurance that the constraints associated with protected species, and the potential effects likely to occur at different phases of the proposed development, including the pre-construction, construction and operational phase of the scheme were appropriately considered. The BMEP will incorporate the specific requirements of mitigation required to prevent, reduce or offset the potential impacts on species that benefit from statutory protection, and which will cover all phases of the proposed development.

#### 3.2 General Mitigation Measures

3.2.1 The Ecological Assessment Report (Huckle Ecology, May 2023), recommended the following general measures, which will demonstrate best practice during construction:

Appointment of a Project Ecologist to act as Ecological Clerk of Works EcOW on a call-off basis and to provide ecological advice as and when required.

Clearance of all vegetation (if needed), rubble and log piles within the Site following a clear Method Statement, under the supervision of an EcOW to ensure that the vegetation clearance minimises the risk of harm to ecological important species including breeding birds, reptiles and hedgehogs.

Any materials brought to the site for the proposed works, should be stored off the ground on pallets to prevent small animals seeking refuge and using the materials as shelter.

Any rubbish or waste should be removed off site as soon as practically possible or placed in a skip to prevent small animals using the waste as a refuge or shelter.


Adherence to a no-dig proposal as far as practically possible. Where excavations are required, these will be shallow, surface excavations that aim to minimise damage to the root network of trees present within the woodland.

#### 3.3 Mitigation of Potential Effects on Habitats

3.3.1 The development aims to ensure that there is no net loss of woodland as a result of the proposed development, and through appropriate restoration and management, will aim to restore the currently degraded woodland towards a woodland with a greater affinity with Priority Habitat Woodland. Specifically, the following woodland management practices are to be followed:

Continued management of existing trees through selective thinning, removing even-aged ash trees, particularly where affected by Ash die-back (ADB). Only felled wood with evidence of ADB will be removed from site, with other logs used on site to create dead wood piles to enhance the potential for saproxylic invertebrates, in both shade and sunny aspects, and to encourage fungal decomposition.

- Through selective thinning as above, open areas will be created around the edges of the woodland and in clearings to provide sheltered, sunny areas, and to increase the structural diversity of the woodland with a number of mature trees retained and allowed to develop. Where possible, felled ash trees will be replaced with native woodland species including pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, hornbeam *Carpinus betula* and Field Maple.

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- Existing rubble and debris located on existing concrete pads will be used where possible to create low bunds along the south boundary of the woodland. These bunds will be covered with existing leaf litter present within the site to create hibernacula suitable for use by reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates.

### 3.4 Mitigation of Potential Effects on Protected Species

#### Bats

- 3.4.1 No mitigation of potential effects on bats, but note, that arboricultural work associated with ongoing woodland management is required to ensure that potential effects on bats are considered and mitigated if necessary.

#### Breeding Birds

- 3.4.2 Any loss of buildings, scrub and individual trees can potentially impact on breeding birds, which are protected during the nesting season. To avoid impacts on breeding birds, removal of any buildings, scrub or woody vegetation (including trees, scrub and hedgerows) should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March – August inclusive). Should this not be possible then all areas identified for clearance must be checked for nests by a suitably experienced ecologist prior to clearance. If any nests are identified, then this area should be clearly delineated, and no works allowed until after chicks have fledged and the nest has been abandoned.

## 3.5 Ecological Enhancements

3.5.1 The Ecological Assessment Report (Huckle Ecology, May 2023) included a series of ecological enhancements to be integrated into the landscape design of the development. These habitat enhancements include:

- Creation of the wildlife area in the western area of the site, separated from the visitor area by a newly planted species-rich native hedgerow;
- Creation of additional new hedgerows along the southern site boundary between the woodland and the arable field to the south will strengthen the woodland edge habitat;
- Erection of a total of six bat boxes attached to suitable semi-mature trees within the woodland. The bat boxes should be of standard woodcrete construction such as the 'Schwegler 2F' or equivalent to maximise the durability of the bat boxes while minimising maintenance requirements. It is recommended that at least six are installed at a height of at least 4m, facing different directions to provide a greater diversity of roosting opportunities.
- Erection of a total of four bird nesting boxes to be installed in semi-mature or mature trees in appropriate locations within the wildlife area; the nest boxes should be sheltered from wind, rain and strong sunlight and approx. 3-5 m above ground level.

3.5.2 The indicative locations of the above bat and bird boxes is presented on Figure 1 below; during the April 2024 walkover survey it was noted that 4x bird boxes had been recently installed in appropriate locations and at a suitable height and these locations are noted on Figure 1.

### *Detailed Design of Bat and Bird Boxes*

3.5.3 The bat and bird boxes will include tree-mounted bat and bird boxes within trees retained to the west of the site. The bat boxes should be installed on the south, east or west side of buildings and trees to provide a combination of orientations and ideally with clear fly way leading to the bat box.

3.5.4 The bat boxes should be constructed from pre-cast woodcrete or concrete to provide durability and to avoid the need for maintenance and aftercare. A range of bat boxes are appropriate including the following models, or equivalent as recommended by a professional ecologist.

- Schwegler 1FD
- Schwegler 1FF
- Schwegler 1FR
- Schwegler 1WQ
- Schwegler 2F
- Schwegler 2FN
- 'Bat Block' Integrated bat box



Improved Cavity Bat Box

Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box 'C'

HabiBat bat boxes (various custom faces available to fit with proposed building facades)

3.5.5 Examples of suitable boxes are provided below.



### 3.6 Implementation Details

3.6.1 In accordance with the requirements of Condition 6, the above section has specified the purpose and objectives of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, the detailed design of the measures and the extent and location of the proposed works.

#### Timetable for Implementation

3.6.2 As noted above the bird boxes have been installed already and it is proposed that the bat boxes would be sourced and erected as soon as possible following discharge of the conditions. The bat boxes should be erected prior to spring 2025 to enable them to be installed prior to the commencement of the 2025 bat activity season.

3.6.3 The wildlife enclosure hedgerow will be planted in the first appropriate planting season (typically autumn –

spring) available with a temporary boundary installed prior to the first occupation of any Shepherds Huts or use of the Site for short-term holiday letting.

#### Persons responsible for implementing the works

- 3.6.4 All works specified within the BMEP will be the responsibility of the landholder, who will also be responsible for monitoring the condition of all bat and bird boxes, maintaining all fencing and ensuring that woodland management proceeds in an appropriate manner.

#### Initial Aftercare and Long-term Maintenance

- 3.6.5 All proposed mitigation and enhancement measures are recommended to be subject to annual checks to ensure that bat and bird boxes are functional, have not become damaged or lost. All fencing and newly planted hedges should be checked on an annual basis and repaired, if necessary, with failed hedgerow planting replanted as required.

#### Disposal of Waste

- 3.6.6 No waste is likely to arise from the proposed works.

Figure 1 Site Topographic Plan – showing indicative locations of tree-mounted bat boxes (blue arrow) and bird boxes (red arrow) – bird boxes have already been erected

