



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The Russets, Strand Close,
Meopham

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing, and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snapshot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species may be recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Frankham to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for The Russets, Strand Close, Meopham DA13 0HB hereafter referred to as the 'site' (Figure 1).

1.2 The key objectives of a PEA (CIEEM 2017) are to:

- Identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project;
- Identify any mitigation measures likely to be required, following the 'Mitigation Hierarchy' (CIEEM 2016; BSI 2013, Clause 5.2);
- Identify any additional surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA); and
- Identify the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.

Site Context

1.3 The site (TQ 64320 67060) is located within the village of Meopham in Dartford, Kent. It covers an area of approximately 0.10ha consisting primarily of an area of hardstanding, a number of buildings as well as small areas of modified grassland, introduced shrub, bare earth and three scattered trees. The site is situated in a rural village setting with multiple green spaces within the surrounding area.

Proposed Development

1.4 Demolition of the existing garages to provide a part-two, part-three-storey building, providing, five residential units, with associated car parking, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping and all associated works.



Figure 1: Approximate site boundary.



Figure 2: Proposed Development Plan

Planning Policies

- 1.5 The site was surveyed to assess its ecological value and to ensure the proposals were compliant with relevant planning policy and legislation. Policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) as well as policies from Gravesham Borough Council. The following policies are considered relevant to ecology, biodiversity and nature conservation:

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)

- **SO16:** safeguard and enhance the biodiversity of the Borough.
- **CS12:** Green Infrastructure
- **CS13:** Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- **CS19:** Development and Design Principles

- 1.6 The Environment Bill received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021 and is now enacted as the Environment Act 2021. Part 6 (Nature and Biodiversity) and Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 insert a new section 90A and Schedule 7A into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA), which contain the provisions requiring mandatory biodiversity net gain for development granted planning permission pursuant to the TCPA. These provisions require developments to provide a biodiversity value post-development that exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitats by at least 10%.

- 1.7 The assessment also takes into consideration nature conservation and wildlife legislation including, but not limited to, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

- 1.8 The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for PEA (CIEEM 2017) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Desktop Study

- 2.1 A desktop study was completed using an internet-based mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and an internet-based aerial mapping service (maps.google.co.uk) was used to understand the habitats present in

and around the site, including identifying habitat linkages and features (ponds, woodlands etc.) within the wider landscape. Species records and non-statutory designated site records within a 2km radius around the site from Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC).

Phase 1 Habitat Survey and UKHab Assessment

- 2.2 The site was surveyed on 12th August 2025 by senior ecologist Kieran McGranaghan BSc (Hons) PGDip. The surveyor identified the habitats present, following the 'Phase 1 habitat survey' auditing method (Joint Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC)) and the UK Habitat classification system (UKHab V2). The site was surveyed on foot, and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on an appropriately scaled map.

Protected Species Assessments

- 2.3 Any evidence of additional protected species was recorded. Standard methods of search and measures of presence, or likely presence based on habitat suitability were used for bats in trees (Collins 2023), breeding birds (BTO 2020), hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* (Bright *et al.* 2006), great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* (ARG 2010), reptiles (Froglife 2015), badgers *Meles meles* (Creswell *et al.* 1990) and water voles *Arvicola amphibius* (Strachan *et al.* 2011).

Limitations

- 2.4 It should be noted that 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. The site was visited once, as such seasonal variations cannot be observed and potentially only a selection of all species that potentially occur within the site have been recorded. Therefore, the survey provides a general assessment of the potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.
- 2.5 The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on-site, based on the suitability of the habitat and any direct evidence on site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. The assessment is only valid for the time when the survey was carried out. Additional surveys may be recommended if, based on this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

3.0 RESULTS

Desktop Study

3.1 Four internationally designated sites are located within 15km of the site:

- **North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** located approximately 3.5km southeast of the site. Designated for supporting *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles (Yew-dominated woodland), *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests (Beech forests on neutral to rich soils), semi-dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*, dry grasslands on chalk of limestone).
- **Thames Estuary & Marshes Ramsar and Special Protection Area (SPA)** located approximately 6.9km northeast of the site. Designated for its ornithological importance, regularly supporting more than 1% of the GB wintering populations of avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*; more than 1% of the biogeographical populations of the migratory species ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, knot *Calidris canutus islandica*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, and redshank *Tringa totanus totanus*; and regularly supports more than 20,000 waterfowl in any season, with 75,019 during the wintering period of 1993/94-1997/98.
- **Peters Pit SAC** located approximately 8.2km southeast of the site. Designated for supporting large breeding populations of Great Crested Newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*.
- **Medway Estuary & Marshes Ramsar and SPA** located approximately 13.5km northeast of the site. Designated for its ornithological importance, regularly supporting nationally important breeding populations of avocet and little tern *Sterna albifrons*, a nationally important wintering population of avocet, and regularly supporting over 20,000 waterfowl, with an average peak count of 53,900 birds recorded in the five-winter period 1986/87 to 1990/91.



Figure 3: International statutory designated sites within 15km (red circle) of the site.

3.2 No statutory designated sites are located within 2km of the site, with the closest being:

- **Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** located approximately 2.1km east of the site. Designated for supporting grassland and beech woodland on chalk soil. The site is entomologically important, being the only known location in Britain for the moth *Hypercallia citrinalis*.

3.3 There are eight non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site boundary:

- Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) GR05 – B260 Longfield Road (East), located approximately 580m northwest of the site.
- RNR GR04 – A227 Wrotham Road RNR, located approximately 1.28km north of the site.
- GR04 – Henley Wood and Pasture Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located approximately 1.45km east of the site.
- GR10 – Happy Valley, Meopham LWS, located approximately 1.6km south of the site.
- RNR GR08 – B260 Longfield Road (West), located approximately 1.6km northwest of the site.
- GR09 – Nurstead and Cozendon Woods, Nash Streed LWS, located approximately 1.65km north of the site.

- GR13 – Elbows Wood, Meopham LWS, located approximately 1.8km southwest of the site.
- GR06 - Strawberry Hill Pasture and Woodland, Meopham LWS, located approximately 1.9km southeast of the site.
- GR03 – Pasture South of Istead Rise Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located approximately 1.95km northwest of the site.

3.4 There are four priority habitats identified within 1km of the site (Figure 4). The closest of each type are:

- **Deciduous Woodland** located approximately 110m west of the site.
- **Woodpasture and Parkland** located approximately 580m east of the site.
- **Ancient & Semi-natural Woodland** located approximately 680m west of the site.
- **Traditional Orchards** located approximately 780m east of the site.



Figure 4: Priority habitats within 1km (red circle) of the site: deciduous woodland (green), woodpasture and parkland (light green), ancient & semi-natural woodland (vertical hatching) and traditional orchards (dark green).

3.5 OS mapping and aerial images indicate there are no ponds located within 250m of the site.

3.6 The closest past European Protected Species (EPS) licences for each species are (Figure 5):

- **Bat** – located approximately 3.2km west of the site, 2012 licence for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*.
- **Dormouse** – located approximately 3.8km northeast of the site, 2021 licence for the impact and destruction of a resting place and impact and destruction of a breeding site.
- **Great Crested Newt** – located approximately 3.9km southwest of the site, 2013 licence for the destruction of a resting place.

3.7 The closest great crested newt class survey licence return with great crested newts present is located approximately 3.7km west of the site.

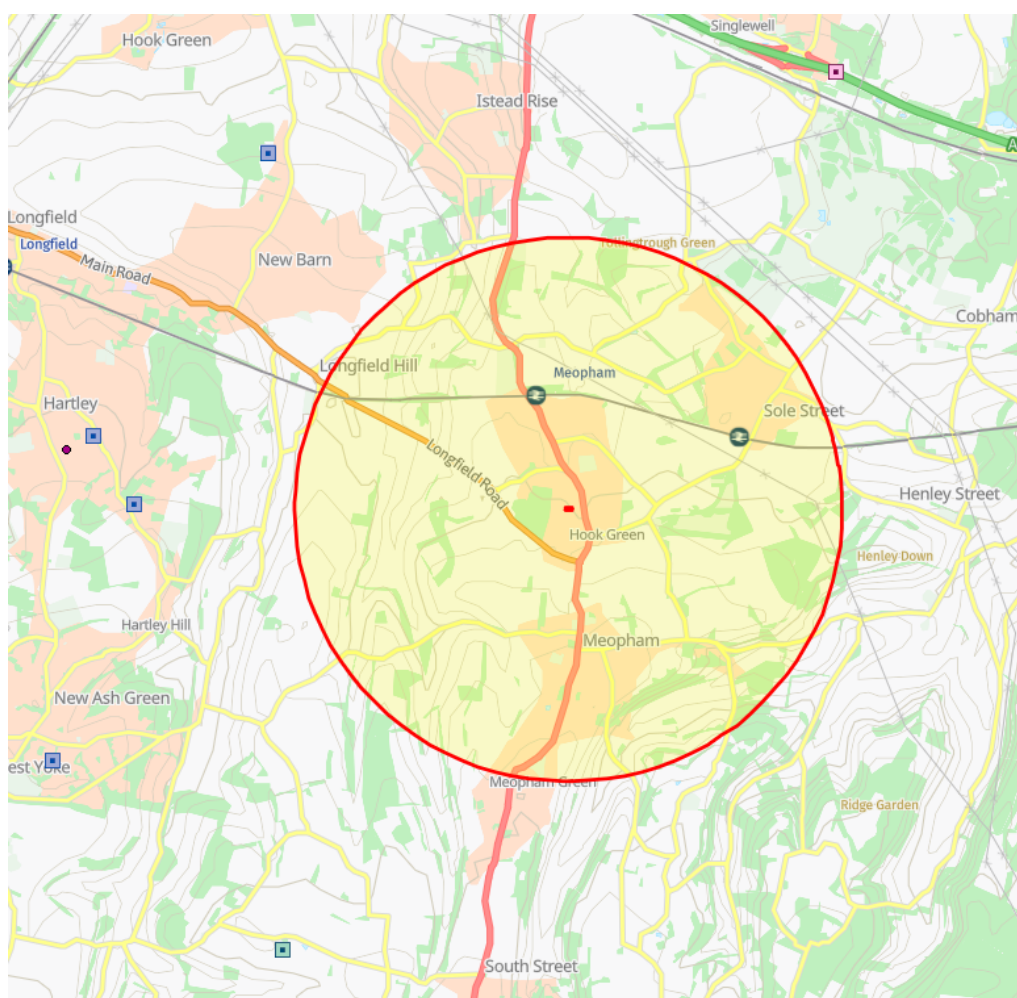


Figure 5: EPS Licences granted within the local area, with a 2km buffer zone of the site shown (red circle) (Blue square – bat, pink square – dormouse, green square - great crested newt, purple circle – great crested newt class survey license return).

Table 1: Biological Records from KMBRC within 2km of the site

Species	Status	Distance from site	Date of record
Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 8	1.9km north	16/07/2021
Jersey Tiger <i>Euplagia quadripunctaria</i>	Habitat & Species Directive Annex 2	500m north	20/08/2021
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	180m east	March 2009
Common Frog <i>Rana temporaria</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	1.15km northeast	31/07/2020
Smooth Newt <i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	1.9km northeast	17/05/2012
Slow Worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5, NERC Act (2006) Section 41	2.1km northwest	16/06/2019
Common Lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5, NERC Act (2006) Section 41	980m east	2014
Badger <i>Meles meles</i>	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	2.3km northwest	08/06/2023
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	Bern Annex 3	190m east	14/06/2022
Hazel Dormouse <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	Bern Annex 3, Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2, Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	1.75km southeast	30/10/2013
Brown Long-eared Bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2, Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	680m east	21/01/2022
Noctule Bat <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2, Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	690m east	01/08/2019
Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2, Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	475m northeast	04/11/2019
Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2, Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5	675m east	08/07/2021
Serotine Bat <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Schedule 2,	680m east	01/08/2019

	Habitat and Species Directive (1992) Annex 4, Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) Schedule 5		
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**Some species have not been included due to the age of the record and the likelihood of presence on site due to habitat types*

Habitat Survey

- 3.8 The site photos are in **Appendix 1** with the habitat map presented in **Appendix 2**.

Developed land; sealed surface (Hardstanding)

- 3.9 The site contained a large area of hardstanding in the form of the existing access road, parking area and footpath.

Developed land; sealed surface (Buildings)

- 3.10 A total of three sets of single-storey garages were present on the site.

Bare Earth

- 3.11 A small area of bare earth was located along part of the southern boundary of the site, under the mature English Walnut tree *Juglans regia*. Some vegetation was present within this habitat with species identified including Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, ivy *Hedera helix*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common mallow *Malva sylvestris* and common nettles *Urtica dioica*.

Introduced Shrub

- 3.12 Areas of introduced shrub were located near the eastern boundary of the site. These areas contained abundant cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*.

Modified Grassland

- 3.13 Two small sections of heavily modified grassland were identified within the site, located along its eastern boundary. The grassland was seen to contain a very short sward height, which was uniform both sections. The grassland was dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* which was estimated to cover over 90% of the grassland area. Other species identified within the habitat included Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, wall barley *Hordeum murinum*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, white-dead nettle *Lamium album* and field bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*.

Scattered Trees

- 3.14 Three scattered trees were present within the site, the first was a small crab apple *Malus sylvestris* tree near the eastern boundary of the site, and two medium sized English walnut trees located along the sites southern boundary.

Schedule 9 Invasive Species

- 3.15 Schedule 9 Invasive Species were recorded to be present on site. Virginia Creeper *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* was recorded located on top one of the garage units. The approximate location of which is shown within the habitat map in Appendix 1 of this report.

Protected Species**Bats***Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)*

- 3.16 All buildings present on site were assessed for their suitability for roosting bats, due to the uniformity of the buildings present they have all been assessed together for ease. All of the buildings were seen to be primarily brick-built structures with flat felt-lined roofs which were being used as garages/ storage units for the residents. All of the buildings were externally assessed with no visible Potential Roost Features (PRFs) identified. Whilst one of the buildings was seen to have ivy overlaying part of its roof, this feature was not considered to be suitable for roosting bats due to its limited extent and the urban nature of the site. Overall, all of the buildings present on site were considered to support 'Negligible' suitability for roosting bats.
- 3.17 All mature trees on site were subjected to a ground-level tree assessment (GLTA) during the walkover. Both of the trees present on site were considered to support 'None' suitability for roosting bats due to the lack of PRFs present on them.

Foraging and commuting habitat

- 3.18 The site largely consisted of hardstanding and buildings, with small areas of short sward grassland and introduced shrub. The site itself is located in a largely suburban setting, with primarily residential units directly surrounding the site. The scattered trees within the site were considered to offer the majority of the site's potential for commuting and foraging bats. Overall, the site is considered to have 'Low' suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

Badgers and other mammals

- 3.19 No evidence of badgers including setts, foraging marks or latrines were recorded within the site. The site itself contains limited suitability for foraging and foraging badgers, with only the modified grassland and introduced shrub areas considered to offer some suitability for the species. This suitability of these areas are further limited by the active use of the site, as these the small extent of these areas. However, the somewhat suburban location of the site, with a unit of woodland located approximately 110m west of the site, increases the probability of badgers being within the local landscape. As such, the presence of commuting and foraging badgers, or more likely other mammals such as urban foxes, cannot be ruled out.

Birds

- 3.20 The trees, and to a lesser extent the introduced shrub and Virginia creeper habitats present on site, have the potential to support nesting birds.

Great Crested Newts

- 3.21 OS maps and aerial images indicated that there are no ponds within a 250m radius of the site. The closest EPS licence for the species was located approximately 3.9km southwest of the site, with the closest survey licence return for the species being 3.7km west. No records for great crested newts were returned from the local records centre within 2km of the site.
- 3.22 The site itself was seen to be largely unsuitable for the species due to the lack of waterbodies and dominance of hardstanding within the site. Additionally, the active nature of the site is considered to further reduce the habitat's suitability for the species. Overall, with the site primarily supporting largely unsuitable habitat for great crested newts and the lack of records or licences within or around the site, it is considered highly unlikely the species is present on or using the site. As such, works can commence without further consideration for the species.

Dormice

- 3.23 The closest EPS licence for dormice was located approximately 3.8km northeast of the site, with the closest record of dormice being approximately 1.75km southeast of the site from 2013.

- 3.24 The site itself was seen to be largely unsuitable for the species due to the dominance of hardstanding within the site, with only the scattered trees and to a lesser extent the introduced shrub, offering some potential for the species. Additionally, the active nature of the site is considered to further reduce the habitat's suitability for the species. Furthermore, the site had very limited connectivity to dormouse suitable habitat within the wider area, which further reduces the suitability of the habitats present on site for dormice.
- 3.25 Overall, it is considered highly unlikely that dormice are present on or using the site. As such, works can commence without further consideration for the species.

Reptiles

- 3.26 The record search from the biological record centre returned records for slow worms and common lizards at approximately 2.1km northwest and 980m east of the site respectively.
- 3.27 The habitats on site are considered to be of largely negligible ecological value for this species, due to the dominance of the hardstanding, buildings and short-sward modified grassland. Additionally, the active nature of the site is considered to further reduce the habitat's suitability for the species. As such, it is considered highly unlikely that reptiles are present on or using the site and therefore works can commence without further consideration for this species.

Other Species

- 3.28 Due to a lack of suitable habitat, the site is not considered suitable for other protected species such as water voles and otters. As such, no further surveys are recommended, and these species will not be discussed further within this report.

4.0 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The following paragraphs consider the effects of the development on designated sites, priority habitats and protected and priority species. Where the desk study and Phase 1 survey provide sufficient evidence for an assessment of effects on any of these groups to be taken through planning, these are detailed below, the need for additional surveys and when and how these should be completed are summarised, if required.

- 4.2 Provisional recommendations are also given for means to enhance biodiversity following the principle (CIEEM et al. 2016) of following the mitigation hierarchy of; avoidance, minimisation of loss, compensation on site and biodiversity offset.

Effects on Designated Sites

- 4.3 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any designated sites. The closest internationally designated site is North Downs Woodlands SAC located approximately 3.5km southeast of the site. The closest statutory designated site was Halling to Trottscliffe Escarpment SSSI located approximately 2.1km east of the site.
- 4.4 The protection of European Sites is transposed into UK legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The control of activities is in relation to the sites' conservation objectives, which are phrased to avoid damage to the qualifying feature (2.11 below).

'Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- *The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features*
- *The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features*
- *The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely*
- *The population of each of the qualifying features, and,*
- *The distribution of the qualifying features within the site. '*

- 4.5 The qualifying features of North Downs Woodland SAC are the following Annex 1 habitats:
- Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles. (Yew-dominated woodland)*
 - Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests. (Beech forests on neutral to rich soils)
 - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (FestucoBrometalia). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)
- 4.6 The site itself is dominated by buildings, hardstanding, modified grassland, introduced shrub, bare earth and scattered trees and does not contain any of the qualifying habitats as listed above. Furthermore, due to the dominance of the hardstanding habitats within the site and its distance from the designated area, the site is not considered to contain any functionally linked land for North Downs

Woodland SAC. Overall, at this distance from North Downs Woodland SAC, the small scale and scope of the development and its lack of qualifying habitats, the proposals for the site are not considered to have any likely significant direct impacts on this designated area.

- 4.7 Whilst there may be a small increase in indirect impacts, namely recreational pressure, it is again considered that the small scale and scope of the development would not result in any significant impacts on North Downs Woodland SAC. This is especially the case due to the presence of existing recreational areas much closer to the site, namely Camer Park Country Park located 580m southeast and Jeskyns Country Park approximately 2km northeast of the site.
- 4.8 In regards to the Thames Estuary & Marshes Ramsar and SPA, as the site falls outside of the 6km Zone of Influence (ZOI), at approximately 6.9km northeast of the site, no significant direct or indirect impacts are expected to occur as a result of the development. Similarly, the site falls outside of the 6km ZOI for Medway Estuary & Marshes Ramsar and SPA, at approximately 13.5km, therefore no significant direct or indirect impacts are expected to occur as a result of the development.
- 4.9 Whilst no official ZOI is listed for Peters Pit SAC, at approximately 8.2km from the site as well as the small scale nature of the proposals, no significant direct or indirect impacts are expected to occur as a result of the development.
- 4.10 Furthermore, the Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) indicate that at the site's location, the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on terrestrial SSSIs and the SACs, SPAs, or Ramsar sites that they underpin. Therefore, Natural England does not need to be consulted on the likely effects of development on terrestrial SSSIs and the SACs, SPAs, or Ramsar sites that they underpin.
- 4.11 There are eight non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site's boundary, the closest of which was RNR GR05 – B260 Longfield Road (East) Roadside Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 580m northwest of the site. Given the distance between the site and the designated site and the small-scale and size of the proposals, no significant impacts are predicted to occur as a result of the proposals on the surrounding non-statutory designated sites.

- 4.12 Overall, given the distance of the site from any designated sites, the results of the IRZ and the small-scale scope and extent of the proposals, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposed development will have any significant direct or indirect impact on any designated sites.

Effects on Priority Habitats

- 4.13 There are several priority habitats within the wider landscape, the closest being deciduous woodland located approximately 110m west of the site. As the development is focused solely within the red line boundary of the site, no significant direct impacts are predicted on this, or other priority habitats within the local area.
- 4.14 Furthermore, the extent and nature of the proposals themselves, which are for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of five residential units is not considered to lead to significant indirect impacts on the priority habitats within the local area.

Effect on On-site Habitats

- 4.15 The majority of the site is hardstanding which has negligible ecological value and heavily managed modified grassland of very low ecological value. The two mature walnut trees on site provide the greatest ecological value and are set to be fully retained within the site.
- 4.16 Ecological enhancements have been recommended to enhance biodiversity post-development and a separate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment is being undertaken for the site as to fully assess the impacts of the proposals on the habitats on site.
- 4.17 The schedule 9 invasive species Virginia creeper was identified on the southern boundary of the site, on top of one of the garages. It is recommended that a specialist contractor is brought in to remove these species, as to adhere to government legislation and prevent its spread into the adjacent woodland habitats.

Effects on Protected Species

Bats

Buildings

- 4.18 All of the buildings present on site were considered to support '**Negligible**' suitability for roosting bats and as such, no further surveys on these buildings in regards to roosting bats are necessary.

Trees

- 4.19 Both of the mature trees identified on site were considered to support '**None**' suitability for roosting bats and as such, no further surveys on these trees in regards to roosting bats are necessary.

Foraging and commuting

- 4.20 The site contains features such as trees which offer limited potential for commuting and foraging bats, with the grassland and introduced shrub offering lower levels of suitability. According to Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, it is important that proportionality is employed when recommending further survey work for bat species on a proposed development site. As stated within section 2.2.19 of the latest survey guidelines (2023), the following points need to be taken into account with regard to planning bat surveys:

- Likelihood of bats being present;
- Type of proposed activities;
- Scale of proposed activities;
- Size, nature, and complexity of the site;
- Species concerned;
- Number of individuals.

- 4.21 Due to the nature of the proposed development and the low suitability of the habitats present on site, it is considered that transect surveys for bats would not be required. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed development on-site would not significantly impact upon the ecological functionality of the local landscape.

- 4.22 It is recommended, however, that the proposed lighting scheme considers bats and wildlife in the surrounding area as well as the site. All bat species are nocturnal, resting in dark conditions during the day and emerging at night to feed. Bats are known to be

affected by light levels, which can affect both their roosting and foraging behaviour.

Recommendations include:

- Installing lighting only if there is a significant need;
- Using sodium lamps instead of mercury or metal halide lamps where glass glazing is preferred due to its UV filtration characteristics;
- Directing lighting to where it is needed and avoiding light spillage;
- Using baffled lighting where light is directed towards the ground;
- Avoid putting lighting near trees or hedgerows and angling light away from these linear features which are used by commuting and foraging bats.

Birds

- 4.23 The on-site trees, and to a lesser extent the introduced shrub, have the potential to support nesting birds. It is recommended that the removal of suitable vegetation is undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist. If active nests are identified, works in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest.

Mammals

- 4.24 Mammals such as badgers, or more likely urban foxes, may use the site for commuting and foraging, and precautionary construction measures are recommended. The guidelines are as follows:
- Any trenches or excavations on site should be either covered over at night or a plank of wood placed in so as to allow any mammals to escape if they were to accidentally fall in.
 - Any open pipes or conduits laid should be blocked off each night to prevent any small mammals from entering them.
 - Disturbances, such as loud noises, vibrations, and flood lighting in association with night working should be minimised.

Ecological Enhancements

- 4.25 Several enhancements can be made to the final development to further opportunities for wildlife.

- 4.26 Bird boxes can be integrated into the new development to increase the number of breeding opportunities (Figure 6). The box should be positioned on a north or east facing aspect and at least 2m above the ground if possible. Swift boxes could be positioned under the eaves of the building and face north, northwest or northeast.

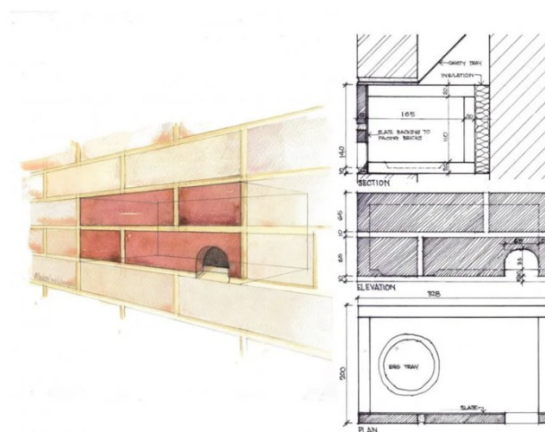


Figure 6: integrated swift box- custom brick facing.

- 4.27 To support the invertebrates and bees using the site, Bee Bricks (Figure 7) can be incorporated into the buildings. The Bee Brick can be used in place of a standard brick or block in construction to create a habitat for solitary bees. Bee Bricks need to be placed in a warm sunny spot on a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. No cleaning or management of the Bee Bricks is required.



Figure 7: Bee bricks to be incorporated into the development.

5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This section of the report forms an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) and is designed to quantify and evaluate the potential impacts of the development on habitats and species present on site or within the local area.
- 5.2 The approach to this assessment accords with guidance presented within the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM 2018). In essence, an EcIA assesses the activities associated with a proposed scheme that are likely to generate changes within the identified zone of influences, on identified ecological features and receptors. The proposals are subsequently reviewed and mitigation and compensation measures are outlined which help to reduce negative impacts.
- 5.3 Table 2 below summarises the impacts and required mitigation for each receptor as previously detailed in the discussion.

Table 2: Assessment of effects from the proposal after mitigation and compensation.

Feature	Scale of Importance	Mitigation/Compensation Required	Residual Effect
Designated Sites	International and National	None required – considerable distance from the site	Not significant
Priority Habitats	National	None required – considerable distance from the site.	Not significant
On site habitats	Site	The proposed development is set to impact habitats with low ecological value, hardstanding and modified grassland. The most ecologically valuable habitats on site are trees.	Not significant
Bat (roosting)	Site	Buildings were considered to support 'Negligible' suitability for roosting bats. Enhancement for bats in the surrounding area is recommended in the form of bat box installation.	Not significant
Bats (commuting and foraging)	Site	Sensitive lighting schemes should be implemented to avoid impacts on bat activity.	Not significant
Nesting Birds	Site	Mitigating direct harm to nests by removal of any suitable nesting habitat outside of nesting bird season or after a check by a suitably qualified ecologist.	Not significant

		Enhancement in the form of the installation of bird boxes.	
Badgers and small mammals	Site	Construction safeguards to be utilised.	Not significant

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any designated sites. The closest internationally designated site is North Downs Woodlands SAC located approximately 3.5km southeast of the site. The closest nationally designated site is Sevenoaks Gravel Pits (SSSI) located approximately 4.2km southeast of the site.
- 6.2 The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for SSSIs indicate that at the site's location, the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on terrestrial SSSIs and the SACs, SPAs, and Ramsar sites that they underpin.
- 6.3 Due to the scale of the proposed development and the distance between the site and the nearest priority habitats, direct and indirect impacts from development are considered unlikely.
- 6.4 The majority of the site consists of hardstanding which is considered to be of negligible ecological value. The modified grassland and introduced shrub is considered to be of low ecological value. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented for wildlife.
- 6.5 The schedule 9 invasive species Virginia creeper was identified on the southern boundary of the site, on top of one of the garages. It is recommended that a specialist contractor is brought in to remove these species, as to adhere to government legislation and prevent its spread into the adjacent woodland habitats.
- 6.6 All of the buildings present on site were considered to support 'Negligible' suitability for roosting bats with all of the mature trees considered to support 'None' suitability for roosting bats and therefore, no further surveys are seen to be required for roosting bats.
- 6.7 The removal of suitable vegetation should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive) or immediately after a nesting bird check by a

suitably qualified ecologist. If active nests are identified, works in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest. As an enhancement, bird boxes could be installed on the on-site trees.

- 6.8 No evidence of badger activity such as sett entrances, faeces, or badger hairs, was recorded on site. As a precaution, it is recommended that precautionary construction measures are implemented to avoid impacting small mammals such as foxes and hedgehogs that might forage and commute on site.
- 6.9 The site does not have significant levels of suitable habitats for dormice, great crested newts, badgers, water voles, and otters. Therefore, further surveys for these species groups are not considered necessary.
- 6.10 Recommendations for enhancements have been made within this report, aimed to further improve the site's ecological value.

7.0 REFERENCES

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Internet resources:

Google Maps: www.google.co.uk/maps

Magic Interactive Map: www.magic.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Photos

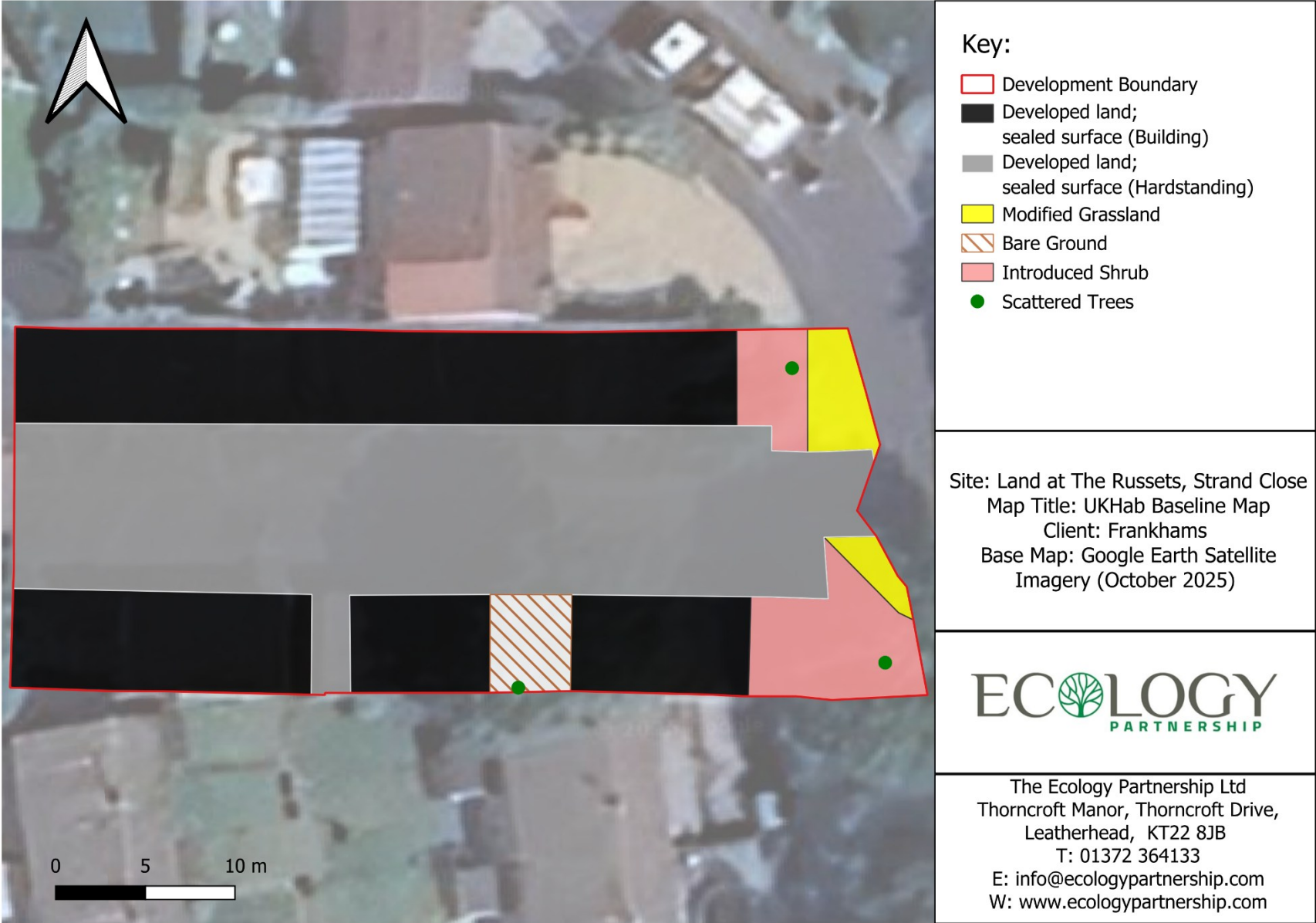
Description	Photograph
Photograph 1: Showing the hardstanding parking and turning area between the rows of single-storey garages.	 A photograph showing a gravel-paved area between two rows of single-storey garages. The garages have green corrugated metal doors and are built with red brick. The area is mostly clear of vegetation, with some small weeds growing in the gravel. The sky is blue with some light clouds.
Photograph 2: Showing the hardstanding parking and turning area between the rows of single-storey garages.	 A photograph showing a gravel-paved area between two rows of single-storey garages. The garages have green corrugated metal doors and are built with red brick. The area is mostly clear of vegetation, with some small weeds growing in the gravel. The sky is blue with some light clouds. There are more trees and foliage visible in the background.

Photograph 3: Showing the medium sized English walnut tree and bare earth with ivy.	
Photograph 4: Showing some of the modified grassland and introduced shrub habitats	

Photograph 5: Showing some of the Virginia creeper present on one of the buildings.



Appendix 2: Habitat Map



Appendix 3: Biological Records Search Report

Our Reference: **ENQ/25/406**

Your Reference: **KENT 7243**

Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre

report regarding

The Russets, Strand Close

on behalf of

Joe Hopkins

The Ecology Partnership

14/08/2025

This report is not a comprehensive ecological survey of the area in question, but can usefully form part of desktop studies to assist competent persons in ecological assessments to determine species and/or habitats reasonably likely to be present in a particular area.

This report was compiled using data held at KMBRC at the time of printing. The KMBRC takes data validation seriously but cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the data included in this report.

Enclosed within this report is the following information specific to the enquiry site :

- Protected Species Inventory ☒
- Kent Rare and Scarce Species Inventory ☒
- Conservation Concern Species Inventory ☒
- Invasive Species List ☒
- SSSI Risk Zones map and report ☐
- Bird List ☒
- Bat List ☒
- Bat Roost Map ☒
- Designated Areas Map ☒
- Kent Habitat Survey Map ☐
- Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat Map ☐

Bespoke Reports:

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Date: 16/12/2025