Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey Report

Client: **DHA Planning**
on behalf of ***Chris Moore at Redec Ltd***

For proposed development of land at

Glendale House
Coopers Lane
Aldington
Kent

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1 - Executive Summary

Introduction

On behalf of DHA Planning, Fellgrove were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Survey Assessment at Glendale House, Aldington, Kent TN25 7HH in September 2021[1].

Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this survey was to provide a baseline assessment of current site conditions and highlight any ecological issues which may affect development proposals.

Further surveying or mitigation works are recommended where relevant. If works are to be carried out any later than two years after this report, then a second site visit is recommended so that an update to this report be carried out.

Key considerations when surveying the site were as follows:

- Identification of significant ecological features present on site and their potential to support protected species, both within the proposed development site and surrounding local area, including all relevant statutory and non-statutory designated sites
- Provide an overview of ecological impacts on proposed development
- To use the results and data obtained from the initial assessment to provide recommendations for further surveys where necessary and to detail enhancement / biodiversity measures to be taken where appropriate, following best practice timelines

Key issues

- Results from this survey found and highlighted moderate potential for bats within buildings 1 and 2, with potential bat roost features present in the roof and cladding.

Recommendations

Moderate potential for bats on site with potential bat roost features present within the buildings. As a result of these findings, further emergence surveys are necessary and are recommended.

1 Best practice guidelines suggest carrying out surveys in dry, warmer weather conditions to produce optimal results with the best possible chance of gathering accurate data. Surveys undertaken outside of this may provide sub-optimal results.

2 – Introduction

On behalf of DHA Planning, Fellgrove were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Survey in relation to a planning application at Glendale House, Aldington, Kent TN25 7HH in September 2021.

The site location and immediate surrounding area were easily accessible (internal access to buildings was granted for assessment by the ecological surveyor) and was surveyed in fair weather conditions.

Results from this survey found and highlighted moderate potential for bats within buildings 1 and 2, with potential bat roost features present in the roof and cladding. As a result of these findings, further emergence surveys are necessary.

2.1 – Surveyor

The surveyor and author of this report is Richard Ferrett BSc (Hons), Ecologist. Richard currently holds survey licenses for Great Crested Newts and continues his ecological professional development.

2.2 - Site Description

The site is located at National Grid Reference: TR040369 and accessed by leaving Coopers Lane. The site itself lies to the North of Frith Road and is bordered on the North by a residential property and kennels, to the East by Coopers Lane, to the South by a commercial property and Frith Road and to the West lies Frith Business Centre (made up of commercial units and semi-improved grassland).

The site habitat is predominantly hardstanding with buildings previously used for what appears to be commercial purposes.

2.3 - Development Overview

The development proposal put forward by the client is for the construction of three new dwellings with associated parking, with plans to demolish the existing onsite buildings and removal of tarmac. The proposal will allow for an overall increase in the habitat on site. ***Please see figure 1 below.***

Figure 1: Proposed Development Plan

3 - Method

3.1 - Desk Study

A desk top data search for protected and notable species within 2km of the site was made using freely available environmental and ecological databases.

The ordnance survey 1:25000 scale map for the area was also examined for evidence of water bodies within 250m of the site which might be potential great crested newt breeding sites.

A search of the MAGIC (magic.defra.gov.uk) website was carried out to determine if any statutory designated nature conservation sites were located within 2km of the site and any European Protected Species Mitigation Licences had been granted in the same search area.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is based on Phase 1 Survey methodology, as described in the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Survey (1990). Its use allows habitat types on sites to be mapped. From this the ecological value of areas of a site can be ascertained. It can then be determined how likely it is that protected, or otherwise notable species might occur on site. It also determines which areas on site might support protected species. Based on the information gathered, the ecologist will make an assessment on the potential presence of protected and otherwise important or notable species on the site of the proposed development.

Incidental records of other species noted during the habitat survey were also compiled, Scientific names are given after the first mention of a species, thereafter, common names only are used. Nomenclature follows Stace (2010) for vascular plant species.

Information sourced from the desk-top study included the following: Statutory sites of nature conservation importance. Non-statutory sites designated as SNCIs at county level and of local conservation importance, and often recognised in Local Planning Authority development plans; Protected, rare and/or other noteworthy species; and Habitats and Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity in England as listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 which may be relevant to the site (hereby referred to as 'species or habitats of principal importance').

This information can aid the ecologist in justifying their recommendations from the initial findings of the field study or alternatively will help then decide that there is a better course of action regarding certain protected species. A map showing habitat types and locations on site is included further on. The following protected species are those most found on potential development sites: Amphibians, Badger, Birds, Bats and Reptiles.

3.2 - Field Study

The Preliminary Ecological Assessment Survey followed the standard method outlined in the JNCC (1990) Handbook for Phase 1 Survey. A Preliminary Ecological Habitat Appraisal involves a field survey whereby an ecologist will visit the proposed development site. The ecologist will study as much of the site as they can safely access. Habitats are described, mapped and a map of the site is compiled together with photographs and list of plant species in the final report. Preliminary Ecological Habitat Assessment guidelines are published by CIEEM (2013).

Where the site shows no evidence of protected species and no suitable habitats for them, further surveying for that species can be ruled out. Where suitable habitat is present further surveying is recommended if current guidelines and the judgement of the surveyor suggest presence is reasonably likely.

Upon completed field survey, the ecologist carried out a data search researching freely available local area biodiversity records and habitat mapping information to provide an overview in terms of protected species presence within the local and surrounding area.

This site was assessed for potential habitat for protected species and species of principal conservation or concern during a walkover survey carried out in September 2021. All trees on site were also taken into consideration and checked for potential roosting bats in addition to checks for nesting birds.

4 – Survey Results

4.1 - DESK STUDY

The desk study alongside the freely available online record data searches also made use of documents submitted for planning within the immediate local area. The data search identified records of relevant protected species within 2km of the site as follows:

- Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus)*
- Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus)*
- There are records of bird species from the BoCC Amber list and BoCC Red list.

The site is also located within 2km of the following:

Designated Site Records

- **Biodiversity Opportunity Area** - areas that presents the best opportunity for enhancing biodiversity, often being buffers around existing reserves or linkages between existing sites.

- **Ancient Woodland -** areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600 in England. This is when maps started to be reasonably accurate so we can tell that these areas have had tree cover for hundreds of years. They are relatively undisturbed by human development the closest of which is Tile lodge Wood and Park Wood

- **Local Wildlife Site -** areas of land that are especially important for their wildlife. They are some of our most valuable wildlife areas. Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria and surveys. They are corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks.

Protection Areas

- **Local Nature Partnership Area** - run by a broad range of influential organisations, businesses, and people, and from a range of sectors, charged by government with the task of bringing about improvements in their local natural environment in England. To achieve this, they are expected to ensure that consideration for the environment is put right at the heart of local decision-making.

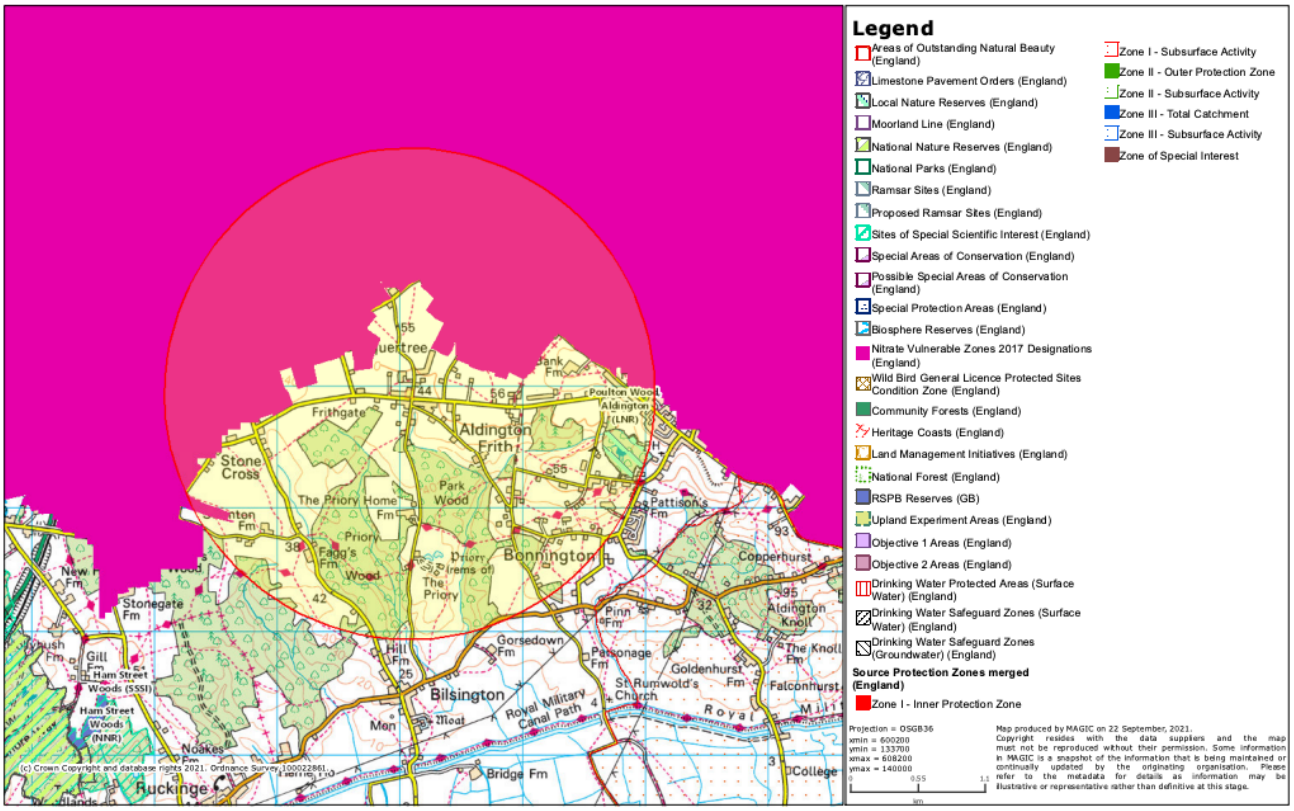
- **Countryside Management Partnerships Area** – helping to manage habitats and landscapes, and link communities to those areas.

Waterbodies

There are water bodies within 500m of the site. There are seven ponds and a drain within 500m of the proposed build area. There are four ponds within 250m of the proposed site. All these ponds are within private properties. None of these ponds are within the site itself.

Figure 2: Magic Map (2km)

Source: MAGIC (www.defra.gov.uk)



4.2 - FIELD SURVEY

The habitat survey identified three broad habitat types on the site, each of which is described further below with reference to the dominant or more notable plant species identified within each habitat during the survey. The proposed development area was found to contain the following habitat features:

1. **Hard standing (Tarmac) –** 50% of the external habitat
2. **Buildings –** 49% of external habitat
3. **Scrub –** 1% (with patches bordering East and west of the site).

The likelihood of species being present ranges in a scale from extremely unlikely to highly likely. The judgement of the surveyor combined with knowledge of habitats present, signs and sightings of animals and evidence from records is used to give an estimated likelihood of presence (as outlined below).

Protected Species Prescence - Guidelines (2016)	
Confirmed	• Species directly observed on site • Clear evidence of species presence observed (e.g., droppings, burrows, etc.)
High	• Important structures or features of use for breeding or refuge present. For instance, ponds for newts, old trees for bats. • Significant amount of high-quality foraging habitat present • Site adjacent to surrounding areas of suitable habitat, or connected by linear features of use to commuting species (e.g., river) • Site close to known offsite species populations
Medium	• Some features suitable for breeding or refuge present. Some suitable foraging habitats available • Site connected to suitable offsite areas of habitat
Low	• Small amounts of low-quality areas for refuge or breeding • Small areas suitable for foraging • Site not connected to suitable offsite habitats or species not likely to enter site.
Negligible	• No suitable habitats on site

Constraints / Limitations

There were no survey constraints or limitations which would have impacted the outcome of the survey results and the surveyor was provided access to all onsite buildings.

Recommendations – *continued below*

5 – Conclusion & Recommendations

If mitigation is not actioned, the proposal could have moderate impact on local wildlife and protected species, specifically local bats but also potentially affecting nesting birds. However, the proposal will create green space within the site boundary that does not currently exist.

There were no survey limitations, and the surveyor was given access to all the buildings. Further surveys have been recommended where appropriate for protected species and wildlife populations. These surveys will help determine what / if species-specific mitigation measures are necessary.

A baseline assessment of the site to support protected species has been carried out and, based on the desktop observations made, an assessment of the suitability of on-site and adjoining habitat and information on the distribution of these species. Those considered potentially present were further evaluated as follows:

Badger

The desk study shows no badgers recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. The field survey found no field signs of badgers present on site with no setts or signs of badger. The site does not offer foraging potential for badgers. No further surveys have been recommended.

Bats

The desk study shows that Bats have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. The field survey found multiple potential bat roost features within the building structures with a moderate probability of bats being present on site. **As a result, we recommend bat emergence surveys.** This survey will involve two visits – two at dusk, - by a licenced bat surveyor and an experienced surveyor to cover all the aspects of the buildings that have potential roost features. If bat activity is very high additional visits may be necessary.

Nesting Birds

The desk study shows that birds have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. Birds of conservation concern on the amber and red list have been recorded with 2km of the site. The survey found bird's nest potential amongst the scrub on the site. If any scrub is planned for removal during nesting bird season (Spring - Summer) and check will be necessary, a day prior to removal to ensure nesting birds will not be impacted by the planned works.

Dormice

The desk study shows that no Dormice have been recorded within 2km of the site within the last twenty years. The field survey found no field signs of dormice being present on site with dormice.

Great Crested Newt

The desk study shows no records of Great Crested Newt's within 2km of the site in the last twenty years. Despite ponds being present within 2km. The survey found a negligible probability of Great Crested Newt being present on site. the site has no habitat suitable for Great Crested Newt. No further surveys have been recommended.

Reptiles

The desk study shows that reptiles have not been recorded within 2km of the site in the last twenty years. There is negligible probability of reptiles being present on site with no suitable habitat present for hibernating or foraging.

Other notable species

The desk study shows that Hedgehog have been recorded within 2km of the site in the last twenty years. The survey found negligible probability of hedgehog being present on site.

6 - Additional Recommendations

6.1 - Biodiversity Enhancements

Planning policy requires new developments to be enhanced for biodiversity. The existing proposals are considered to determine whether biodiversity enhancements are offered and whether they are adequate to meet the policy requirements. Again, national, regional, county and borough policies are considered. Opportunities should be sought where appropriate during the design of landscaping.

6.2 - Green Space Planting

The proposal will create green space within the site boundary that does not currently exist. All new planting should be of native species of local provenance that will have a value as forage and cover for species using the site. Planting associated with the proposed development should include native, flower rich species, including those that flower in the late and early seasons to benefit pollinators, such as bumblebees where appropriate.

6.3 - Bat & Bird Boxes

We recommend the installation of three Woodstone bird nest boxes and two Woodstone bat roost boxes, both located at suitable location and heights onto the new buildings (additional bat boxes may be necessary depending on the outcome of the bat emergence survey (***document ref: 6729 – Fellgrove***).

7 - References

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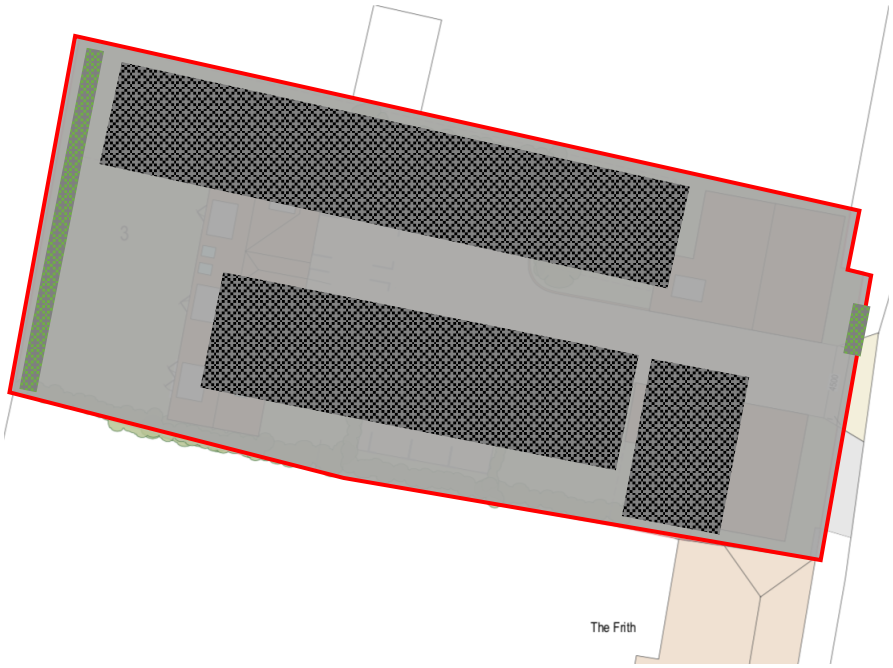
(http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/BoCC_tcm9-217852.pdf)

8 - Appendices

Appendix 1: Phase One Local Area Map



Key	
Site border indicated by red line	
Hardstanding	
Buildings	
Scrub	

Appendix 2: Survey Photographs

Figure 1: Buildings (A) and (B)

Figure 2: Building (A)

Figure 3: Internal building (A) Upstairs

Figure 4 Internal building (B)

Figure 5: Inner building (B)

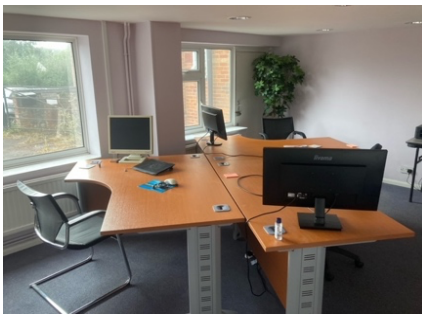


Figure 6: Internal building (A) Downstairs

Figure 7: Building (C)

Figure 8: Building (C)

Figure 9: Internal building (c)

Figure 10: Internal building (c)

Figure 11: Internal building (c)

Figure 12: Internal building (c)

Figure 13: Internal building (c)

Figure 14: Buildings (A) External

Figure 15: Building (c) - External

Figure 16: Building (B)

Figure 17: Building (C)

Figure 18: Building (A)

Figure 19: Buildings (B) and (C)

Figure 20: Hardstanding

Figure 21: Hardstanding

Figure 22: Hardstanding

Figure 23: Building (C)

Figure 34: Building (A)

Figure 35: Hardstanding

Figure 36: Hardstanding

Figure 37: Hardstanding

Appendix 3: Relevant Legislation (United Kingdom)

Bats are legally protected under British legislation the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). For more information on the relevant legislation refer to the appendix of this document or visit The Bat Conservation Trust website.

For the most accurate and up to date wildlife legislation and law for the United Kingdom we refer to:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wildlife-law
- https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law