Mitigation Excellence

Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Produced on behalf of Mohammed Al-Samaraie

14/10/2021

Site Reference: EE-21-08170-01

Site Address: Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 0SB

Report Prepared By: Mark Vivian MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
SUMMARY	3
1.0 INTRODUCTION	4
2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY	7
3.0 METHODOLOGY	7
4.0 RESULTS	8
5.0 EVALUATION	15

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SUMMARY

Mohammed Al-Samaraie commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Protected Species Assessment (PSA) for the proposed development at Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, West Sussex, BN16 0SB (Grid Reference: SU 95344 06908). The aim of the assessment was to evaluate the type and quality of the habitat affected by the proposed development and to appraise the scope of potential ecological constraints, with emphasis on Protected Species. The PEA/PSA was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) on 17th August 2021.

There are three ecological constraints associated with this site: Potential Bat Roosts, Potential Reptile Habitat and Potential Nesting Birds.

The main structure on site (TN01, Figure 1) has been designated as possessing 'high' bat roost potential and one ash tree with dense ivy growth (TN02, Figure 1) has been designated as possessing 'low' bat roost potential. A bat survey that comprises three dawn or dusk surveys, undertaken during the bat maternity season (May-August inclusive), will be required to establish whether there is an active roost within the main structure on-site. A bat survey that comprises one dawn or dusk survey, undertaken during the bat maternity season (May-August inclusive), will be required to establish whether there is an active roost within the immature ash tree with dense ivy growth on-site. **A bat survey has been completed at the time of writing which found no evidence of active bat roosts on-site, a mitigation strategy has been deemed surplus to requirements.**

The development will necessitate the removal a small amount of potential reptile habitat within the boundary areas that contain a mosaic of rough grassland and compost. **A reptile survey has been completed at the time of writing which found very low numbers of slow worm only, a mitigation strategy that involves a supervised site clearance has been submitted with the survey report.**

There were no observable bird nests, however, it is possible that common, widespread birds may establish nests during the breeding season. It would be sensible to arrange for a competent person to check for active bird nests should it become necessary to remove any of the on-site vegetation during the bird breeding season (March-August inclusive).

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

1.1 Mohammed Al-Samaraie commissioned Epoch Ecology Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Protected Species Assessment (PSA) for the proposed development at Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, West Sussex, BN16 0SB (Grid Reference: SU 95344 06908).

1.2 The aim of the assessment was to evaluate the type and quality of the habitat affected by the proposed development and to appraise the scope of potential ecological constraints, with emphasis on Protected Species.

1.3 The PEA was comprised of a baseline survey using the JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Survey protocol, where appropriate, and the surveyor's judgement to categorise the composition and extent of the existing site habitat. In addition, the PSA was undertaken to assess the potential for European and nationally protected species within the identified site habitat, in addition to any locally impacted areas.

Dates & Authorship

1.4 The PEA/PSA was undertaken by Mark Vivian (BSc MSc MCIEEM; Principal Ecologist; Epoch Ecology Ltd – mark@epochecology.com, 07766302243) on 17th August 2021.

Development Proposals

1.5 The development proposals consist of the demolition of one residential unit set within c. 0.21 hectares of land located on the southern edge of Fontwell Village in West Sussex. A small number of residential units, with associated access and hard and soft landscaped facilities, are proposed for construction. The proposals will result in the loss and/or alternation of the majority of the habitat within the red line boundary and the following assessment has been based upon this outcome.

Site Overview

1.6 The site was comprised of a single dwelling residential plot (c. 0.21 hectares) that was fully occupied by the owners/residents at the time of survey. There was one main, brickwork structure on site and a small number of subsidiary structures, comprised of old wooden sheds. There were many scattered, semi-mature trees and semi-overgrown areas at the periphery.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

1.7 The main structure was a T-shaped single-storey unit/bungalow with a pitched roof, slate tiles, and a continuously open attic interior. The main structure is located within the northern half of the site and the southern part of the site is comprised of a mixed array of amenity and self-seeded deciduous/coniferous trees (refer to Plate 1; below). Canopy cover in the southern section of the site was approximately 85% and the northern section was regularly managed to maximise the amenity/utility of the area.

Plate 1: The site in relation to the local landscape (c. 150m radius)



1.8 The peripheral areas were well-established and marked by deciduous and coniferous trees which connected well to the peripheral vegetation of the agricultural fields of the wider landscape.

1.9 The site is accessed from Arundel Road to the north via The Ridings.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

Location Overview

1.10 The site was located on the southern edge of Fontwell village in West Sussex. Fontwell village, to the north, was characterised by a somewhat dense housing stock relative to similar such localities. The area to the north of Fontwell village was dominated by Slindon Wood which is a large patch (c. 38 hectares) of ancient woodland and is delimited along its southern boundary by the A27 (refer to Plate 2; below).

1.11 The landscape to the south of the site was dominated by agricultural farmland that had been granted planning permission for housing. It is believed that the trenches from an archaeological investigation can be seen in the image presented in Plate 2 (below). The field network to the south had well-defined wooded boundaries that provide potential corridors to/from the ancient woodland to the north with other parcels of woodland to the south.

Plate 2: The site in relation to the wider landscape (c. 1.0 km radius)



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2.0 SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The aim of the PEA was to:

1) Classify and document the habitat and plant communities on-site
2) Identify floral species within each habitat to aid classification
3) Appraise potential for Protected/Notable Species considered relevant for Planners
4) Recommend routes by which constraints can be investigated, circumvented or mitigated
5) Provide recommendations for ecological enhancement and/or compensation

2.1 This report details the potential ecological resource on-site positing specific locations, where possible.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken on 17th August 2021, wherein a Phase 1 Habitat Survey was conducted, using guidelines from *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit* (JNCC 2003).

3.2 The site habitat was classified and documented and the presence, or potential presence, of relevant Protected/Notable (P/N) flora/fauna was outlined. A summary description, with defining species abundance, of the site habitat was collected, following the Phase 1 Habitat Survey method, and presented in Section 4.0.

3.3 Target Notes, highlighting the location and defining criteria, of features of features relevant to the assessment were recorded, and have been laid out in Table No. 1 – Target Notes and Figure No. 1 – Site Habitat Plan.

3.4 All habitat on-site, and adjacent to site, were appraised for their potential for P/N fauna including, but not limited to, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Potential features and signs of use were identified and assessed for their importance for P/N spp and field signs, such as scat and hair, were considered. Stones, logs and debris were overturned, and any holes studied for recent activity, water bodies were recorded, where access allowed, within 500m of the proposed development.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

3.5 A summary of the results, accompanied in large part by photographic evidence, and recommendations for further investigation are made in the following report.

Limitations

3.6 The site survey does not propose to present an exhaustive floral assemblage, as only one site survey visit was performed. Seasonal, and inter-year, variations may have inhibited the collation of such a list due to the growth habit of all species present. This does not affect the classification of habitat as the definitions offered by this survey protocol are broad.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Desk-Top Survey

4.1.1 The following section describes the ecological character of the development site, including relevant features from local areas, such as conservation sites and species records. Sites and habitat described here are not necessarily representative of the site ecology but are useful in characterising the local context.

Statutory Protected Sites

4.1.2 There are no Statutory Protected Sites within 1.0 kilometre of the site. The development is small in scale and is not predicted to extend beyond the site boundary.

4.1.3 The A27 to the north marks the boundary of the South Downs National Park (SDNP), the site lies outside of its boundary.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

4.1.2 The impact of the development is not predicted to extend beyond the site level. It is considered highly unlikely for a non-statutory site, such as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), to be impacted by the development proposals.

UK Priority Habitats

4.1.3 The scheme does not propose to remove UK Priority Habitat.

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4.2 Field Survey

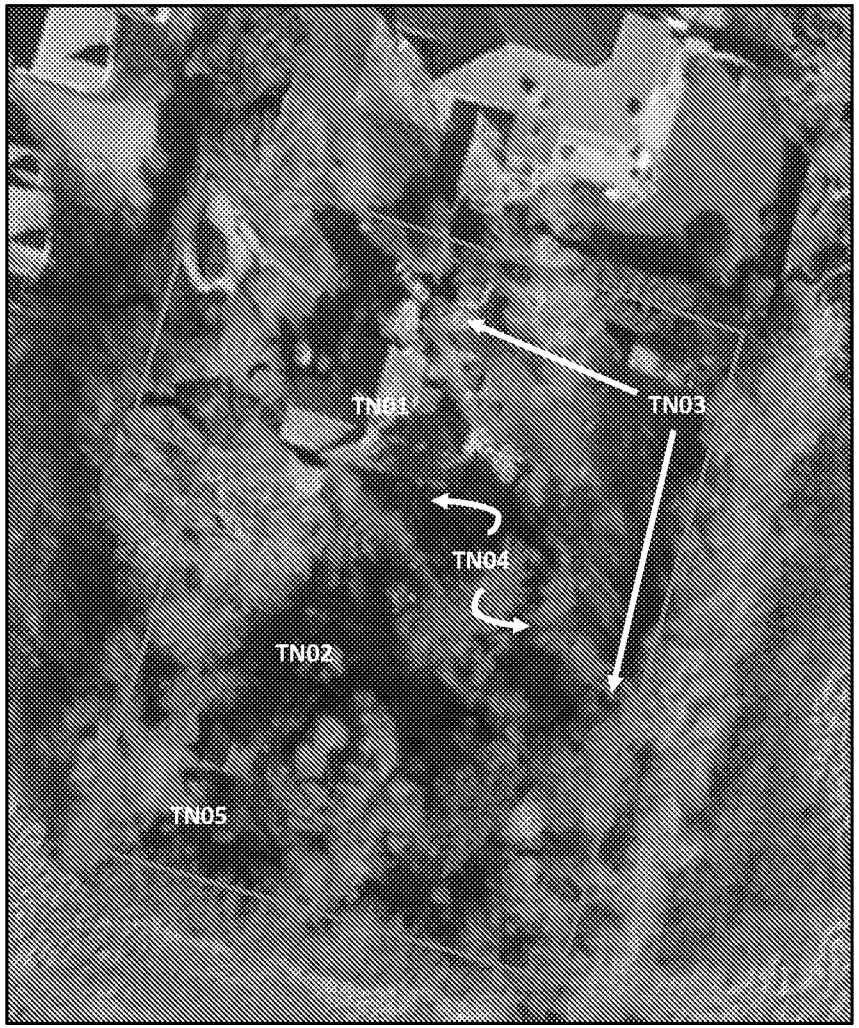
Site Habitat Assessment

4.2.1 The following habitat and Features of Interest (FoI) were recorded on-site/locally during the site survey visit. The site character has been described and the reasons for habitat classification given. Photographic evidence has been provided in Appendix No. 1 – Site Photographs; and a description of target notes has been provided in Table No. 1 – Target Notes.

4.2.2 Habitats within and adjacent to the development site area include:

- Structure
- Improved Grassland (Amenity)
- Scattered Trees
- Intact Hedgerows
- Hardstanding

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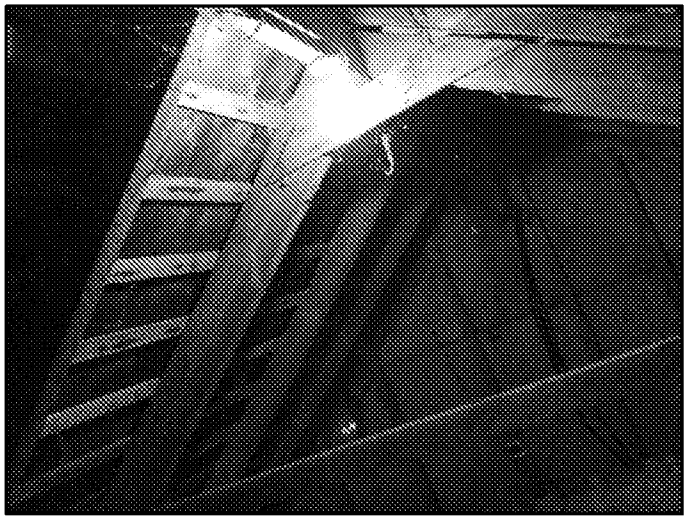


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Figure 1	Site Habitat Plan Rev00
Reference	EE-21-08170-01
Title	Morelands, Arundel Road, Fontwell, West Sussex
Date	14th October 2021
Contact	Mark Vivian MCIEEM mark@epochecology.com T: 01273 693864 M: 07766 302243

Table No. 1 – Target Notes

TN	Description	Species	Potential	Photo No.
01	Main structure. The building was T-shaped and had a continuously open attic throughout. There were simple, slate tiles; open wooden roof trusses; and no roofing membrane. The base of the attic had been insulated with fiberglass roll. The interior was accessed by a staircase. The exterior walls were in a good state of repair with no observed opportunities for roosting bats. There were potential access points behind fascia for bats to the interior. There were spiderwebs along the ridge beam indicating that bats had not flown close beneath.	Bats	High	1-3
02	There was dense ivy growth on one of the trees located within the southern section of the site.	Bats	Low	No Photo
03	There was dense, continuous vegetation around the peripheral locations that may provide habitat for reptiles.	Reptiles	Moderate	4
04	There was dense, continuous vegetation around the central locations in the southern parcel of site that may provide habitat for reptiles.	Reptiles	Moderate	5
05	There was a large compost pile, that was overgrown with vegetation, located at the southern end of the site. This may add value to the potential reptile habitat on-site.	Reptiles	Moderate	6

Photograph 1	
	The attic was comprised of open wooden trusses, baton, and simple slate tiles. The interior was continuously open throughout its extent. There were spiderwebs along most of the underside of the ridge beam.
Photograph 2	
	There were no observable signs of bat activity within the interior of the attic such as bat droppings.
Photograph 3	
	The building was T-shaped and the walls were in good condition with no observed opportunities for bat roosting.

Photograph 4	
	There was dense, continuous vegetation around the peripheral locations that may provide habitat for reptiles.
Photograph 5	
	There was dense, continuous vegetation around the central locations in the southern parcel of site that may provide habitat for reptiles.
Photograph 6	
	There was a large compost pile, that was overgrown with vegetation, located at the southern end of the site. This may add value to the potential reptile habitat on-site.

Habitat Description

4.2.3 The site was a fully occupied and managed parcel of residential land that contained one single-storey structure set within 0.22 hectares of land. As a result, the land-use complied with what would be expected of domestic usage, e.g. regular mowing of garden areas. The northern section of the site contained the main structure, one subsidiary structure (shed) and a well-managed lawn with scattered ornamental planting.

4.2.4 The southern section was dominated by a mixed array of semi-mature, deciduous/coniferous woody species estimated to be less than 35 years of age. As such, the trees were in a general good state of health and there was very limited opportunity for bat roosting within this area. The canopy of this young stand of woodland measured approximately 85% coverage and was believed to offer a good foraging resource for bats and birds. There was however one immature ash tree that has dense ivy growth that provided low potential for roosting bats.

4.2.5 The site boundary was comprised of a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees some of which were mature.

Protected Species Assessment

4.2.6 The main structure located at TN01 (refer to Figure 1 and Photograph 1-3) has been assessed to represent 'high' potential for roosting bats. The building offered a continuously open interior and potential access points behind fascia. There was also one tree in one site that was colonised by dense ivy growth that could act as a refuge for bats located at TN02 (refer to Figure 1).

4.2.7 The immediate landscape is believed to offer high quality foraging habitat for bats as the site had numerous semi-mature and some mature trees. The wider landscape offered well-established navigational corridors for to optimal bat foraging habitat (Slindon Wood). Bats, therefore, had motivation to use the site and opportunity within the site to roost.

4.2.8 The main structure has been designated as possessing 'high' bat roost potential and the immature ash tree with dense ivy growth has been designated as possessing 'low' bat roost potential. An investigation as to the status of roosting bats on-site should be included with the planning application.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

4.2.9 There was potential reptile habitat on-site located at TN03, TN04 & TN05 (refer to Figure 1 and Photograph 4-6). An investigation as to the status of the on-site reptile population, should be included with the planning application.

4.2.8 There was high potential for bird nests within the scattered trees within the southern parcel of the site (to be removed) and the peripheral trees (to be retained). It should be planned for the scattered trees to be removed outside of the bird breeding season or following a search and watching brief by a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.2.9 In general, however, the area has been confidently assessed to represent 'low ecological value' and ecological impacts resulting from the development in this area are not considered controversial.

5.0 EVALUATION

Zone of Influence (ZI)

5.1 The Zone of Influence (ZI) is meant to include the area of land over which the potential impacts of the development should be considered. The ZI comprises the whole site, but does not extend beyond the site boundary, due to the nature of the development proposals and the scale of the plans. The development will necessitate the removal of much of the existing site habitat although this will need to be with reference to the results of the potential ecological constraints of bats and reptiles. The development is relatively small, and any ecological impacts are unlikely to spill-over outside of the site boundary.

Existing Habitat within ZI

5.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has identified five habitat types within the site, all of which are within the Zone of Influence (ZI) of the development: 1) Structure (main dwelling); 2) Improved Grassland (Amenity); 3) Scattered Trees; 4) Intact Hedgerow; and 5) Hardstanding.

5.3 All the site habitats are common and widespread, and each habitat is a typical example of its wider cohort. The ecological value of the site habitat, from a botanical perspective, is 'negligible'. The impact of the development upon the intrinsic value of the habitat within the ZI is not considered further here.

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL WA/42/22/PL

Protected Species: Bas – Habitat: Potential Roosts

5.4 The main structure on site (TN01, Figure 1) has been designated as possessing 'high' bat roost potential and one ash tree with dense ivy growth (TN02, Figure 1) has been designated as possessing 'low' bat roost potential.

5.5 A bat survey that comprises three dawn or dusk surveys, undertaken during the bat maternity season (May-August inclusive), will be required to establish whether there is an active roost within the main structure on-site.

5.6 A bat survey that comprises one dawn or dusk survey, undertaken during the bat maternity season (May-August inclusive), will be required to establish whether there is an active roost within the immature ash tree with dense ivy growth on-site.

5.7 **A bat survey has been completed at the time of writing which found no evidence of active bat roosts on-site, a mitigation strategy has been deemed surplus to requirements.**

Protected Species: Reptiles – Habitat: Grassland and Scrub

5.8 The development will necessitate the removal a small amount of potential reptile habitat within the boundary areas that contain a mosaic of rough grassland and compost. Reptiles are protected from killing and/or injury by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which will mean that a mitigation strategy may be needed to inform the planning application.

5.9 **A reptile survey has been completed at the time of writing which found very low numbers of slow worm only, a mitigation strategy that involves a supervised site clearance has been submitted with the survey report.**

Protected Species: Breeding Birds – Habitat: Scattered Trees

5.10 There were no observable bird nests, however, it is possible that common, widespread birds may establish nests during the breeding season. It would be sensible to arrange for a competent person to check for active bird nests should it become necessary to remove any of the on-site vegetation.

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