

Sent by E.mail to: [REDACTED]

7th March 2023

Ref no: E1936 010323

RE: Helen Allison School, Longfield Road, Meopham DA13 0EW

To whom it may concern,

Hone Ecology Ltd was requested to undertake a walkover survey of the land at Helen Allison School, Longfield Road, Meopham DA13 0EW (OS Grid reference TQ 64147 66672), where works are proposed to create a 32 x 16m MUGA within a recreational area of the school grounds. Experienced surveyor Julie Merrett attended the site on 1st March 2023 to survey the area of land impacted by the proposed works.

The proposed works area is a small rectangular area of regularly mown grassland. It is bordered by school buildings, playground and adjacent school recreational area to the north, east and west, line of deciduous trees, wooden shed and adjacent arable farmland to the south, and a small wildlife area with deciduous trees and rough grassland to the south west. Arable farmland lies out to the west and south of the school. The school is bordered by 3m high wire security fencing. Figure 1 shows a map of the planned works area within the school boundary.

Method

MAGIC Maps was reviewed for information on designated sites, woodland areas, great crested newt (GCN) records, and Natural England licence applications within a 1km radius from the site for the walkover survey. An extensive search of web-based information for the area was also undertaken identifying records of protected and other notable species of flora and fauna.

The walkover survey consisted of a survey of the proposed works area, and the school grounds (see Figure 1), surveying for field signs of protected species and habitats.

Site designations

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is approximately 885m to the west of the site (Figure 2). There were no other statutory designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 1km of the planned works. Due to distance and the limited nature of the planned works there is no impact to the AONB.

Woodlands

There are ten areas of woodland, and one traditional orchard within 1km of the planned works (Figure 3). The closest ancient woodland is approximately 735m to the west, primary habitat inventory deciduous woodland approximately 230m to the south, and traditional orchard approximately 820m to the east. Due to distance the limited nature of the planned works there is no impact to the woodlands or traditional orchard.

Walkover results

Vegetation

The planned works area is an area of regularly mown grass which is used recreationally. Due to the close mowing, it was not possible to identify grass species on the site, but daisy *Bellis perennis*, and springy turf-moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* were observed. At the south boundary of the site area

were a line of mature beech *Fagus sylvatica* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* trees, which it is understood are not impacted by the planned works (Plate 1). Due to its management and use, the area of planned works provides limited biodiversity or habitat potential.

To the south west of the site was a play area with a trampoline bordered by tarmac and mowed grass and moss (Plate 2). Adjacent to the south of this was a wildlife area (The Wilderness), which was a grassland with a layered mound, planted bulbs (daffodils *Narcissus sp.*, bluebells *Hyacinthoides sp.* and wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*), and bordered by immature and semi-mature deciduous trees (Plates 3 and 4) including beech, hazel *Corylus avellana*, cherry *Prunus avium* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. The north and east boundaries of these areas consisted of immature and semi-mature deciduous trees and bushes, including honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* (Plate 5).

The areas of the school to the north and north west of the planned works area consisted of developed land, including a playground (Plate 6), the school buildings with associated paving, and a car park to the north (Plate 7). There were planted borders and planters adjacent the school building containing introduced species (Plates 8 and 9). The car park was bordered to the north by predominantly non-native species hedges including *cotoneaster sp.*, but also sections of holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, and two hawthorn trees (Plate 10).

	
Plate 1: Regularly mown grassland area of planned works, with line of trees on the south boundary.	Plate 2: Play area with trampoline to the south west of the planned works.
	
Plate 3: Wildlife area (The Wilderness) to the south west of the planned works.	Plate 4: Area of The Wilderness with planted bulbs.

	
Plate 5: North boundary vegetation of The Wilderness and trampoline play area.	Plate 6: Playground to the west of the planned works area.
	
Plate 7: School building and car park.	Plate 8: Introduced plant borders and planters adjacent the school building.
	
Plate 9: Planted border adjacent the school building.	Plate 10: Hedge on north boundary of car park.

Great crested newt

No survey licence return records for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* were identified within 1km of the site. Records of common toad *Bufo bufo* and smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* were noted, but not on the site itself. There are no ponds on the site or school grounds themselves, and no ponds noted within 500m to support breeding amphibians.

The regularly mown grass within the planned works area provides sub-optimal habitat for amphibians, although there is some potential cover and foraging within the wildlife area to the south west of the planned works, and boundary vegetation of the school grounds. The site itself has therefore been assessed as negligible potential for GCN and other amphibians, and the adjacent wildlife area as low potential.

GCN's are afforded legal protection under Schedule 5 of The Conservation of Habitats Species Regulations (2010) (as amended). GCN are a European Protected Species (EPS). Common amphibians are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Reptiles

No records of common reptiles were identified within 1km of the site. The regularly mown grass within the planned works area provides sub-optimal habitat for common reptiles, although there is some potential cover and foraging within the small wildlife area to the south west of the planned works. The site itself has therefore been assessed as negligible potential for reptiles, and the adjacent wildlife area as low potential.

Common reptiles including slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica* are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

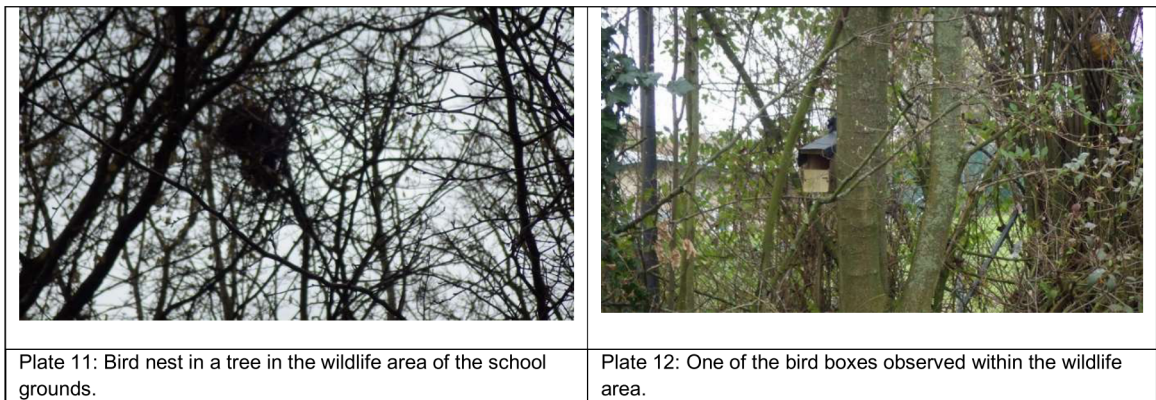
Badger

No signs of badger were observed on the site or bordering areas in the form of animal paths, setts, snuffle holes or latrines. The security fencing bordering the site provides a barrier to animals such as badger, fox and hedgehog. The proposed works area has therefore been assessed as negligible potential for foraging badgers.

Badgers are afforded legal protection under the Badgers Act 1992 and Schedule 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Birds

The trees bordering the school property and trees and bushes within the wildlife area to the south west of the planned works area provide potential for nesting and foraging birds. A bird nest was observed within a tree in the wildlife area, and bird nest boxes were also observed in this area (Plates 11 and 12). It is understood that none of the trees on the site are impacted by the planned works.



All species of bird whilst actively nesting are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed on Schedule 1.

Bats

The habitat impacted by the works provides limited foraging potential for bats, and no bat roost potential in the form of raised bark, woodpecker holes or similar features were observed within the trees adjacent the works area on the site. The trees bordering the school and the wildlife area do provide some foraging potential for bats locally.

No potential roost features were observed on the wooden shed to the south of the planned works area. It is understood this shed is not impacted by the planned works.

The trees adjacent the planned works area, and the wooden shed were therefore assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats. The site boundary area was assessed as having a low-moderate potential for foraging bats locally.

All species of bat are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (As amended) and are European Protected Species.

Other protected species

There is no potential for other protected species such as hazel dormice on the site due to the limited suitable habitat on the site, and lack of aerial connectivity to suitable woodland habitat in the wider area.

Invasive species

No signs of invasive species such as Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifer* observed on the site or the surrounding area.

Recommendations

To retain the negligible potential for GCN, other amphibians and reptiles on the site itself, this area should continue to be regularly cut to maintain it at 5cm or less in height to ensure foraging and cover potential habitat for GCN and reptiles does not develop.

In the event any trees or bushes are to be removed as part of the planned works, this work should ideally be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season which extends from March to August inclusive. It should be noted however that certain species are known to breed throughout the year (e.g. pigeons) and remain protected. If this timing is not possible, a nesting bird check of the area to be cleared should be undertaken by an ecologist within 24 hours of the planned works starting to confirm no nesting birds will be impacted.

In the unlikely event that GCN, reptiles or other protected species are observed on the site during the works, works in that area must stop immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice.

It is understood that no lighting is planned for the MUGA. During construction of the MUGA, any lighting should avoid the boundary trees and vegetation to avoid impacting foraging bats in the area.

Enhancements

The grass area impacted by planned works provides limited biodiversity value. However, to increase biodiversity on the site and provide flowering plants for pollinators and butterflies, it is recommended that a wild flower area approximately 1.5m wide be sowed outside the west side and north west corner of the MUGA. It is understood the east side is required to access the fire exit for the school, and therefore no planting is recommended in this area. The sown areas should be cut twice a year, once in mid-summer, and then October to allow the flowers to produce seed for the next season. Cuttings should be removed from the area to avoid nutrient build up which will encourage invasive species and reduce biodiversity. The meadow seed mix would include local species, such as:

- Birdsfoot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*
- Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifrage*
- Catsear *Hypochaeris radicata*
- Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*
- Eyebright *Euphrasia nemerosa*
- Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*
- Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*
- Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*
- Meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*
- Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*

- Pignut *Conopodium majus*
- Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*

To provide additional nesting potential for birds, it is recommended that two bird boxes be fitted to the mature trees at the south of the site.

It is also recommended that a bat box be fitted to the school building, in the area shown in Plate 13 in yellow below. This placing will ensure the box is not disturbed by school activities, and also that any bat droppings falling from it land on a roof away from the active areas of the school. Once in use by bats, bat boxes can only be inspected by a licensed bat worker. It is therefore recommended that a self-cleaning box such as a Kent bat box be used.



Plate 13: Recommended area on school building for bat box.

To provide hibernacula for any amphibians or reptiles in the local area, and foraging opportunities for insects, it is recommended that any logs from tree works be used to create log piles in the wildlife area, near the boundaries with trees.

Insect hotels could also be placed on the shed within the wildlife area to provide hibernacula and refugia for insects locally.

If you require further clarification on any of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Julie Merrett BSc (Hons) ACIEEM
Principal Ecologist
Hone Ecology Ltd
07399 861899

Figures



Figure 1: Site of proposed works shown in red, with school boundary in blue.

MAGiC

Statutory Designated Sites



Figure 2: Map showing the positions statutory designated sites in relation to (within 1 km) the planned works area.

MAGiC

Woodland



Figure 3: Map of woodland habitats in relation to (within 1 km) the planned works site.