

**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF LAND SOUTH SIDE OF
NORTHFLEET GREEN RD SOUTHFLEET DA13 9PT.**

06.06.2023



Sean McMinn
MARSH ENVIRONMENTAL
40 ORMONDE ROAD
HYTHE
KENT
CT21 6DW
E-MAIL: [sean@ marsh-environmental.com](mailto:sean@marsh-environmental.com)
Tel: 07888683767

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. SITE DESCRIPTION	2
3. METHODOLOGY	4
4. RESULTS	6
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	13
6. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS: ENHANCEMENTS	14
7. REFERENCES	15
FIGURE 1: LOCATION AND SURVEY AREA	3
FIGURE 2: PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP	5
FIGURE 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD	12

1. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land South of Northleet Green Road, Southfleet, DA13 9PT. The site survey and report were commissioned by Mr. Arnold.

The PEA was carried out by Sean McMinn from Marsh Environmental on the 6th of July 2023, a suitably qualified ecologist who is licensed by Natural England for the following, protected species:

- Birds (including barn owls)
- Bats
- Great Crested Newts

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The land South of Northfleet Green Road is located in a rural landscape southeast of Gravesend in north Kent. The land is set in an area of open farmland, mostly arable with occasional hedgerow with three-four residential properties to the northeast and west.

The current site consists of a linear strip of land that is mostly bare ground with limited growth of spear thistles and common mallow. There is a short length of native hedge forming the northern boundary with hazel, maple, hawthorn and ash. The southern edge of the site is bordered by an arable field. There are two buildings on site, one just the timber frame of a barn and a brick built building with no roof. The site is located at grid reference: TQ 62525 71094.

Site plan

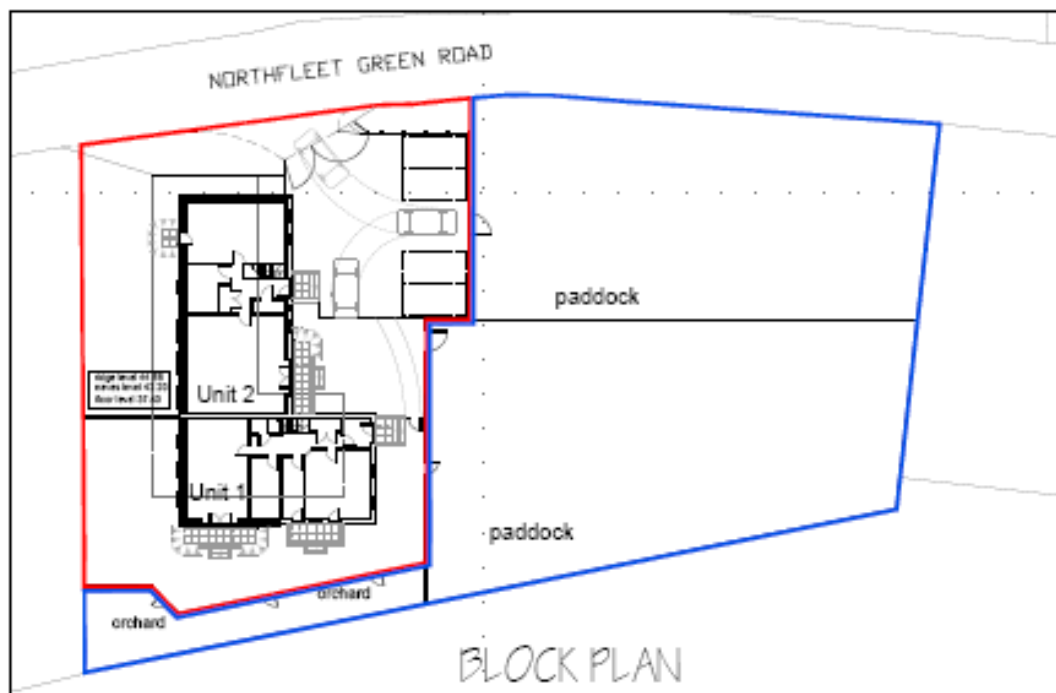


FIGURE 1: LAND SOUTH OF NORTHFLEET ROAD SOUTHFLEET LOCATION AND SURVEY AREA



3. METHODOLOGY

Site Survey

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land South of Northfleet Green Road, Southfleet, DA13 8PT was undertaken on the 6th of July 2023. The survey area concentrated on the land as defined in red on the site plan and figures 1 and 2.

All habitats were recorded as standard Phase 1 classification as described in the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2010 (JNCC), Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey and standard best practice as recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management in their Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2017). A basic habitat plan illustrates the results in figure 3.

FIGURE 2: PHASE 1 SURVEY HABITAT MAP



4. RESULTS – WHAT WE FOUND

Objectives

The objectives of this commission were to:

1. Conduct a baseline ecological survey and appraisal of the above site and identify notable factors/features;
2. prepare a 'Phase 1' Habitat Map with Target Notes to recognised standards;
3. produce a written summary of results;
4. provide appropriate recommendations for mitigation, biodiversity protection/ enhancement, *etc.*

Limitations

It should be noted that, whilst the investigation of the site was appropriately intensive within the intended framework of the commission, and we feel it is unlikely that significant matters have been overlooked, a single visit will inevitably miss species not apparent on the date of survey by reason of seasonality, mobility, habits, or chance.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Habitats & vegetation (NB. Please be aware that several designated habitat types and many plants enjoy legal protection in Britain.)	
General description	The land South of Northfleet Green Road is located in a rural landscape southeast of Gravesend in north Kent. The land is set in an area of open farmland, mostly arable with occasional hedgerow with three-four residential properties to the northeast and west. The current site consists of a linear strip of land that is mostly bare ground with limited growth of spear thistles and common mallow. There is a short length of native hedge forming the northern boundary with hazel, maple, hawthorn and ash. The southern edge of the site is bordered by an arable field. There are two buildings on site, one just the timber frame of a barn and a brick built building with no roof. The site is located at grid reference: TQ 62525 71094.
Target Note 1	Hedgerow at north boundary provides some nesting bird habitat.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
TN2-3	Buildings with no potential to support roosting bats.
Statutory designations (on/near)	Information from MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) Information on this site from MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) is as follows: The nearest Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are Swanscombe Skull Site 1.9km northwest, Darenth Wood, 3.7km west and Shorne and Ashenbank Woods 5.km east. It is considered unlikely the development proposals will have a direct negative impact on these sites.
Non-statutory designations (on/near)	Information from MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) Information on this site from MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) is as follows: There are no non-Statutory sites within 1km of land south of Northfleet Green Lane.
Notable hedgerows, woodland, or scrub	None. However, the northern boundary hedge provides some nesting bird habitat.
Ecologically notable trees (e.g., veteran, wildlife significant) ¹	None.
Ponds/water courses	There are no ponds on site. There is one pond are approximately 60m northwest of the site across the road and another pond 450m southwest of the site.
Notable communities	None observed on site.
Notable vascular plants	None observed on site.

¹ Please note that we do not check TPO status as this is a landscape/amenity planning classification.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Notable bryophytes	None present on site.
Notable lichens	None present on site.
Notable fungi	None present on site.
Other notable habitats/vegetation	None.
Mammals (NB. Several species and their habitats have very strict protection in British/European law.)	
Badger	None observed and no signs of them on site. However, may occur in the wider area.
Otter	No suitable habitat.
Other mustelids	None observed.
Bats	The buildings on site have no potential to support roosting bats being completely open. There are no trees on site with potential to support roosting bats. The general area is considered to be sub-optimal foraging habitat for bats.
Water vole	No suitable habitats on site.
Common or hazel dormouse	No suitable habitat on site.
Deer	None.
Hedgehog	May occur in neighbouring habitats/gardens.
Shrews	No suitable habitat on site.
Others	Other mammals such as foxes, rats and mice may use the site for foraging/breeding as suitable habitat exists.
Birds (NB. With the exception of eleven derogated pest or very common species, the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and amendments) gives protection to all wild birds in Britain from killing, injuring, or taking as well as taking, damaging, or destroying nests in use or being built, and taking or destroying eggs. Many species are also protected by European and international statutes. ²⁾)	

² Please also see http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/status_explained.aspx and <http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u38/downloads/home-news/2011-11/SUKB%202011%20final.pdf> for red and amber lists etc., and explanations.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Schedule 1	None.
Red list	None recorded during the survey.
Active nests	No active nests. There were inactive swallows and a blackbird's nest within the buildings.
Other	Kestrel on the adjacent pylon. There is likely to be a greater range of bird species in the general area.
Herpetofauna (NB. The grass snake, slow-worm, viviparous (common) lizard and adder (viper) are all protected from intentional killing and injury under Schedule 5, Section 9(1), of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended/reinforced by the CROW Act 2000. They are also protected under Schedule 5, Section 9(5) which prohibits selling, offering for sale, possessing, or transporting for the purpose of sale, or advertising for sale, any live or dead animal, or any part of, or anything derived from the species. Other species and their habitats have stricter protection at national and European levels.)	
Adder	None, no suitable habitat.
Grass snake	None, no suitable habitat.
Slow-worm	None, no suitable habitat.
Common lizard	Very limited habitat around the buildings.
Rarer reptiles	None (not found in this area).
Great crested newt	There are no ponds on site and the remaining terrestrial habitat on site is poor, offering no cover for resting or foraging reptiles. However, there is some potential hibernation habitat around the old buildings and general refugia around the site. There are two ponds within 500m of the site.
Natterjack toad	No (not found in this area).
Other amphibia	Unlikely.
Fish	
Significant fishery	None present on site.
Other notable fish	None.
Macro-invertebrates (NB. Several species enjoy legal protection.)	
Notable assemblage (terrestrial)	None present or indicated on site.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Notable assemblage (aquatic)	None.
Crayfish	None present.
Roman snail	None observed.
Lesser silver water-beetle	None.
Stag beetle	None.
Mining bees	None observed.
Other notable spp or groups	None present on site.
Notable invertebrate habitat	None present on site.
“Invasive” species (There are an increasing number of these being listed by authorities, some subject to regulatory control.)	
Japanese knotweed (or related <i>Fallopia</i> spp.)	None present on site.
Giant hogweed	None present on site.
Himalayan balsam	None present on site.
Tree-of-heaven	None present on site.
New Zealand pigmyweed	None present on site.
Floating pennywort	None present on site.
Parrot’s feather	None present on site.
Water fern (<i>Azolla</i>)	None present on site.
Weeds Act natives (common ragwort, creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks)	Abundant Spear thistle recorded.

ITEM		OBSERVATIONS
Other exotics that may cause problems such as <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> , <i>Buddleia davidii</i> .		None recorded.
Invasive animals (signal crayfish, killer shrimp, oak processionary moth, harlequin ladybird, zebra mussel, grey squirrel etc.)		None recorded.
<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and other serious plant diseases (sudden oak death, etc.)		None observed on site.
Are there any known conflicts with local planning biodiversity policy.		In the likely absence of any protected species on site no conflicts are anticipated.
Are there any known conflicts with national planning biodiversity policy.		In the likely absence of any protected species on site no conflicts are anticipated
Are there any known conflicts with European or international biodiversity policy		In the likely absence of any protected species on site no conflicts are anticipated
Policy		
GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION (Geodiversity is a material planning consideration)	YES/NO	ACTION REQUIRED IF "YES"
Are there any features of geological importance on the development site?	Unknown	
Are there any features of geological importance adjacent to the development site or that might be affected by the development (during or post construction)?	Unknown	

FIGURE 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF LAND SOUTH OF NORTHFLEET GREEN LANE.

View west



View northwest



View of southern boundary



View of brick building



View northeast



View north of entrance



View of barn



View east



Internal view of brick building



View west side of barn



North boundary hedge



View west over bare ground



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are to meet compliance with current legislation, planning policy and best practice as recognised by the various statutory authorities. They are intended to fulfill ecological planning formalities and facilitate the implementation of the project.

1. **Birds-** The hedgerows and scattered trees have the potential to support nesting birds, therefore any hedge and tree clearance should be undertaken outside the bird breeding season (typically, March – September). If this is not possible then it is recommended that a suitable qualified ecologist checks the site for any active nests before commencement of any clearance. Compliance with law protecting active birds' nests.
2. **Reptiles-** the terrestrial (bare ground with limited growth) habitat is largely unsuitable for reptiles in general. It is recommended the area is regularly maintained as such to dissuade any animals (reptiles) from colonising these areas. Compliance with law protecting reptiles.
3. **Great crested newts-** There are two ponds <500m from the site, one of which is 60m northwest of the site across the road. Although much of the terrestrial habitat on site is bare ground providing relatively poor foraging and resting habitat, there is suitable hibernation habitat especially around the bases of the buildings for example therefore the possibility of great crested newts within 500m cannot be ruled out. There may be then the requirement to investigate the opportunity to join the great crested newt district licensing scheme that has been recently adopted by a number of Local Planning Authorities in partnership with Naturespace and Natural England. See

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-district-level-licensing-schemes-for-developers>

[A quick, simple, certain and sustainable solution to newt mitigation - NatureSpacePartnership \(naturespaceuk.com\)](#)

An alternative would be to take a water sample from the pond and test for great crested newt Environmental DNA. Compliance with law protecting amphibians.

4. Formally instruct contractors and site personnel on agreed policies, recommendations, and requirements to maintain environmental quality and minimise impacts during any proposed construction, generally avoiding unnecessary disturbance and pollution.
5. Whilst the risk to fauna in general is very low on this site, in accordance with best practice, excavations should be fenced off or alternatively a ramp will be left to allow fauna to exit easily.
6. In compliance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 125, avoid unnecessary negative impacts of new lighting at night, e.g., on bats, invertebrates, plants, astronomy. Minimise the hours when lighting is used, avoid "spillage" by using directional down-lighting, reduce brightness of necessary illumination and keep light from shining on bat roost entries, mammal holes, etc.

6. BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

Ecological enhancements should where possible be included in the proposed development plans to contribute towards the intended objectives of planning legislation below:

The UK Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged—(Para 118). The design and implementation of habitat enhancements can also be used to contribute towards the "Home Quality Mark" or similar accreditation, should this be a consideration for this site.

Biodiversity enhancements (generic) for the site could include some of the following:

- Provision of ready-made bird boxes such as a mix of open-fronted and hole-nesting boxes constructed from woodcrete suitable for starlings and other hole nesting species).
- Provision of reptile / amphibian hibernacula (as stand alone or within new walls by creating recesses into wall structures). Hibernacula has been provided around the pond for great crested newts. Additionally, an area of reptile/amphibian habitat could be created at the east boundary of the site to provide connectivity to neighbouring gardens etc.
- Provision of log piles for invertebrates (including stag beetles), reptiles and amphibians.
- Provision of bat bricks in the wall of the new dwelling and or bat tiles on the roof.
- Use native planting (preferably of local origin) in all landscaping. Where exotic species are planted, always avoid invasive species, and choose those with wildlife value such as nectar or shelter.
- Priority should be given to species present on the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species list, and where there is the potential for that species to occur on site. The list includes great crested newt, common toad, viviparous lizard, slow-worm, grass snake, adder, house sparrow, tree sparrow, hedgehog, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, brown hare, water vole, harvest mouse, dormouse, otter as well as many more species. <https://www.kmbrc.org.uk>
- Design and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in agreement with the Environment Agency or other relevant authority.

7. REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trusts Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition 2016).

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. CIEEM, Winchester, UK CIEEM (2013) Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management.

CIEEM (2007) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. CIEEM, Winchester, UK.

IEEM (2006). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit. JNCC, Peterborough.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2003) *Herpetofauna Worker Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004) *Bat Workers Manual*, JNCC, Peterborough.

Kent/Sussex Biodiversity Action Plans.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (August 2005). Planning Policy Statement Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS 9). HMSO, London.

Ratcliffe, D. A. (ed.) (1977). *A Nature Conservation Review*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

The UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report. Volume 2. Action Plans. HMSO, (1995), London. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. HMSO, London.