



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Rockley House

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.0 METHODOLOGY.....	6
3.0 RESULTS	8
4.0 DISCUSSION	17
5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT	23
6.0 CONCLUSION.....	25
7.0 REFERENCES	27
APPENDIX 1: PHOTOS	29
APPENDIX 2: EXISTING HABITATS MAP	33

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 Robinson Escott to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for Land at Rockley House, South Street, Meopham, DA13 0QN, hereafter referred to as the 'site' (Figure 1). This report includes an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) designed to quantify and evaluate the potential impacts of the development on habitats and species present on site or within the local area.

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 (TQ63546347) covers an area of approximately 0.37ha and mostly consists of stable/barn buildings, two equestrian ménages, with hardstanding and modified grassland in between. The surrounding landscape is residential to the north, though a more open, rural landscape with woodland parcels lies to the east and south.



Figure 1: Site red line boundary.

Proposed Development

- 1.4 The proposed development includes the erection of 6 residential dwellings (Figure 2).

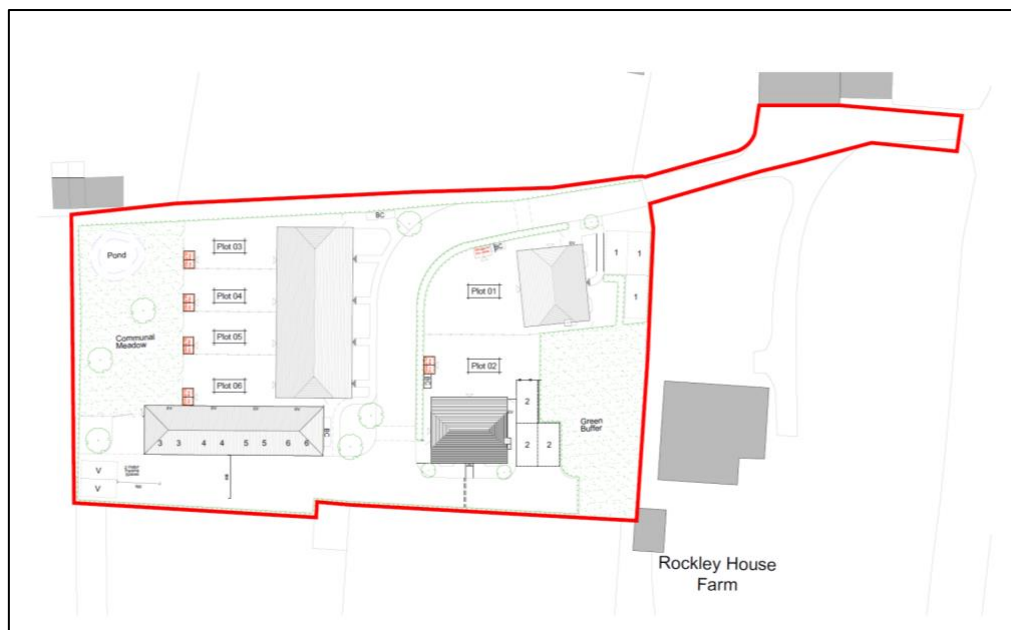


Figure 2: Proposed development.

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.

2.2 Records of protected/notable species and non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site were requested from Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC).

Phase 1 Habitat Survey and UKHab Assessment

2.3 The site was surveyed on 5th February 2026 by principal ecologist Eddie Selwyn BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM and assistant ecologist Finnian Young BSc (Hons). The surveyors 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).

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

2.4 The buildings (internally and externally) were assessed for their suitability for roosting bats following the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2023). The surveyors checked for evidence of roosting bat species and Potential Roosting Features (PRFs).

Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

2.5 The trees were assessed externally from the ground for their suitability for roosting bats following the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2023). The surveyors checked for evidence of roosting bat species and PRFs.

Protected Species Assessments

2.6 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 (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

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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 international statutory designated sites are located within 15km of the site (Figure 3):

- **North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** located approximately 3.37km east of the site. Designated as an SAC for supporting mature *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests and yew woods on steep slopes, which lie within a mosaic of scrub and other woodland types.
- **Peters Pit SAC** located approximately 7.87km east of the site. Designated for supporting large ponds situated amongst grassland, scrub and woodland. The ponds support large populations of breeding great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.
- **Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar** located approximately 10.62km northeast of the site. Designated as a Ramsar site for hosting a complex of brackish, floodplain grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflats, which support an internationally important assemblage of wetland plants and invertebrates.
- **Thames Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA)** located approximately 13.13km northeast. Designated as an SPA for supporting internationally important populations of birds including avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, knot *Calidris canutus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, and ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*.



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

- 3.2 There are no national statutory designated sites located within 2km of the site (Figure 4), and the closest is **North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve (NNR)** located approximately 2.01km south of the site.

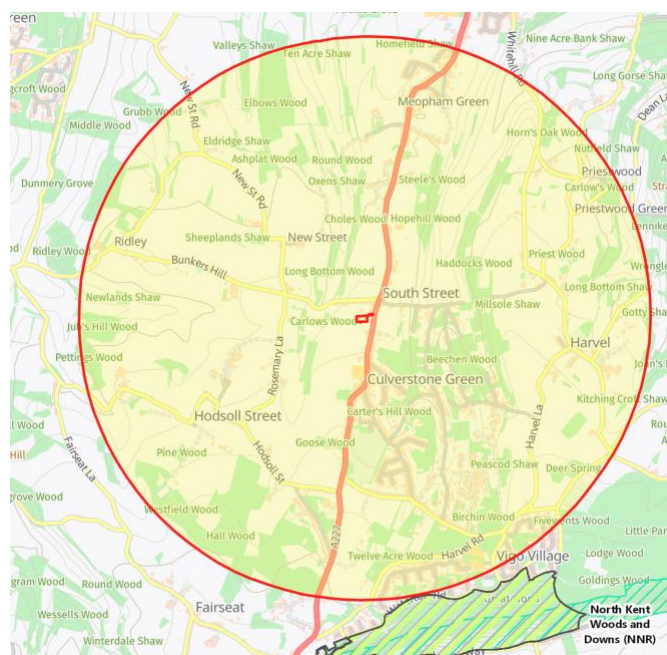


Figure 4: Nationally statutory designated sites within 2km (red circle) of the site.

- 3.3 There are several non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the area, with the closest being the Happy Valley, Meopham Local Wildlife Site (LWS) located 524m east of the site.
- 3.4 There are four priority habitat types identified within 1km of the site (Figure 5). The closest of each are:

-

3.7 The closest GCN class survey licence return with GCN present is approximately 4.14km south of the site.

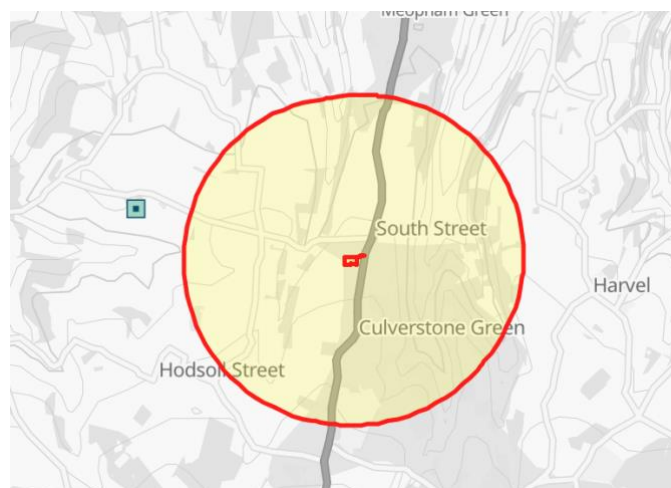


Figure 6: EPS Licences granted within 2km of the site (Green square – great crested newt).

- 3.8 The site, as well as the majority of the surrounding landscape within 250m, falls within a green risk zone for Natural England District Licensing of GCN (Figure 7). Natural England defines a green zone as containing sparsely distributed GCN and are less likely to contain important pathways of connecting habitat.

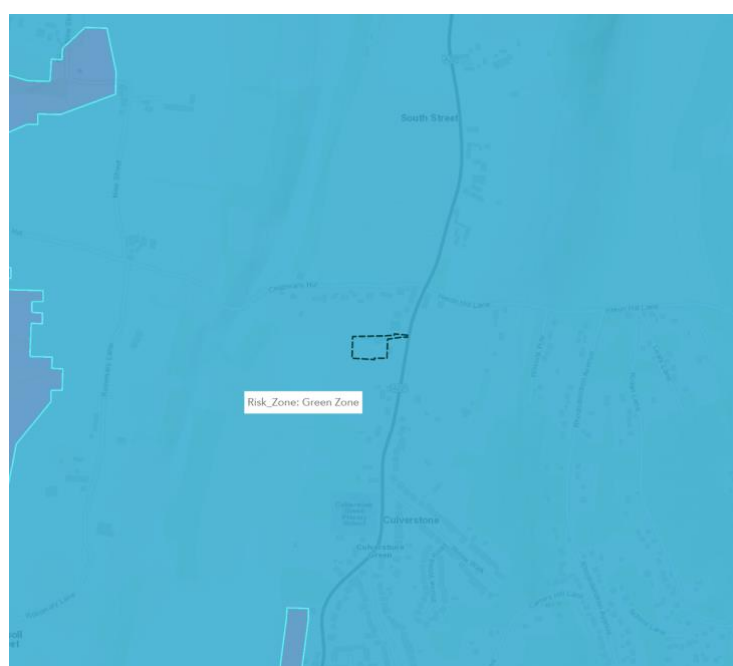


Figure 7: The site within a Green Risk Zone for District Licensing of GCN.

- 3.9 A 2km data search for protected species was requested from KMBRC. The results are presented in Table 1. Some species have not been included due to the age of the record and the likelihood of presence on site due to habitat types. The records received could only be estimated to be 'within 2km of the site' due to the low locational accuracy of the records, preventing a more accurate estimation of the distance between the sites and the records being estimated.

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

Species	Status	Date of record and location from site
Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Hab Dir A4; Bern A3; Bonn A2; WCA5	1.46km south 2017
Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Hab Dir A4; Bern A2; Bonn A2; BAP; S41; WCA5	1.45km south 2021
Brown long-eared bat <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Hab Dir A4; Bern A2; Bonn A2; BAP; S41; WCA5	820m southeast 2017
Grass snake <i>Natrix Helvetica</i>	Bern A3; WCA Sch5 s9.1/s9.5a	1.46km south 2020
Badger <i>Meles meles</i>	Bern A3; Protection of Badgers Act 1992	1.95km north 2019
House martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	Red List; Bern A2	Within 2km 2016
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>	Amber List; BAP; Bern A2; NERC S41	Within 2km 2023
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Red List; Birds Dir A2; Bern A3; WCA Sch1 Pt1	Within 2km 2023
Mistle thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Red List; Birds Dir A2; Bern A3	Within 2km 2023
Marsh tit <i>Parus palustris</i>	Red List; BAP; Bern A2; NERC S41	Within 2km 2022
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Red List; BAP; Birds Dir A2; NERC S41	Within 2km 2023
House sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Red List; BAP; NERC S41	Within 2km 2023
Greenfinch <i>Chloris chloris</i>	Red List; Bern A2	Within 2km 2023
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citronella</i>	Red List; BAP; Bern A2; NERC S41	Within 2km 2023
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	Red List; Bern A3	Within 2km 2023

Habitat Survey

- 3.10 The site photos are in **Appendix 1**, and the habitat map is presented in **Appendix 2**.

Developed land; sealed surface (including buildings) and artificially unvegetated, unsealed surface

- 3.11 The site includes five buildings, as detailed in the PRA section below, along with several areas of hardstanding, including an access track. In addition, there are two ménages with artificial surfacing on the site.

Modified grassland

- 3.12 Areas of managed short sward grassland are present within the site. Species present include annual meadow grass *Poa annuum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, cleaver *Galium aparine*, herb Robert *Geranium*

robertianum, broad-leaved willowherb *Epilobium montanum*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, field speedwell *Veronica agrestis*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, red deadnettle *Lamium purpureum*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, and dove's-foot crane's-bill *Geranium molle*.

Ruderal/Ephemeral

- 3.13 Areas of ruderal vegetation are located across the site and support a mixture of species. Species include common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, medick *Medicago lupulina*, cleaver, dove's-foot crane's-bill, broad-leaved dock, hairy bittercress *Cardamine hirsute*, common nettle, pineappleweed *Matricaria discoidea*, herb Robert, hawkbit *Leontodon* sp., common vetch *Vicia sativa*, ivy *Hedera helix*, goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, Yorkshire fog, broad-leaved dock, common chickweed *Stellaria media*, greater celandine *Chelidonium majus*, hedge woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, ribwort plantain, and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

Hedgerows and individual trees

- 3.14 The site supports three hedgerows and three individual trees along the boundaries.
- 3.15 Hedgerow H1, located along the northern boundary, is a defunct native hedgerow and includes elder *Sambucus nigra*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, bramble, ivy, rose *Rosa* sp., and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*.
- 3.16 Hedgerow H2 is located along the northern boundary and is dominated by cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*.
- 3.17 Hedgerow H3 is located along the eastern boundary and is dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with ivy, elm *Ulmus* sp., willow *Salix* sp., and holly *Ilex aquifolium*.
- 3.18 There are three individual trees along the northern boundary; T1 and T2 are field maples *Acer campestre*, and T3 is a hawthorn.

Bramble scrub

- 3.19 A small area of bramble scrub is located along the northwest boundary, with limited hazel also present.

Introduced shrub

- 3.20 A small area of cherry laurel shrub is located along the northwest boundary.

Protected Species*Bats**Foraging and commuting habitat*

- 3.21 The majority of the site provides limited opportunities for foraging and commuting bats. The northern boundary is considered to provide the majority of opportunities due to the off-site adjacent habitat.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.22 B1 is a stable/storage building constructed of breezeblocks and a pitched corrugated metal roof; B2 is a stable building constructed of breezeblocks and a flat roof; B3 is a timber and steel framed barn with a pitched corrugated roof covering building B2; B4 is a stable building constructed of breezeblocks, a corrugated sheeting roof, and a single-skinned timber weatherboard gable ends; B5 is a garage constructed of timber weather-boarding and a corrugated metal roof; B6 is three shipping containers. All the buildings within the site are considered to have '**negligible**' suitability for roosting bats due to their construction characteristics and lack of PRFs.



Figure 8: Buildings within the site.

GLTA

- 3.23 The trees on site are immature and semi-mature, with limited ivy cover present. As such, the trees do not support PRFs and are considered to have '**none**' suitability for roosting.

Badgers and other mammals

- 3.24 No evidence of badgers including setts, foraging marks or latrines were recorded within or adjacent to the site. However, the site has connectivity to open fields and woodland parcels to the west, which suggests that badgers and other mammals may access the site for foraging and commuting activities.

Birds

- 3.25 A suspected inactive robin nest was recorded in building B3, and a suspected inactive barn swallow nest was recorded in building B4. The trees, hedgerows, and bramble scrub along the margins of the site, as well as the stable and barn buildings within the site, have the potential to support nesting birds.

Dormice

- 3.26 The native hedgerows are limited within the site, with the northern native hedgerow being defunct, and eastern native hedgerow being species poor. These hedgerows are considered to provide sub-optimal habitat for dormice. The bramble scrub and limited hazel provide some opportunities for dormice. These habitats have connectivity to suitable habitats within the local area.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- 3.27 The majority of the site (buildings, hardstanding, and ménages) is not suitable for GCN. The areas of grassland are not considered suitable for GCN due to the regular management and frequent use by horses for grazing. Limited sub-optimal habitat is present along the northern boundary.
- 3.28 The next closest pond is 280m south of the site (Pond P2). Where present, great crested newts tend to remain near their breeding pond and whilst a maximum routine migratory range has been estimated as approximately 250m from a breeding pond (Franklin, 1993; Oldham and Nicholson, 1986; Jehle, 2000), one study by Robert Jehle, (2000) demonstrated a 'terrestrial zone' of 63m, within which 95% of summer refuges were located. A further study (Jehle, R & Arntzen, JW. 2000) showed that after the breeding season, 64% of newts were recorded within 20m of the pond edge. As such, ponds further afield and certainly outside the 250m are not considered a constraint, considering the poor quality of terrestrial habitat present on site. Core terrestrial habitat for the species is recognised by Natural England as within 50m of a breeding pond for licensing purposes.

3.29 No records for GCN were returned within 2km of the site, and the site falls within a green Risk Zone for Natural England GCN district licensing.

3.30 Based on the limited suitable habitat within the site, no ponds being located within 250m of the site, no records within 2km of the site, and the site being within a green Risk Zone, GCN are not considered to be present within the site, and no further surveys are recommended. As such, this species will not be discussed further in this report.

Reptiles

3.31 The grassland within the site is unsuitable for reptiles due to its short sward height and constant disturbance. The northern boundary provides limited habitat for reptiles.

Other Species

3.32 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 in 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 is not located within or adjacent to any designated sites. The closest international designated site is North Downs Woodland SAC, located approximately 3.37km east of the site, and the closest national designated site is North Kent Woods and Downs NNR, located approximately 2.01km south. The Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI IRZs) indicate the proposed development at the site is unlikely to have a harmful effect on terrestrial SSSIs and the SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites that they underpin.

4.4 The closest non-statutory designated site is Happy Valley, Meopham LWS, located 524m east of the site.

4.5 Based on the distance of the closest designated sites, and given the scale of the development, any direct or indirect impacts on designated sites are considered unlikely to result from the proposed development.

Effects on Priority Habitats

4.6 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.

Effect on On-site Habitats

4.7 The majority of the site is formed of developed land, and the remainder includes common and widespread habitats which are of limited ecological value. The hedgerows, trees, and scrub within the site, particularly those along the northern

boundary, provide the greatest ecological value within the context of the site and are expected to be retained as part of the proposed development. Small areas of ruderal vegetation and managed modified grassland will be lost, but the loss of this habitat is considered negligible, and landscape planting will provide similar opportunities post-development. It is recommended that the cherry laurel within the site be removed to enhance the native species and wildlife.

- 4.8 The proposed development includes new boundary hedgerow planting, and it is recommended that a mixture of native species is utilised. Additional ecological enhancements have been recommended to enhance biodiversity post-development.
- 4.9 The proposals include a new pond within a community meadow and a green buffer, which will enhance opportunities for a range of wildlife and increase the ecological value of the site.

Effects on Protected Species

Bats

Foraging and commuting habitat

- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 Commuting and foraging bats may utilise the habitats lining the margins of the site. However, considering the above and the limited habitat present, it is considered that activity surveys for bats would not be required. Furthermore, it is considered that the development of the site would not impact the ecological functionality of the local landscape.

4.12 It is recommended that any proposed lighting scheme as part of the development should consider bats 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 and
- Avoid putting lighting near trees or hedgerows and angling light away from these linear features which are used by commuting and foraging bats.

PRA

4.13 No evidence of roosting bats or PRFs were recorded in any of the buildings within the site. As such, the buildings have '**negligible**' suitability for roosting bats and can be removed without further surveys for roosting bats.

GLTA

4.14 The trees on site are considered to have '**negligible**' suitability for roosting bats, and as such can be removed without further surveys for roosting bats.

Badgers and small mammals

4.15 Badgers and other mammals such as foxes and hedgehogs may use the site for commuting and foraging. Therefore, 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 to allow any mammals to escape if they were to accidentally fall in.
- Any open pipes or conduits 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 work should be minimised.

Nesting Birds

- 4.16 The trees, hedgerows and scrub have the potential to support nesting birds and two disused bird nests were recorded within the buildings. It is recommended that the removal of suitable vegetation and the buildings are 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.
- 4.17 The proposed development will result in the loss of suitable swallow nesting habitat. As such, it is recommended that new swallow cups be incorporated into the proposed development (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Swallow Cup.

Dormice and Reptiles

- 4.18 The site supports limited habitat along the northern and northeastern boundaries, and based on the proposed development, this habitat will be retained. It is recommended that heras fencing is installed prior to construction to protect this retained habitat, and landscape planting within these boundaries is undertaken sensitively.
- 4.19 If these habitats are to be impacted by the proposed development, a license may be required from Natural England. If impacts to these habitats are limited, it may be possible to undertake these works via Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs), and an ecologist should be present.

Ecological Enhancements

- 4.20 Ecological enhancements have been recommended to further opportunities for wildlife.

- 4.21 Bird boxes can be hung on the building or integrated to increase the number of breeding opportunities (Figure 10). Bird boxes should be woodcrete (or similar) as they provide better thermal properties, are longer lasting and more durable than wooden boxes. The boxes should be positioned adjacent to proposed landscaping, on a north or east facing aspect, and at least 2m above the ground if possible.



Figure 10: Vivara Small Bird Nest Box.

- 4.22 Integrated bat boxes can be installed within the new building to provide additional roosting opportunities post-development. These can be designed to match the proposed brickwork for the building or built into the soffits and require little/no maintenance. Examples of what integrated bat boxes might look like are shown in Figure 11. Bat boxes should be installed as high as possible from the ground surface (usually beneath the roof apex) and positioned on a south or west facing aspect of the building. Soffit bat box installation guidance is shown in the diagram in Figure 11.



Figure 11: Examples of integrated bat boxes - a Habibat integrated bat box (left), a Wildcare soffit bat box and a diagram to show its installation specifications (centre and right).

- 4.23 To support invertebrates and bees, Bee Bricks (Figure 12) can be incorporated into the building. 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 12: Bee bricks.

- 4.24 In order to allow hedgehogs to move freely throughout the site, new garden fencing should include 13x13cm holes at the base. It is recommended that signage, such as that shown in Figure 13 from hedgehogstreet.org, is erected in order to prevent the holes from being accidentally covered up.



Figure 13: Hedgehog highway hole and signage.

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	Direct and indirect impacts on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites are considered to be negligible due to the scale of the development and the distance from these designated sites.	Not significant
Priority Habitats	National	Small scale of development not considered to have impacts on wider landscape.	Not significant
On-site habitats	Local	The majority of the site is developed land. The remainder of the site includes common and widespread habitats of limited ecological value. On-site habitat loss will be sufficiently offset through the proposed landscaping.	Not significant
Bat (roosting)	Site	The buildings and trees within the site have 'negligible' suitability for roosting bats and as such impacts to roosting bats are not anticipated. Enhancement for bats in the surrounding area is recommended in the form of bat box installation.	Not significant
Bats (commuting and foraging)	Local	Bat activity surveys are not considered necessary. Sensitive lighting schemes should be implemented to avoid impacts on bat activity.	Not significant

Badgers and other mammals	Site	Construction safeguards should be implemented to avoid impacting badgers and other mammals that might commute or forage within the site. Enhancement could include the implementation of hedgehog highway holes.	Not significant
Nesting Birds	Site	Inactive bird nests identified within buildings at the 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. Enhancement in the form of the installation of swallow cups and bird boxes.	Not significant
Dormice and Reptiles	Local	The site supports limited habitat along the northern and northeastern boundaries, and based on the proposed development, this habitat will be retained. It is recommended that heras fencing is installed prior to construction to protect this retained habitat, and landscape planting within these boundaries is undertaken sensitively. If these habitats are to be impacted by the proposed development, a license may be required from Natural England. If impacts to these habitats are limited, it may be possible to undertake these works via Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs), and an ecologist should be present.	Not significant
GCN, Water Voles and Otters	N/A	Considered unlikely to be present on site.	Not significant

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The site does not fall within or adjacent to any statutory designated site. The closest international statutory designated is North Downs Woodland Special Area of Conservation (SAC), located approximately 3.37km east, and the closest national statutory designated site is North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve (NNR), located approximately 2.01km south. The closest non-statutory designated site is Happy Valley, Meopham LWS, located 524m east of the site. As such, given the distances as well as the scale of the development, it is considered that the proposed development will have no direct or indirect impact on any designated sites.
- 6.2 No direct or indirect impacts on priority habitats are anticipated due to the scale and distance of the proposed development.
- 6.3 The majority of the site is formed of developed land, and the remainder includes common and widespread habitats which are of limited ecological value. The hedgerows, trees, and scrub within the site, particularly those along the northern boundary, provide the greatest ecological value within the context of the site and are expected to be retained as part of the proposed development. Small areas of ruderal vegetation and managed modified grassland will be impacted, but the loss of this habitat is considered negligible, and landscape planting will provide similar opportunities post-development. It is recommended that the cherry laurel within the site be removed to enhance the native species and wildlife.
- 6.4 The buildings and trees within the site support ‘negligible’ suitability for roosting bats. As such, no further surveys for roosting bats are required, and the buildings and trees can be removed. The installation of bat boxes will enhance roosting opportunities post-development.
- 6.5 The habitats on site provide limited opportunities for foraging and commuting bats. As such, bat activity surveys are not required. A sensitive lighting scheme will ensure the site is not subject to adverse lighting impacts.
- 6.6 It is recommended that precautionary construction measures are implemented to avoid impacting foraging/commuting badgers and other mammals that might access the site. Hedgehog highway holes could be incorporated into new garden fences as an enhancement to support hedgehogs using the site.

- 6.7 The trees, hedgerows, and buildings within the site have the potential to support nesting birds. Suspected inactive robin and barn swallow nests were observed in B3 and B4, respectively. The removal of suitable vegetation and buildings 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, work in the vicinity of the nest must cease until the birds have fledged the nest. As mitigation/enhancement, swallow cups and bird boxes are recommended as part of the development to provide nesting opportunities.
- 6.8 The site supports limited habitat along the northern and northeastern boundaries, and based on the proposed development, this habitat will be retained. It is recommended that heras fencing is installed prior to construction to protect this retained habitat, and landscape planting within these boundaries is undertaken sensitively. If these habitats are to be impacted by the proposed development, a license may be required from Natural England. If impacts to these habitats are limited, it may be possible to undertake these works via Reasonable Avoidance Measures, and an ecologist should be present.
- 6.9 Other protected species including great crested newts, water voles and otters are unlikely to use the site due to a lack of suitable habitat. As such, further surveys and considerations for these species are not necessary.

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

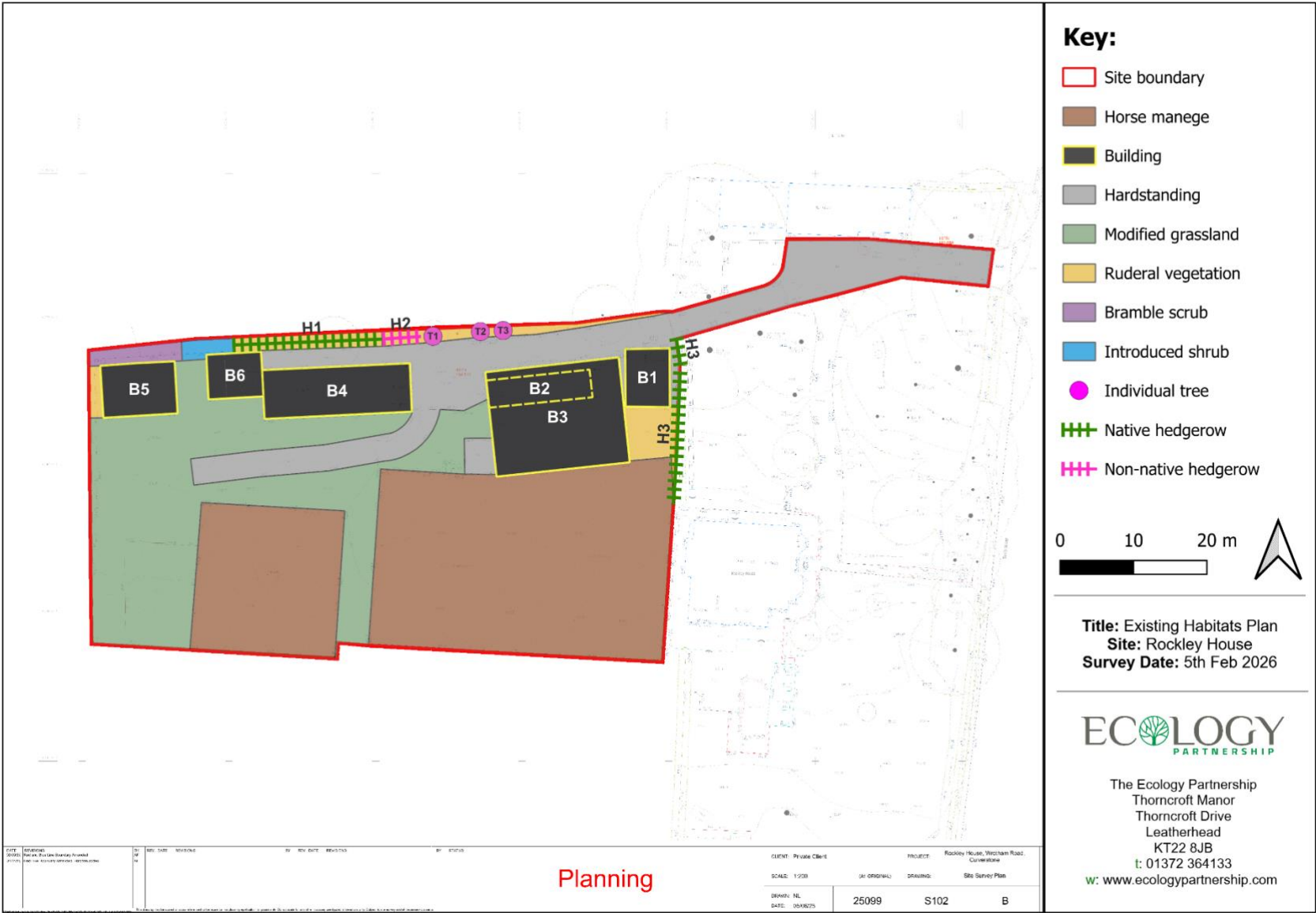
Photograph 1: Building B1 and B3	 A photograph showing the interior of a barn or shed. In the center, there is a large, rectangular hay bale resting on a wooden pallet. To the left, another wooden pallet is leaning against a wall. The floor is covered with straw and hay. The roof is made of corrugated metal, and the walls are made of concrete or stone. A blue bag is visible in the background.
Photograph 2: Building B2	 A photograph showing the exterior of a building. The roof is made of wooden planks, and the walls are made of stone. A wooden beam runs along the side of the building. The ground is covered with straw and hay. A blue bag is visible in the background.

Photograph 3: Building B4 and B6 (shipping containers)	 A photograph showing two shipping containers, one green and one red, stacked next to a stone building. The green container has the text 'EGHU 3130274 22G1' and 'GROSS TARE' on its side. The red container has 'tex' written on it. In the foreground, there is a red tractor with a stack of wooden planks on its seat. A silver metal box is on the ground to the right of the containers.
Photograph 4: Building B5	 A photograph of a small, single-story building with a corrugated metal roof and dark green double doors. The building is made of light-colored wood or stone. To the right of the building, there is a red shipping container with 'tex' on it and a stack of wooden planks.

Photograph 6: Internal building B5	 The photograph shows the interior of a building with walls and ceiling made of oriented strand board (OSB). A wooden workbench is positioned against the wall, cluttered with various items including a blue toolbox, a yellow container, a red spray can, a blue spray can, a white bucket, and several other tools and materials. A red and white sign is hanging on the wall above the workbench.
Photograph 7:	 The photograph shows an outdoor scene with a grassy field. In the foreground, there is a metal gate made of three horizontal bars. In the background, there is a wooden fence made of vertical posts and horizontal rails. Beyond the fence, there are trees and a clear sky.

Photograph 8:	
Photograph 9:	

Appendix 2: Existing Habitats Map



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