



ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

TO: Kelly Joyce
FROM: Helen Forster
DATE: 23 December 2025
SUBJECT: Leasden, Meopham 20250121

The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the county council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application and if sufficient/appropriate ecological information has been provided.

Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the planning officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.

We advise that sufficient information has been provided to determine the planning application.

Protected/Notable Species

We have reviewed the submitted ecological information and we advise that sufficient information has been provided to consider the impacts on protected/notable species.

The PEA was carried out following the vegetation clearance and is possible that a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and/or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) has occurred. This is of particular concern due to the site's connectivity to ancient woodland and other parcels of broadleaved woodland and the potential for nesting birds, roosting bats and dormice to have been impacted.

However due to the works already being carried out we accept that no further ecological surveys are required and any impact in the retained habitats can be avoided through a precautionary mitigation approach. We have taken this view as there is land within the blue line boundary that could be enhanced for protected/notable species.

We recommend that if planning permission is granted an ecological mitigation strategy is submitted. We recommend the following:

No development shall be undertaken (including any ground works, site and/or vegetation clearance) until a construction ecological management plan (CEMP) which contains full details of the ecological mitigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall be based on up-to-date ecological survey information, as advised by a suitably qualified ecologist and include the following:

- *Measures to avoid impacts to the retained habitats including identification of a construction exclusion zone (and the use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs);*
- *Extent and location of proposed construction and mitigation works, shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;*
- *Specific measures (which may be presented as a series of method statements) to avoid impacts to protected/notable species and a timetable for implementation of the measures;*
- *Persons responsible for implementing the measures, including times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on-site;*
- *The role and responsibilities of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECow) or similarly competent person(s);*
- *Contingency plans should a protected species be encountered;*

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period in accordance with the approved details.

Priority Habitat

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland has been cleared from the redline and blue line boundary, this is a priority habitat. The PEA this was conducted post-habitat clearance and the PEA acknowledges that site clearance has taken place '*Historical aerial photos from 1960 show that the site was mainly bare, with a structure, but then became mainly wooded by 1990, then cleared again by 2003 then started to get scrubby/wooded by 2015 once more*', The site clearance has resulted in the biodiversity value of the site has been significantly reduced, and that woodland has been present since at least the 1940s in the blue line area and is mapped as priority woodland on MAGIC.



When we previously commented we highlighted that no attempt at compensation for the loss of this habitat has been made within proposals, other than the proposed installation of a single bird box and the planting of 2 x trees.

The applicant states that proposals are exempt from BNG under the custom/self-build exemption criteria and it is not within our remit to confirm this. Regardless, The NPPF 2024, paragraph 193(d) indicates “...*opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.*”

There is land within the blueline boundary that could be replanted to replace the lost woodland. However a BNG metric has been submitted and it has detailed that to compensate for the loss of the priority woodland 0.2831 woodland biodiversity units could be purchased from an off site provider.

We would encourage the applicant to replant the land within the blueline boundary but accept that the purchasing of off site units is an acceptable approach.

If planning permission is granted we recommend that the following condition is included requiring information to be submitted demonstrating that the units have been purchased. We recommend the following wording:

Prior to works commencing on site a letter must be submitted to the LPA for approval demonstrating that sufficient woodland biodiversity units have been purchased to compensate for the loss of priority woodland on site.

If you have any queries regarding our comments, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Helen Forster MCIEEM
Biodiversity Officer

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (KB Ecology, July 25)
- Proposed Site Plan (Kentec, March 24)
- BNG metric