

The Cherries, Ashen Road, Clare, Suffolk, CO10 8LG T: 01787 277912

E: roger@skilledecology.co.uk
W: www.skilledecology.co.uk

# Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Including a Protected Species Assessment at Land Rear of 5 Wratting Road, Haverhill, Suffolk.

On behalf of:

**Richard Kitching** 

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Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd.

Registered company in England no: 7188811

Registered Office: 7 Trust Court, Histon, Cambridge, CB24 9PW

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#### 0 SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Richard Kitching to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Land Rear of 5 Wratting Road, Haverhill, Suffolk. The report is required for a planning application for erection of small HMO flats following demolition of a garage.
- 1.1.2 The survey was conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2023 by experienced ecologist Roger Spring BSc MCIEEM (licensed to survey for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* and licenced to survey for bats level 2). The survey consisted of an inspection for preferred habitat types and signs and evidence of protected and priority species, such as for bats, great crested newts, reptiles, badgers *Meles meles* and nesting birds following Natural England (English Nature) Guidelines. A local bat record search was undertaken.
- 1.1.3 The proposed construction zone is very small and includes: a brick garage with a pitched, corrugated sheeting roof, as well as a typical garden with hardstanding, central short improved grass area (lawn) and boundary garden shrubs. The site is positioned in a residential location surrounded by housing with modest gardens.
- 1.1.4 Close-board fencing is present on the northern boundary, beyond which is a minor road. North of the site is a similar garden area dominated by short improved grass, though with fewer shrubs and a small number of mature trees. The garden area to the south is set below the site and separated by a brick retaining wall. Habitats immediately east included the dwelling of 5 Watting Road. Immediately west of the site is a gravel carpark.
- 1.1.5 The proposed construction zone was considered low in ecological value and negligible in suitability or potential for protected, priority or rare species, such as bats and great crested newts etc. No signs or evidence of such were recorded during the survey visit. Theoretically the garden shrubs were considered suitable for low number of common nesting birds, though no old bird nests were observed.
- 1.1.6 Further ecological surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary for the proposed development to proceed. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact, precautionary measures for bats, hedgehogs and birds are provided in this report and should be followed.
- 1.1.7 With the recommendations followed as described, development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm or impact to local ecological value or to protected, priority or rare species and notable habitats.
- 1.1.8 Biodiversity enhancement recommendations are also included in the report in accordance with national planning policy.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.2 Skilled Ecology Consultancy Ltd. was commissioned by Richard Kitching to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Protected Species Assessment at Land Rear of 5 Wratting Road, Haverhill, Suffolk. The report is required for a planning application for erection of small HMO flats following demolition of a garage.
- 1.1.3 Wildlife such as nesting birds, bats, reptiles and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are protected by law. Protected and priority species and habitats, are also a material consideration for individual planning decisions under the National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (MHCLG, 2021).
- 1.1.4 This study and report complies with the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 2017 Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals.
- 1.1.5 CIEEM guidelines indicate that ecological surveying typically remains valid for between 12 and 18 months (CIEEM, 2019).

#### 2 METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 A local bat record search was obtained through the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) to support the assessment.
- 2.1.2 A search of the Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) was also conducted, to check for statutory nature conservation sites.
- 2.1.3 These results were then combined with the findings of the site survey, to assess the risk of ecology issues, relevant to planning, occurring on the site.

#### 2.2 Study Limitations

2.2.1 Botanical assessment was undertaken at a suitable time of year, though some early flowering species and annuals may not be visible or identifiable to species level.

#### 2.3 Initial Site Survey

Habitats and Surroundings

- 2.3.1 The site was visited on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2023 to survey for ecology issues. This included the following:
  - Noting the suitability of habitats present on the site, with regard to protected, priority and rare species; including plants, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, nesting birds, invertebrates and protected, priority or red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC);
  - Assessing the habitats surrounding the site and in the local area;
  - Direct survey for evidence of protected species as far as possible, e.g. for bats, reptiles, great crested newts, badgers *Meles meles*, and nesting birds;
  - Checking for invasive species such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

#### Bat Inspection

- 2.3.2 The assessment for bats was conducted by an experienced ecologist, licensed by Natural England to disturb and take bats for science and education. Buildings and trees were externally inspected for bat activity, suitability and potential for roosting following English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature, 2004) and Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines, therefore considerations were:
  - the availability of access to roosts for bats;
  - the presence and suitability of cracks, crevices, gaps, fissures, ivy growth and other places as roosts;
  - signs of bat activity or presence, such as; the bats themselves, droppings, grease marks, scratch marks, urine spatter and prey remains.
- 2.3.3 Equipment available for use during the survey included a ladder, high powered torch, digital camera and binoculars.
- 2.3.4 The availability of access to roosts was assessed based upon the presence of holes large enough to allow entry to bats and lack of cobwebs and dirt.
- 2.3.5 The outside of buildings and outside of trees were inspected for gaps, cavities, access points and crevices, and any signs of bats (droppings, staining, urine spatter), in accordance with Natural England (English Nature) guidelines (English Nature, 2004).

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#### Reptiles & Amphibians

- 2.3.6 The site was inspected for potentially suitable terrestrial habitats for foraging, sheltering or dispersing amphibians and foraging, sheltering, breeding and basking habitat for reptiles. High quality terrestrial refuges searched for, included:
  - Log piles & rockeries,
  - Thick leaf litter,
  - Compost & manure heaps,
  - Mammal burrows,
  - Deep ground cracks;
  - Refuse suitable for shelter;
  - Tussock grassland;
  - Hedgerows and any other potential habitats.

#### Badgers & Other Mammals

- 2.3.7 Signs and evidence of badgers, and other protected, priority and rare mammal activity searched for included the following:
  - Setts, holes and burrows;
  - Foraging holes and other diggings;
  - Latrines, droppings, spraints and scats;
  - Mammal hairs;
  - Paw prints and other tracks;
  - Feeding remains;
  - Scratch marks, bedding material and other signs.

#### 3 RESULTS AND RISK

#### 3.1 Site Description & Location

- 3.1.1 The proposed construction zone is very small and includes: a brick garage with a pitched, corrugated sheeting roof, as well as a typical garden with hardstanding, central short improved grass area (lawn) and boundary garden shrubs. The site is positioned in a residential location surrounded by housing with modest gardens.
- 3.1.2 Close-board fencing is present on the northern boundary, beyond which is a minor road. North of the site is a similar garden area dominated by short improved grass, though with fewer shrubs and a small number of mature trees. The garden area to the south is set below the site and separated by a brick retaining wall. Habitats immediately east included the dwelling of 5 Watting Road. Immediately west of the site is a gravel carpark.
- 3.1.3 No ponds with amphibian habitat connectivity to the site are present nearby (Ordnance Survey Map, 2023).

#### 3.2 Nature Conservation Sites

3.2.1 The closest statutorily designated nature conservation site is Haverhill Railway Walks Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located approximately 75m east. The LNR is a former railway line and is designated for its scrub and trees providing habitat connectivity for wildlife and foraging resource (MAGIC, 2023).

#### 3.3 Data Search

3.3.1 The following information is a summary of modern, local bat records collated through Suffolk Biodiversity information Service (SBIS).

Table 1 - Summary of local biological records.

Species	Approximate Location	Year
Noctule	Castle Hill, Haverhill	2017
Common pipistrelle	Castle Hill, Haverhill	2017
Brown long-eared	Castle Hill, Haverhill	2017
Daubentons	Mill Road. Haverhill	2019
Natterers	Mill Road. Haverhill	2019
Barbastelle	Haverhill	2014

#### 3.4 Protected, Priority & Rare Species

Vegetation & Habitats

- 3.4.1 The site includes hardstanding, a garage, short improved grass and garden beds.
- 3.4.2 The short improved grass included: cocksfoot *Dactylus glomerata*, perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, violet species *Viola* sp, common daisy *Bellis perennis*, self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, dovesfoot cranesbill *Geranium molle*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, wood avens *Geum urbanum*.
- 3.4.3 Garden beds: bay laurel *Laurus nobilis*, lilac *Syringa vulgaris*, butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii*, ornamental cherry species *Prunus* sp., bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg, Hebe sp., dogwood species *Cornus* sp, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, ivy *Hedera helix*, periwinkle species *Vinca* sp, Mexican orange blossom *Choisya ternate*, Brachyglottis Sunshine *Senecio Greyii*.
- 3.4.4 No protected, priority or notable plants were found. No UK priority habitats are present. No Schedule 9 invasive plant species were observed.

Bats

- 3.4.5 The garage was found to be a well-maintained structure. No clear access for bats into the building was noted. If bats did manage to enter the building, the roof and structure generally was considered negligible in suitability or potential for roosting. No external signs or evidence of bats were found.
- 3.4.6 No trees are proposed for impact. Mature trees adjacent to the site were inspected from a distance for suitability for roosting bats. No hollows or significant cracks or crevice's were identified. In any event, these trees are proposed for retention.
- 3.4.7 The proposed construction zone was generally considered low in suitability for foraging bats.
  - Other Protected & UK Priority Mammals
- 3.4.8 The site is small in size and low in suitability for foraging or sheltering by other protected priority or rare mammals such as badgers *Meles meles* and hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* etc. No signs or evidence of such were noted during the survey. It is possible that the occasional hedgehog may cross the site for temporary foraging.

Birds

- 3.4.9 Birds observed or heard on or close to the site during the survey included; wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, blackbird *Turdus merula*, and herring gull *Larus argentatus*.
- 3.4.10 All birds recorded are common and widespread species and green-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC).
- 3.4.11 No signs or evidence of past nests were observed on the site, though the larger shrubs were theoretically suitable for low numbers of common nesting birds. The garage was well-sealed to birds and low in suitability for nesting.
- 3.4.12 The BoCC ratings are summarised as follows:
  - Red-listed highest conservation concern;
  - Amber-listed moderate conservation concern;
  - Green-listed least conservation concern.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

3.4.13 Habitats present and proposed for impact were low in ecological value as terrestrial habitat for great crested newts with little shelter or foraging habitat proposed for impact. No local ponds were identified (Ordnance Survey Map, 2023).

Reptiles

- 3.4.14 Habitats present on and adjacent to the site were considered low in suitability or potential for reptiles of any species. Little safe basking, foraging or breeding habitat was present.
- 3.4.15 Reptiles were not discovered during the survey visit.

Invertebrates

- 3.4.16 The proposed construction zone was considered negligible in suitability or potential for invertebrates of conservation concern with common and widespread habitat types present in an isolated locality.
- 3.4.17 No notable invertebrates were observed during the survey.

Other Protected, Priority or rare Species

3.4.18 No signs or evidence of any other protected or priority species were observed on the site, nor were there any suitable habitats for such.

#### 4 DISCUSSION OF RISK AND LEGISLATION

#### 4.1 Protected & Priority Species

Bats

- 4.1.1 Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 and under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Some bats are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:
  - Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or take a bat;
  - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, whether bats are present or not;
  - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat;
  - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection;
  - Deliberately disturb a bat anywhere.
- 4.1.2 Bats have been recorded locally (SBIS, 2023). The site and surrounding gardens are suitable for low numbers of foraging bats, it is expected that on occasions the gardens are visited by foraging bats. However, the site was considered highly unlikely to constitute a significant foraging resource for bats.
- 4.1.3 No trees are proposed for impact.
- 4.1.4 The garage proposed for demolition was also considered negligible in suitability or potential and highly unlikely to support roosting bats. No signs or evidence of such were observed during the survey visit.
- 4.1.5 Overall, it was considered that the risk of significant impact, to bats, bat roosts or local bat populations is negligible.
- 4.1.6 Therefore, further bat surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, precautionary measures detailed later in the report should be followed.
  - Other Protected, Priority & Rare Mammals
- 4.1.7 The site was considered low in suitability or potential for any other protected, priority or rare species and no signs or evidence of such were discovered during the survey visit. However, it could not be discounted that the occasional hedgehog may cross the site.

4.1.8 Further surveys or mitigation for any other protected, priority or rare mammals were considered unnecessary. However, to minimise any residual risk of impact to hedgehogs, precautionary measures, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

**Birds** 

- 4.1.9 Wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, with certain exceptions (e.g. pest species) in certain situations, it is an offence to intentionally:
  - Kill or injure any wild bird;
  - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
  - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 4.1.10 Some bird species (such as barn owls) are also specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and others are UK priority species.
- 4.1.11 The site is small and very low in suitability for protected and priority bird species, though shrubs required for removal were considered theoretically suitable for low numbers of common nesting birds.
- 4.1.12 The risk of significant impact to notable birds or local bird conservation was considered negligible.
- 4.1.13 Overall, it was considered unnecessary to undertake further bird surveys for rare or protected birds or provide mitigation for such species. However, to prevent harm to actively nesting birds, recommendations, detailed later in the report, should be followed.

Great Crested Newts & Other Amphibians

- 4.1.14 Great crested newts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Great crested newts are also UK priority species. A summary of the offences likely to be relevant to development are:
  - Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill;
  - Intentionally injure;
  - Deliberately disturb, or intentionally or recklessly disturb in a place of shelter or protection;

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- 4.1.15 The site is small and low in suitability as terrestrial habitat for great crested newts and other amphibians. No local ponds were present. The risk of great crested newts using the site and being impacted by the proposed development was considered negligible.
- 4.1.16 Therefore, further amphibian surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Reptiles

- 4.1.17 Widespread reptile species including, grass snake, adder, slow worm and common lizard, are protected from intentional killing and injuring under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are also UK priority species.
- 4.1.18 The site is small and habitats proposed for impact negligible in suitability for reptiles. Therefore, the risk of significant impact or harm was considered negligible. Therefore, further reptile surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Plants & Invertebrates

- 4.1.19 No rare, protected, priority or Schedule 9 invasive plants were present.
- 4.1.20 No UK priority habitats are proposed for impact.
- 4.1.21 Further botanical surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.
- 4.1.22 Regarding invertebrates, habitats present were common, widespread and isolated from any habitat of high ecological value for invertebrates (such as woodland or species rich meadows etc.). The risk of presence of a significant assemblage of invertebrates of conservation concern was considered negligible.
- 4.1.23 Further invertebrate surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary.

Other Protected & Priority species

4.1.24 No signs or evidence of other protected, priority or rare species were observed on the site and it was considered that there was a very low risk of such species occurring on the site or being impacted by the proposed development.

#### 4.2 Other Issues

Sensitive Habitats

- 4.2.1 The site and project is small and positioned a significant distance from any statutorily designated nature conservation sites. Therefore, the risk of direct or indirect impact to such sites was considered negligible.
- 4.2.2 Further surveys or mitigation for designated nature conservation sites or other sensitive habitats were considered unnecessary.

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Precautionary Measures & Compensation

Bats

- 5.1.1 To minimise any residual risk of impact to bats, the following precautionary measures should be undertaken:
  - If at any point during demolition bats or evidence of bats (droppings) are found, works should stop and an ecologist called for advice;
  - Any new proposed external lighting should be minimised. Where external lighting is required, it should be warm white LED lamps with glass glazing, rather than plastic, as these produce the least amount of heat and UV light possible, minimising the attraction effects on insects and minimising disturbance to local bats;
  - Any external lighting proposed for the development should be aimed carefully, to minimise illumination of boundary habitats and avoid light spillage into the sky, or horizontally out from any buildings, by using hoods or directional lighting.

Birds

- 5.1.2 Any removal or reduction of hedgerow, trees and shrubs should be undertaken outside of the main bird nesting season (March to end of August). If this is not possible or practical, an ecologist should survey the site for active bird nests and provide advice accordingly.
- 5.1.3 If an active bird nest was found, it would require protection from impact or disturbance until the bird had finished nesting.
- 5.1.4 All trees required for removal should be replaced, as detailed above for bats to compensate for habitat loss.

#### Hedgehogs

- 5.1.5 The risk of hedgehogs being significantly impacted by the development was negligible, to minimise any residual risk of impact or harm or impact, the below recommendations should be followed:
  - Before construction commences, vegetation should be maintained short with regular cutting to prevent the site improving in ecological value for wildlife;
  - During works waste materials should be removed off site immediately to prevent wildlife using the materials for shelter and being harmed by subsequent movement;
  - Construction materials should be stored on hardstanding or on pallets to prevent wildlife from sheltering in the materials and being harmed by movement of the materials;
  - No construction work at night when hedgehogs are mostly active;
  - Any excavations for the development should be covered at night or should have a roughly sawn plank placed in them to facilitate escape, the plank should not be placed at more than 30° and must be at least 30cm in width;
  - Any new boundary fencing should have gaps at the base every 15m of fencing to allow for movement of hedgehogs. The gaps should be at least 13cm in diameter:
  - If at any stage hedgehogs are observed on the site, works should stop immediately, and the animal should be allowed to disperse of its own accord, or an ecologist should be contacted for advice.

#### 5.2 Enhancements

- 5.2.1 To improve the site for wildlife and provide a net-gain in accordance with national planning policy (NPPF, 2021) the below new habitat boxes will be installed:
  - 1 x Beaumaris Bat Box (or similar if out-of-stock);
  - 1 x Vivara Pro Sparrow Terrace (or similar is out-of-stock).
- 5.2.2 The boxes will be mounted high (above 4m) on the newly constructed extension. The bat box will be positioned facing a southerly aspect. The bird box will be facing a northerly direction or otherwise be out of direct sunlight.
- 5.2.3 Wildlife boxes can be purchased on-line.

5.2.4 In addition to the above, any new soft landscaping will include only native and/or wildlife attracting species. Prioritising fruit producing varieties is recommended.

#### 6 CONCLUSION

- At the time of survey, the site supported common and widespread habitats negligible in ecological value. No signs or evidence of protected, priority or rare species were identified. The risk of significant impact to such species or to local ecological value was considered negligible.
- Further ecological surveys or mitigation were considered unnecessary. Recommendations for bats, nesting birds and hedgehogs are provided.
- 6.3 With recommendations followed as described, the development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm impact to protected, priority or rare species or habitats.
- 6.4 With the biodiversity enhancements followed as described, the proposed development would be enhanced for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with national planning policy.

#### 7 REFERENCES

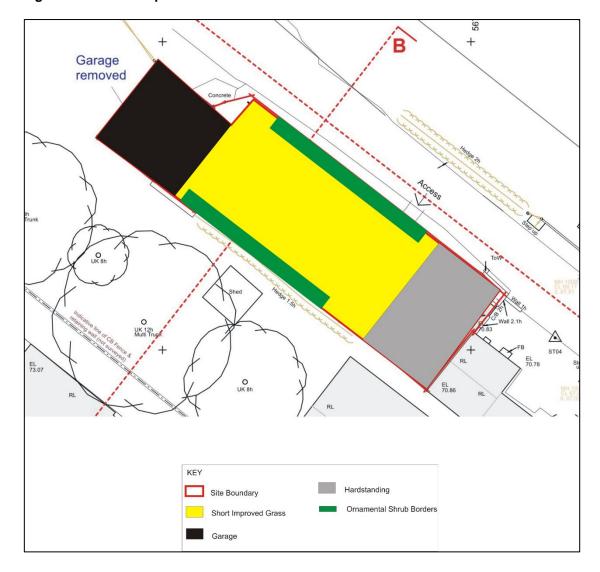
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# 8 APPENDICES

# 8.1 Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1 - Habitat map of the site.



21040-02 Architects

RIBA Scale 1:200 @ A1

Figure 2 – Location plan and proposed development.

# 8.2 Appendix 2: Photographs

Photograph 1: Garage at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 2: Main site area (lawn & garden beds) at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph 3: Main site area (lawn & garden beds) at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 4: Main site area looking east to west across the site at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph 5: Garage proposed for removal at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph by Roger Spring 2023

Photograph 6: Northern boundary of the site at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.



Photograph 7: Southern boundary beyond the site at land to rear of 5 Wratting Road.

