Ecological Walkover Survey

Site Address:	Land in Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LL
Client Name:	LNT Care Developments
Reference:	Ecological Walkover Survey to update the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Date:	10/11/2025

Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by LNT Care Developments to undertake an Ecological Walkover Survey at Land in Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LL (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The survey was required to inform a planning application for the Erection of a care home (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development") and to provide an updated assessment of the site. A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. on 06/11/2024.

Summary of previous results:

- A biodiversity net gain assessment is required.
- Precautionary working methods are recommended for amphibians, reptiles, nesting birds, hazel dormice and [redacted]
- A low impact lighting strategy is recommended for foraging and commuting bats.

The aim of the Ecological Walkover survey is to provide an updated PEA for the site.

Site Location and Landscape Context

The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference TL6821946455 and has an area of approximately 0.58ha. The site comprises a grassland with hedgerows along the northern and western site boundary. It is situated within the town of Haverhill, Suffolk. The site is surrounded by additional grassland and a woodland area to the south and east with a large construction site located to the north and west. Aerial imagery shows the wider landscape to comprise residential development to the south and west, and predominantly agricultural land to the north and east. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

Survey Methodology

The survey was undertaken by Isla Yarrow BSc (Hons) MSc, Graduate Ecologist.

A walkover of the site was undertaken to establish whether any material changes to the habitats on the site and their suitability for protected or notable species have occurred since the original PEA was completed. Habitats have been classified using the UKHab V2.01 (July 2023). Species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare). A habitat map is provided in Appendix 3.

Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
10/11/2025	12	94	100	12	Light rain

Results

Modified Grassland (g4)

The site was previously found to have been predominantly comprised of modified grassland with a reduced level of management, and a sward height of between 5-40cm. The site is still as it was last year and contains a varied sward of between 5-50cm. As the grassland has been left unmanaged, the sward height varied more so than the previous assessment and contained areas of taller grasses. Small areas of damaged ground from machinery use were still present to the northwest of the site and this was still less than 5% of all areas (as in the previous assessment), however this was now largely vegetated over. Species within the grassland include cock's foot Dactylis glomerata (D), timothy Phleum pratense (A), false oat grass Arrhenatherum elatius (A), perennial ryegrass Lolium perenne (F), bristly oxtongue Helminthotheca echiodes (F), spear thistle Cirsium vulgare (F), field thistle Cirsium discolor (F), moss spp. (F), cows parsley Anthriscus sylvestris (O), hoary ragwort Jacobaea erucifolia (O), broad-leaved dock Rumex obtusifolius (O), common nettle Urtica dioica (R), common dandelion Taraxacum officinale (R), ground ivy Glechoma hederacea (R), yarrow Achillea millefolium (R) and plantain Plantago (R).

The condition of the grassland is assessed to be the same as the previous assessment, achieving a good condition (see Appendix 4).





Native hedgerow (h2a)

There is a hedgerow running along the both the northern and western site boundary. This is comprised of hawthorn Crataegus (D), blackthorn Prunus spinosa (F), sweet briar Rosa rubiginosa (O) and dogwood Cornus (O). The hedgerow was ~2m in height and ~2m in width, with no gaps >5m.

The condition of the hedgerow is assessed to be the same as the previous assessment, achieving a good condition (see Appendix 4).





Blackthorn scrub (h3a)

An area of blackthorn Prunus spinosa scrub is located to the northwest of the site, encroaching on the grassland. Blackthorn is the dominant species, with bramble Rubus fruticosus agg. (R) also present.

This scrub has grown in height since the previous assessment and is ~2m in height at its tallest section, with smaller areas where recent encroachment has occurred. It is, however, still relatively sparse, as was found in the previous assessment.

The condition of the blackthorn scrub is assessed to be the same as the previous assessment, achieving a poor condition (see Appendix 4).





Bramble scrub (h3d)

An area of bramble Rubus fruticosus agg. scrub is present along the western site boundary. This is seen to have encroached further into the grassland than it was previously and extends further along the western boundary.





Conclusions and Recommendations

On-site and local notable habitats:

The proposed development includes the removal of grassland and scrub, and the erection of a care home and associated parking facilities. The removal of a short length of native hedgerow (~10m) will make way for an access road.

The site does not contain any habitats listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). However, the site contains native hedgerows which are of good quality and could be of value to local wildlife populations (as detailed in subsequent sections of this table). Other habitats within the site are common and widespread and have low ecological value. Notable habitats are present within 2km, including deciduous woodland.

Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution affecting the deciduous woodland, located ~80m south of the site, must be implemented during construction. A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) may be required for this.

Locality and designated sites:

There is 1 statutory site located within 2km of the site. This is the Haverhill Railway Walks LNR, located ~1.04km southwest of the site. This LNR provides a valuable wildlife corridor and offers food and shelter to a wide range of species.

The presence of non-statutory sites cannot be established without a data search from SBIS.

No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known).

Protected species impacts:

A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for any protected species within 2km of the site.

The hedgerow and scrub on site provide suitable nest building opportunities for birds, as well as foraging and refuge opportunities for [redacted], hedgehogs, reptiles and amphibians. Given the extensive connectivity of these hedgerows with woodland habitats in the wider landscape, the presence of hazel dormice can also not be entirely ruled out. The hedgerow provides a linear feature which is of value to foraging and commuting bats.

However, given the provision of more extensive habitats in close proximity to the site, and the construction activities taking place adjacent to the northern and western site boundaries (providing disturbance and a loss of connectivity), the loss of a short length of hedgerow (~10m), areas of scrub and 0.58ha of grassland is likely to be inconsequential for most species. The closest suitably connected ponds to the site are between 300-500m

south of the site. When completing the rapid risk assessment for great crested newts published by Natural England (Natural England 2015), the proposed development produces a **Green** risk score, which states: Offence Highly Unlikely.

Site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, amphibians, [redacted] hazel dormice and hedgehogs if present. The proposed development could also result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests within the hedgerows.

Recommendations:
The previous assessment recommended precautionary working methods for nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats, reptiles, amphibians, hazel dormice, [redacted] and hedgehogs. The recommendations remain the same, and are detailed below:

Any hedgerow removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the hedgerow should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active bird nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.

Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained bird nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged.

A basic precautionary working method is recommended to mitigate impacts from construction to reptiles, amphibians, hazel dormouse [redacted] and hedgehogs, including the following measures:

- A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians and reptiles from the working area.
- Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the dormouse hibernation season (November to March) insofar as is possible.
- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which [redacted] and hedgehogs could use.
- Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats, both terrestrial and aquatic.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- If any reptiles, common amphibians, or hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
- In the unlikely event that a reptile, great crested newt, a dormouse/dormouse evidence or [redacted] is identified, works must cease and advise must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

No further surveys are required for foraging and commuting bats. A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting-2.

Biodiversity enhancements:

- The installation of two bat boxes at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats.

  - The bat boxes will be incorporated into the fabric of the new building. They will be suitable for crevice-dwelling species.
  - Suitable bat boxes include Habibat Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box, or similar alternative brand.
  - Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
- The installation of a minimum of two bird boxes on the new building will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g.
  - Woodstone Nest Box (buildings or trees) or a similar alternative brand.
  - Boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole.
- The site could be enhanced for reptiles post-development with the inclusion of log piles (created from felled materials) and planting of areas of native shrubs, to provide sheltering opportunities.
- The site could be enhanced for amphibians post-development through creation of amphibian hibernacula using rubble and logs from site clearance. Information on how to construct a hibernaculum can be found here: https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/hibernaculum
- Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities for both [redacted] and hedgehogs.

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Appendix 1 – Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2 – Site Location Plan



Appendix 3 – Habitat Map



Appendix 4 – Condition Assessments

Modified grassland

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)			
Condition Assessment Criteria		**Criterion passed (Yes or No)**	**Notes (such as justification)**
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m^2 present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). **Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.** Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m^2 (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	Yes	
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	Yes	
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes	
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes	
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens)[2].	Yes	
F	Cover of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is less than 20%.	Yes	
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species[3] (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[4]).	Yes	
		Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)	Yes
		Number of criteria passed	7

Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	**Condition Assessment Score**	**Score Achieved ×/✓**
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)	Good
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)	
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)	

Native hedgerow

Condition sheet: HEDGEROW Habitat Types					
Hedgerow favourable condition attributes					
Attributes and functional groupings (A, B, C, D and E)		**Criteria - the minimum requirements for 'favourable condition'**	**Criteria description**	**Criterion passed (Yes or No)**	**Notes (such as justification)**
Core groups - applicable to all hedgerow types					
A1.	Height	>1.5 m average along length	The average height of woody growth estimated from base of stem to the top of the shoots, excluding any bank beneath the hedgerow, any gaps or isolated trees. Newly laid or coppiced hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice). A newly planted hedgerow does not pass this criterion (unless it is >1.5 m height).	Y	
A2.	Width	>1.5 m average along length	The average width of woody growth estimated at the widest point of the canopy, excluding gaps and isolated trees. Outgrowths (such as blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* suckers) are only included in the width estimate when they are >0.5 m in height. Laid, coppiced, cut and newly planted hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice).	Y	
B1.	Gap - hedge base	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length	This is the vertical 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow, and its distance from the ground to the lowest leafy growth. Certain exceptions to this criterion are acceptable (see page 65 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook).	Y	
B2.	Gap - hedge canopy continuity	Gaps make up <10% of total length; and No canopy gaps >5 m	This is the horizontal 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow. Gaps are complete breaks in the woody canopy (no matter how small). Access points and gates contribute to the overall 'gappiness' but are not subject to the >5 m criterion (as this is the typical size of a gate).	Y	
C1.	Undisturbed ground and perennial vegetation	>1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length: · Measured from outer edge of hedgerow; and · Is present on one side of the hedgerow (at least).	This is the level of disturbance (excluding wildlife disturbance) at the base of the hedgerow. Undisturbed ground is present for at least 90% of the hedgerow length, greater than 1 m in width and must be present along at least one side of the hedgerow. This criterion recognises the value of the hedgerow base as a boundary habitat with the capacity to support a wide range of species. Cultivation, heavily trodden footpaths, poached ground etc. can limit available habitat niches.	Y	
C2.	Nutrient-enriched perennial vegetation	Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground.	The indicator species used are nettles *Urtica* spp., cleavers *Galium aparine* and docks *Rumex* spp. Their presence, either singly or together, does not exceed the 20% cover threshold.	Y	
D1.	Invasive and neophyte species	>90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native plant species (including those listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[3]) and recently introduced species.	Recently introduced species refer to plants that have naturalised in the UK since AD 1500 (neophytes). Archaeophytes count as natives. For information on archaeophytes and neophytes see the JNCC website[4], as well as the BSBI website[5] where the 'Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora'[6] contains an up-to-date list of the status of species. For information on invasive non-native species see the GB Non-Native Secretariat website[7].	Y	

D2.	Current damage	>90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities.	This criterion addresses damaging activities that may have led to or lead to deterioration in other attributes. This could include evidence of pollution, piles of manure or rubble, or inappropriate management practices (for example, excessive hedgerow cutting).	Y	
Additional group - applicable to hedgerows with trees only					
E1.	Tree class	There is more than one age-class (or morphology) of tree present (for example: young, mature, veteran and or ancient*), and there is on average at least one mature, ancient or veteran tree present per 20 - 50m of hedgerow.	This criterion addresses if there are a range of age-classes or morphologies which allow for replacement of trees and provide opportunities for different species.	N/A	
E2.	Tree health	At least 95% of hedgerow trees are in a healthy condition (excluding veteran features valuable for wildlife). There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity.	This criterion identifies if the trees are subject to damage which compromises the survival and health of the individual specimens.	N/A	

The hedgerow condition assessment generates a weighting (score) ranging from 1 - 3, which is used within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The scores for each are set out in the tables below.

Condition categories for hedgerows without trees		
Category	**Category Requirements**	**Metric Score**
Good	No more than 2 failures in total; **AND** No more than 1 failure in any functional group.	3
Moderate	No more than 4 failures in total; **AND** Does not fail both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and C2 = Moderate condition).	2
Poor	Fails a total of more than 4 attributes; **OR** Fails both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and B2 = Poor condition).	1
	Score achieved:	Good

Blackthorn scrub

Condition Sheet: SCRUB Habitat Type

	Condition Assessment Criteria	Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description (where in its natural range).[1] - At least 80% of scrub is native, - There are at least three native woody species[2], - No single species comprises more than 75% of the cover (except hazel *Corylus avellana*, common juniper *Juniperus communis*, sea buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* (only in its restricted native range), or box *Buxus sempervirens*, which can be up to 100% cover).	N	
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran[3]) shrubs are all present.	N	
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species[4] (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[5]) and species indicative of suboptimal condition[6] make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Y	
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	N	
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	N	
		Number of criteria passed	1

Condition Assessment Result (out of 5 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ×/✓
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)	
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)	Poor