

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL (PEA)

Land Adjacent to Dawes Cottage

1. Introduction

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) supports the full planning application for demolition of an existing barn and erection of a replacement dwelling.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Identify ecological constraints;
- Assess the likelihood of protected species presence;
- Identify potential impacts of the proposed development;
- Recommend mitigation and enhancement measures.

This appraisal has been prepared with reference to:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- NPPF paragraph 180;
- Gravesham Core Strategy Policy CS12.

The assessment is based on desk-based review and site observations. A precautionary bat inspection will be undertaken prior to demolition.

2. Site Description

The application site comprises:

- An existing agricultural-style barn structure;
- Areas of hardstanding and compacted ground;
- Managed amenity grassland within residential curtilage;
- Boundary hedgerows and trees (to be retained).

The site forms part of an established developed parcel associated with Dawes Cottage and is not subject to any statutory ecological designation.

3. Habitat Assessment

3.1 Barn Structure

The existing barn is of simple agricultural construction.

Given its rural context, the building has potential low to moderate suitability for roosting bats depending on construction details, roof lining and access points.

A Preliminary Roost Assessment by a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist will be undertaken prior to demolition.

3.2 Grassland

The grassland within the curtilage comprises managed amenity habitat of low ecological value.

Such habitat offers limited structural diversity but may provide occasional foraging opportunities for common species.

3.3 Trees and Hedgerows

Boundary trees and hedgerows will be retained and protected during construction.

These features provide potential foraging habitat for bats and nesting opportunities for birds.

No removal or pruning is proposed as part of the development.

4. Protected Species Considerations

4.1 Bats

All bat species and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Given the presence of a rural barn structure, a precautionary Preliminary Roost Assessment will be undertaken.

Should evidence of bat activity be identified, further surveys and appropriate mitigation (including licensing where necessary) will be implemented prior to works.

4.2 Nesting Birds

All wild birds, nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Demolition and vegetation clearance will take place outside the bird nesting season (March–August inclusive), unless a prior ecological inspection confirms absence of active nests.

4.3 Other Species

The site comprises predominantly low-value habitat and managed curtilage.

The likelihood of reptiles, great crested newts or badgers is considered low due to absence of suitable habitat and water bodies within the site boundary.

5. Impact Assessment

The proposed development involves:

- Demolition of an existing barn;
- Construction of a replacement dwelling;
- Retention of boundary vegetation.

Potential ecological impacts are limited to:

- Temporary disturbance during demolition and construction;
- Possible loss of bird nesting opportunity within the existing structure.

No significant habitat loss is anticipated.

6. Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures will be implemented:

- Preliminary Roost Assessment prior to demolition;
 - Implementation of any required bat mitigation in accordance with legislation;
 - Timing of works to avoid nesting bird season or ecological inspection prior to works;
 - Protection of retained trees and hedgerows during construction;
 - Sensitive external lighting design to minimise ecological disturbance.
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7. Biodiversity Enhancement

In addition to mitigation, biodiversity enhancements will be delivered as set out in the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy, including:

- Native planting;
- Wildflower areas;

- Integrated bat and bird features;
- Sensitive lighting design.

These measures will result in measurable ecological improvement.

8. Policy Compliance and Conclusion

Subject to precautionary survey and implementation of mitigation measures, the development is unlikely to result in significant adverse ecological impact.

The scheme complies with:

- Wildlife protection legislation;
- NPPF paragraph 180;
- Gravesham Core Strategy Policy CS12;
- Statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

With mitigation and enhancement measures secured, the proposal is acceptable in ecological terms.