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**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Building Inspection - Rustington Convalescent Home,
Rustington, West Sussex**

Dear Chloe,

Thank you for instructing The Ecology Partnership to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and building inspection for bats at the above site. It is understood that the ecological survey is required in order to support a planning application for replacement of the existing summerhouse within the grounds of Rustington Convalescent Home. Although the summerhouse which is subject to this report has not been previously surveyed, surveys of the wider grounds and buildings were undertaken by PJC Ecology (now The Ecology Partnership) during 2013. These surveys included a PEA and buildings inspection for bats and bat emergence/re-entry surveys.

This letter of report presents the findings of the PEA and building inspection, which aims specifically to assess the existing summerhouse and immediately surrounding habitats potential to support protected species. Potential mitigation measures and recommendations for the site will be included within this report. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that information gathered during previously completed surveys in 2013 is still valid and of material consideration and therefore all information relating to the grounds within associated survey reports should be referred to as part of this report. The Biodiversity Checklist provided

by Arun District Council for inclusion in the planning application is provided in the Appendix of this report.

Site Context & Status

The site is situated within the grounds of Rustington Convalescent Home in Rustington, south-east of Littlehampton, West Sussex. The approximate boundary of the building subject to this report (red-line) and its position within the wider grounds of the convalescent home (blue-line) is shown below in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Red-line boundary of the building subject to this report and blue-line boundary of the wider grounds

Description of Proposed Development

The proposals are understood to include for replacement of the existing summerhouse with a slightly larger summerhouse on a similar footprint.

Planning Policy

This report addresses the site in relation to nature conservation and wildlife and indeed to the local planning requirements as well as national planning and nature conservation legislation. The ecology surveys undertaken by The Ecology Partnership have been undertaken to ensure that the nature conservation value of the site has been characterised and local and national planning policies are addressed. The report has been produced with reference to current guidelines for preliminary ecological appraisal (CIEEM 2013) and in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Methodology

Desktop Study

A desk-top study search was completed using two internet-based mapping services; Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (www.magic.gov.uk) for statutory designated sites and Google Earth (www.earth.google.co.uk) to understand the habitats present in and around the survey area and habitat linkages and features (such as ponds, woodlands etc.) within the wider landscape.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The Ecology Partnership ecologist Vicky Hale BSc (Hons) CEnv MCIEEM undertook an extended Phase 1 habitat survey, which included assessing the site for the potential for protected species on 23rd January 2018. The surveyor identified the habitats present, following the standard 'Phase 1 habitat survey' auditing method developed by the Nature Conservancy Council (JNCC). The site was surveyed on foot and the existing habitats and land uses were recorded on a map. In addition, the dominant plant species in each habitat were recorded, as was any evidence of protected species and the habitat suitability for any protected species.

Internal and External Bat Surveys

An internal bat survey was undertaken on the same day as the extended Phase 1 habitat survey. The surveyor undertook an internal and external examination of the building including all accessible roof voids. The surveyor assessed the building visually and searched for evidence such as:

- Staining beneath or around a hole caused by natural oils in bat fur.

- Bat droppings beneath a hole, roost or resting area.
- Bat droppings and/or insect remains beneath a feeding area.
- Audible squeaking from within a hole.
- Insects (especially flies) around a hole.
- Dead bats.

The building on site were accessed during the day. An external investigation assessed the tiles and structural timber joints of the building. This was undertaken in order to see if there were access points readily available for bats to utilise or crevices that bats could be roosting in.

Buildings which are considered to have a higher potential to support roosting bats would include the following:

- Agricultural buildings (e.g. farmhouses, barns and outbuildings) of traditional brick or stone construction and/or with exposed beams;
- Buildings with weatherboarding and/or hanging tiles that are within 200m of woodland and/or water;
- Pre 1960s detached buildings and structures within 200m of woodland and/or water;
- Pre 1914 buildings within 400m of woodland and/or water;
- Pre 1914 buildings with gable ends or slate roofs regardless of location;
- Buildings which are located within or immediately adjacent to woodland and/or immediately adjacent to water;
- Dutch barns or livestock buildings with a single skin roof and board and gap or Yorkshire boarding if, following a preliminary roost assessment the site appears to be particularly suited to bats.

In addition, any trees on site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats. Trees were assessed for suitable features for roosting bats such as:

- Woodpecker holes, natural cracks and rot holes in trunks and branches;
- Frost cracks;
- Trunk and branch splits;
- Loose bark;
- Cavities beneath old root buttresses and coppice stools;

- Dense epicormic growth;
- Dense ivy cover

The tree assessment was undertaken in accordance with Table 4.1 within the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd edition' (Bat Conservation Trust 2016).

Other Species

The surveyor assessed the site for evidence of or its potential to support a range of other species including; reptiles, great crested newts, badgers and barn owls.

Limitations

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 over the period of one site visit, 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 potential nature conservation value of the site and does not include a definitive plant species list.

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, on the basis of this assessment it is considered reasonably likely that protected species may be present.

Results

Desk Study - Designated Sites, Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitats

The site is not situated within or associated with any sites designated for their nature conservation value; however, several designated sites are located within 2km of the site. These include the following:

- Climping Beach Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - 1.6km West;
- West Beach Local Nature Reserve (LNR) - 1.6km West; and
- Littlehampton Golf Course and Atherington Beach (Climping Beach) Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) - 1.6km West.

No internationally designated sites, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites are present within 10km of the site. No units of ancient semi-natural and/or ancient re-planted woodland are present within 2km of the site; however, several areas of priority habitat are located within 2km of the site. The closest of which (coastal vegetated shingle) is located approximately 0.1km to the south of the site. All additional areas of priority habitat are located in excess of 1.5km from the site.

Habitats

The survey area predominantly comprised of a small timber summerhouse surrounded by areas of short mown amenity grassland, maintained species-poor ornamental hedgerows and ornamental planting with mature and semi-mature coniferous trees. The existing building and immediately surrounding broad habitats are detailed further below.

The summerhouse comprised a small timber building with a pitched and bitumen tiled roof set on a concrete slab platform. Internally, bitumen roofing felt is present between the external bitumen tiles and interior roof rafters. The internal bitumen roof lining was in a reasonable condition with few rips/holes noted; however, areas of the roof lining were noted to be damp, particularly above the eaves with patches of mould also observed. Externally, the roof tiles appeared to be well sealed with few narrow gaps noted in places beneath the ridge. The narrow gaps were not sufficient to provide opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species. It was observed that the capping on the hipped end terminal ridge tiles were missing, creating a small opening at the end of the ridge. No bats or evidence of bats, such as droppings or staining was identified within the summerhouse and no external evidence of bats was found.

Areas of short mown amenity grassland surround the summerhouse, where typical species included cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and annual meadowgrass (*Poa annua*) with daisy (*Bellis pernnis*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and yarrow (*Achillia millifolium*).

Several lengths of low, well maintained ornamental hedgerows surround the summerhouse, which have been assessed for their species richness and other ecological features. It is noted that hedgerows associated with domestic gardens are not protected under The Hedgerow Regulations, 1997 (as amended).

Hedgerows in the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse (see Figure 2) range from 2.5m to 1m in height with all hedgerows measuring approximately 0.5m in width. The dominant species present within the hedgerows comprised Escallonia (*Escallonia* sp) with evergreen spindle (*Euonymus japonicus*), ivy (*Hedera helix*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) present in the hedgerow extending to the east of the summerhouse. Hedgerows present immediately adjacent to the summerhouse are shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Location of hedgerows immediately surrounding summerhouse

Immediately to the south-east of the summerhouse is a young cherry (*Prunus* sp) tree, beyond which lies an extensive strip of ornamental planting with mature and semi-mature coniferous trees. Additional

species present in this area include holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), hebe (*Hebe* sp), evergreen spindle and stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*).

Protected Species

Bats

No bats or evidence of bats, such as droppings or staining was identified within the summerhouse and no evidence was found externally on sections of the summerhouse able to be viewed from ground level. The structure did contain an opening under the ridge tiles at each gable end, however this was considered open in nature and to be exposed to the elements and unlikely to provide the sheltered conditions required by roosting bats. In addition, the site is situated between the English Channel and an extensive urban area, lacking suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats such as woodland and hedgerow networks. It is considered that the exposed location of the site, the lack of suitable foraging habitat and suboptimal features, it is likely to provide suboptimal conditions for roosting bats. As such this building was considered to have 'negligible' potential for bat and no further surveys are recommended.

Although several mature and semi-mature coniferous trees are located within an area of ornamental planting immediately to the east of the building, these trees were considered to have negligible potential to support bats, owing to a lack of suitable features for roosting, such as cracks, rot holes, woodpecker holes and/or dense ivy cover.

Other Species

No evidence of barn owls, such as pellets, white splashing or feathers was identified within the building on the day of survey. Furthermore, although beams within the building were considered to have potential for roosting barn owls, no beams or ledges considered suitable for nesting were observed. The summerhouse is locked when not in use and no suitable barn owl access/egress points were observed.

No evidence of badger activity, such as setts, latrines or footprints was identified within the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse on the day of survey.

Areas of amenity grassland surrounding the summerhouse were identified as having negligible potential for reptiles, owing to grassland being intensively managed through a regular mowing regime, resulting in a lack of vegetation structure offering shelter, as well as areas suitable for basking.

No ponds are present within the survey area and with the exception of Mewsbrook Park Boating Lake located approximately 120m to the north-west of the site, no ponds are located within 500m of the site. It is not considered that the surrounding area contains suitable breeding ponds for great crested newts, therefore it is considered that the site has negligible potential to be onsite. Trees, hedgerows and shrubs in the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse are considered to have potential for nesting bird species during the breeding season.

Owing to a lack of suitable habitat and connectivity, the site is not considered to have potential to support species, such as dormice, otters or water voles.

Discussion

Designated sites

The site is not situated within or associated with any sites designated for their nature conservation value; however; three designated sites are located within 2km of the site, all of which are located approximately 1.6km to the west of the site. No internationally designated sites, such as SACs and SPAs are present within 10km of the site.

It is considered that there are no direct ecological linkages between the habitats within the red-line boundary and those which are designated in the local area. Due to the nature of the site and the surrounding areas, it is considered that development of the site will not result in any indirect impacts resulting from construction or use.

Habitats

No units of ancient semi-natural and/or ancient re-planted woodland are present within 2km of the site; however, several areas of priority habitat are located within 2km of the site. The closest of which (coastal vegetated shingle) is located approximately 0.1km to the south of the site. All additional areas of priority habitat are located in excess of 1.5km from the site. Considering the scale and nature of the proposed development and the distances involved, it is considered no impacts, direct or otherwise, are predicted as a result of the proposals.

The habitats in the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse are common and widespread throughout the local area. Much of the site comprised of amenity grassland with a relatively low species diversity.

Notwithstanding this, trees within areas of ornamental planting are considered to be of greater ecological value and therefore it is recommended that these features are retained where possible, as proposed within the scheme. The hedgerows in the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse are considered to be species-poor and are not considered to be ecologically important.

It is considered that replacement of the existing summerhouse with one which is slightly larger will not impact upon the ecological functionality of the site or indeed the wider landscape.

Protected Species

Bats

No bats or evidence of bats, such as droppings or staining was identified within the summerhouse and no evidence was found externally on sections of the summerhouse able to be viewed from ground level. Although some small gaps were present at the gable ends of the structure under the ridge tiles, the gap was considered to have negligible suitability for roosting bats. It is considered that the exposed nature of the site and lack and fragmentation of any suitable foraging and commuting habitat in the local area further reduce the sites suitability to support roosting bats. No further surveys are recommended and the removal of the building is not considered to be constrained by the presence of roosting bats.

It is understood that no trees are proposed to be removed in order to facilitate replacement of the existing summerhouse and although several mature and semi-mature coniferous trees are located within an area of ornamental planting immediately to the east of the building, these trees were considered to have negligible potential to support bats, owing to a lack of suitable features for roosting, such as cracks, rot holes, woodpecker holes and/or dense ivy cover.

Habitat Assessment for Great Crested Newts

No ponds are present within the survey area and with the exception of Mewsbrook Park Boating Lake located approximately 120m to the north-west of the site, no ponds are located within 500m of the site.

Through online mapping the lake is measured as being in excess of 20,000m² in size. As general guidance, GCN prefer ponds with a surface area of between 100m² and 300m² and a depth of up to 4m. Ponds with an absence of fish and waterfowl are also preferred (*Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*, English Nature, 2001). Through aerial photography and online research, not only does this lake appear to support

waterfowl, it is considerably larger and being a boating lake, likely deeper than ponds generally preferred by GCN. In addition to this, grassland surrounding the summerhouse likely to be impacted by the proposals is considered to offer no suitable terrestrial habitat for GCNs and areas of ornamental planting to the east of the summerhouse are understood likely to be retained throughout development.

Given the distance of this lake from the site and the extent of habitat loss anticipated (less than 0.1ha), based on Natural England's Risk Assessment Calculator, proposed development activities are highly unlikely to result in an offence (see Table 2 below). As such, given the habitat preferences of GCNs and the results of the risk assessment, further survey of the lake is not recommended and works within the site are not considered to be constrained by great crested newts.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of	Result of offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum		0.1
Rapid risk assessment result		GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY
Guidance on risk assessment result categories "Green: offence highly unlikely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that it is highly unlikely any offence would be committed should the development proceed. Therefore, no licence would be required. However, bearing in mind that this is a generic assessment, you should carefully examine your specific plans to ensure this is a sound conclusion, and take precautions (see Non-licensed avoidance measures tool) to avoid offences if appropriate. It is likely that any residual offences would have negligible impact on conservation status, and enforcement of such breaches is unlikely to be in the public interest.		

Table 1: Natural England Risk Assessment Calculator

Other Species

The site was not considered to have the potential to support reptiles and barn owls. Although badgers maybe within the local area, not evidence of the species using the site was recorded such as setts, latrines and snuffle holes. Owing to a lack of suitable habitat and connectivity, the site is not considered to have potential to support species, such as dormice, otters or water voles.

Trees, hedgerows and shrubs in the immediate vicinity of the summerhouse have the potential to be used by birds for nesting during the breeding season. The UK breeding season for most bird species takes place

between March and September. Ideally, work affecting these areas should be avoided during this period. If unavoidable, it is recommended that any works affecting suitable nesting areas on site should be carried out under ecological watching brief.

Ecological Enhancements

Due to the nature of the proposals and the size of the area likely to be impacted, few enhancements are considered feasible or appropriate within the proposed site; however, it is achievable to include ecological enhancement across the wider convalescent home grounds. As such, the following enhancements are recommended.

It is important to utilise native species of local provenance in landscaping schemes to enhance the ecological value of a development.

Bird boxes may be hung on retained mature trees to increase the number of breeding opportunities throughout the grounds. Recommended boxes include:

- Schwegler 1N Deep Nest Box – give added nest protection from predators
- Schwegler 1B Bird Box – general purpose bird box, suitable for many species

Installation of bat boxes will also enhance the number of roosting opportunities for bats in the local area. Boxes should be hung on mature trees and have clear flight paths. Recommended boxes include:

- Schwegler 2F – This box simulates crevices inside to allow suitable habitats for crevice-dwellers
- Schwegler 1FD – This box is a larger version of the 2F
- Schwegler 1FW – This box is suitable for maternity or hibernation roosts

Any trees that are removed should be replaced elsewhere within the grounds with native species such as: oak (*Quercus* sp), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), this will mitigate against the loss of habitat that could be considered important under planning local policies.

The use of wildflower mixes to increase the biodiversity of existing amenity grassland will enhance the ecological value of the site for a range of important invertebrates.

Log piles can be incorporated into the design to encourage invertebrates, as well as hedgehogs and amphibian and reptile species.

Conclusion

The site is not situated within or associated with any sites designated for their nature conservation value; however, three designated sites are located approximately 1.6km to the west of the site boundary. No internationally designated sites, such as SACs and SPAs are present within 10km of the site.

It is considered that there are no direct ecological linkages between the habitats within the red-line boundary and those which are designated in the local area. Due to the nature of the site and the surrounding areas, it is considered that development of the site will not result in any indirect impacts resulting from construction or use.

Although no units of ancient semi-natural or re-planted woodland are located within a 2km radius, several areas of priority habitat are located within 2km. The closest of which (vegetated shingle habitat) is located approximately 0.1km to the south of the site.

The habitats on site were considered to be common and widespread throughout the UK. As such these features are of limited ecological interest. Notwithstanding this, trees within areas of ornamental planting are considered to be of greater ecological value and as such it is recommended that these features be retained post development, as outlined in the current proposals.

No bats or evidence of roosting bats was found within the summerhouse on the day of survey and no evidence was found externally. The summer house building was considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats. No further surveys are recommended.

Loss of trees is not anticipated; however, owing to a lack of suitable features for roosting, none of the trees in the immediate vicinity of the existing summerhouse were considered to have potential to support roosting bats. Trees and hedgerows were considered to provide some limited opportunities for foraging bats and as such these features should be maintained or enhanced, where possible.

Trees, hedgerows and shrubs in the vicinity of the summerhouse have the potential to be used by birds for nesting during the breeding season and therefore, it is recommended that work to clear areas of suitable vegetation, if required be undertaken outside of this period or under ecological watching brief.

Owing to a lack of suitable habitat and connectivity, the site is not considered to have potential to support species, such as great crested newts, reptiles, barn owls dormice, otters or water voles. No evidence of badgers using the site was observed during the survey. No further survey work for these species is recommended.

I trust that the information provided within this report is sufficient for your needs; however, should you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Vicky Hale BSc (Hons) CEnv MCIEEM

Senior Ecologist

Rustington Convalescent Home Appendix 1: Site Photographs

Photo 1: View of the south-west elevation of the existing summerhouse

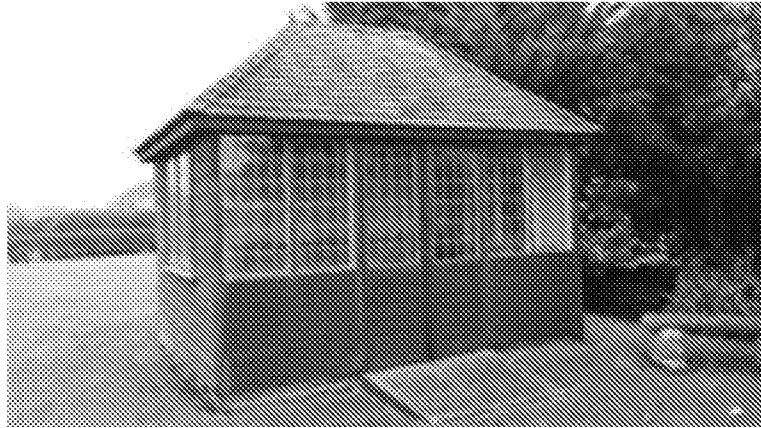


Photo 2: View of the north-east and north-west elevations of the summerhouse

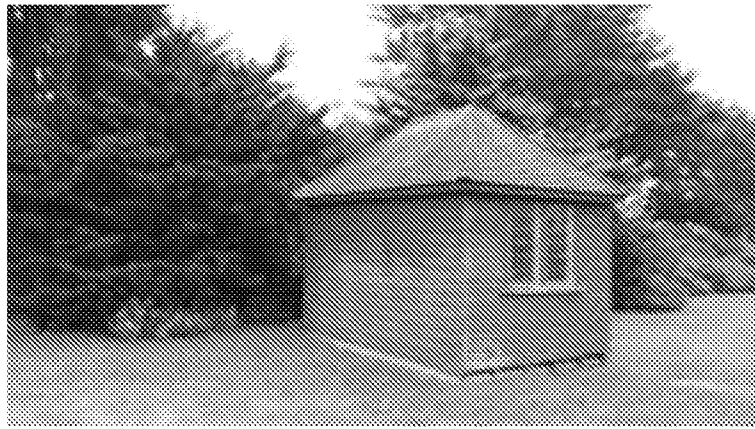


Photo 3: Internal view of summerhouse



Rustington Convalescent Home Appendix 1: Site Photographs

Photo 4: Grassland and hedgerows to the west of the summerhouse



Photo 5: Grassland and hedgerows to the north of the summerhouse



Photo 6: Hedgerow and ornamental planting to the east of the summerhouse



Rustington Convalescent Home Appendix 1: Site Photographs

Photo 7: View of the site from outside of the survey area (south-west)

