



23rd of October 2024

To Whom It Concerns,

Site: Land To The West Of Nursery Mews, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7BU.

Proposal: Erection of 6no. affordable residential dwellings, emergency access / pedestrian / cycle route with associated parking and landscaping.

This appraisal outlines the likely impacts and opportunities for mitigation, compensation, and enhancement to understand the site's ecology.

Methodology

Desk Study

No biological records were requested at this stage. Instead, a search was conducted on Natural England's magic website for any granted European Protected Species Licences. These licences allow the licence holder to safeguard European Protected Species from adverse impacts of development and other potentially damaging activities. The data is for potential users to assess whether the data are 'fit for purpose.' Any biological data and protected species licence will be deemed current if within two years, and historical data up to five years.

Habitat Survey

The vegetation and habitat types are classified according to the UK Habitat Classification. The Small Scale Metric operates on the UK Habitat Classification system. The UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) is a comprehensive habitat classification system for the UK that provides outputs suitable for ecological impact assessment, habitat metrics, and better data integration between organisations.¹

Protected Species

The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site based on habitat suitability and any direct evidence. The

¹ Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2020) The UK Habitat Bank Classification User Manual Version 1.1.



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evaluation should not be taken as providing a complete and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time of the study. Additional surveys are recommended if, based on this assessment, it is likely that protected species may be present.

Buildings and other structures

Any buildings or other structures on site were surveyed. The surveys comprised an external visual inspection and an internal search (where safety allowed) to look for signs of, or potential for, protected species. Indicators could include live animals, carcasses, droppings, feeding remains and nesting material. A ladder, high-powered torch, binoculars, and angled mirror were available as required.

Results

Site location and description

The site was surveyed on the 25th of July 2024. The weather was sunny with a light wind. A risk assessment was completed, and all appropriate PPE was worn. The client granted the surveyor access to the site.

Habitat Survey

Building and Hard-Standing

A hard surface dominated the site. No buildings were present. A tree was present, and several trees were adjacent to the site. A small area of ruderal species was present.

Survey Constraints

The survey was undertaken during the optimal survey season.² Given the nature of the site, an accurate record of the habitats and species present was recorded. It may be that additional plant species were present, which were not visible at the time of the survey. Notably, species diversity and dominant plant assemblages may increase or change throughout the season.

² PEA optimal survey period is April to September.



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Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no single investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. However, the survey provides a general assessment of the potential nature conservation value of the site and needs to include a definitive list of plant species.

Result

The site is not designated for its importance for nature conservation at a national or county level. The habitats are of limited ecological value and only site value.³ Habitats for protected species were evaluated for their likelihood of providing shelter, roosting, foraging, basking and nesting.⁴ Breeding birds require further consideration. The likelihood of other protected species is negligible, and no further consideration is needed.

Recommendation

Generally, any lighting should minimise spill onto the surrounding landscape to reduce potential adverse lighting-related effects upon species. Where possible and practicable, operational lighting should be directed away from the hedgerow boundary, although it is noted that the development operation will conform to industry standard guidelines and best practices regarding health, safety and crime prevention. A sensitive lighting strategy should be implemented to prevent light spills from enhancing the dark corridor at the rear of the site, benefiting nocturnal and crepuscular species. In addition, this will ensure that the boundary habitats are kept dark during the hours of darkness.

Removing suitable habitats must be undertaken outside the bird breeding season. Suppose work during the breeding season is unavoidable. In that case, a suitably experienced ecologist will need to inspect the site immediately before the start of site clearance to identify nests. If active nests are found, an exclusion zone will be set up around the nest(s), and work must only continue once the young have fledged.

³ CIEEM, 2006, Defining ecological values for component habitats.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 180.



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A Biodiversity Impact Assessment is required to provide a measurable calculation of the biodiversity units on the site before and after the proposed development.⁵

Yours faithfully,

Andrew May

Managing Director

Suitable Qualified Ecologist

The Ecologist has over 25 years of conservation experience. Founder of a new conservation charity and previously worked as Head of Conservation for a Wildlife Trust, Director of Studies for the Field Studies Council and Course Director and Lecturer for the University of Essex and Cambridge.

The Ecologist is nationally respected and has been awarded various fellowships for his outstanding or significant contribution to these disciplines, including conservation and biodiversity, for delivering landscape-scale conservation projects. The Ecologist is currently on the external advisory board for the University of Essex. In addition, I represent the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management at the University of Southampton, judge national ecological projects, and am an ecological expert for the Southwood Foundation.

⁵ Using the latest Defra Biodiversity Metric.



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Photographs



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