



Brighter strategies
for greener projects



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Project: Eldridge Close
Report: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned by Arcady Architects to update a 2020 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (ref: 551478ltMay20FV03_PEA) of land to the North of Stickling Green in Clavering, Essex, now known as Eldridge Close.

This document is a report of the updated findings and has been produced to support an outline planning submission for the site which seeks to develop up to 32 residential units with associated gardens and vehicular access as well as a pond and an area of bioswale within communal space.

This survey aimed to re-confirm the ecological value of this site and the presence/likely-absence of notable and/or legally protected species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

The survey area extends to 1.3ha and comprises arable crop, bare ground and species-rich hedgerow with trees lines. Details received from the updated desktop study and site walkover confirmed the site to have the potential to support the following rare and notable and/or protected habitats and species:

- UK BAP habitat in the form of hedgerows;
- Moderate potential for roosting bats within two trees onsite and adjacent;
- Low potential for commuting/foraging bats; and
- High potential for nesting birds associated with the treelined hedgerow on site.

A significant change from the 2020 report was noted; a large ash tree in the western boundary hedgerow was found to have moderate Potential Roost Features (PRFs) for bats in the form of woodpecker holes, and a willow tree in an adjacent garden also had moderate PRFs. No further bat surveys are recommended if the detailed design for the site ensures that any construction works and buildings are more than 20m away from trees with moderate PRFs, and that these trees may be protected and retained without disturbance. If this is not possible, a further PRF inspection survey at height (using a MEWP) is recommended to determine the suitability of these trees to support roosting bats, to inform further emergence / re-entry surveys and appropriate mitigation, enhancement and licensing if required, to inform the detailed design of the site.

It is understood that the BAP habitat hedgerow with trees is due to be maintained and therefore no further surveys are required for commuting/foraging and roosting bats and nesting birds. A bat sensitive lighting scheme should be in place to ensure the hedgerow with trees remains unlit to allow its continued use as a potential foraging resource and linear feature for commuting.

Should any vegetation clearance be proposed in future it should be taken outside of nesting bird season (March-August inclusive) unless confirmed absent by a suitably qualified ecologist within 48 hours prior to clearance.

Mitigation, compensation and enhancements concepts are discussed, which should be factored into the detailed design and approach at site. An Ecological Management Plan and Construction Environment Management Plan should be produced for the site which details these measures. This could be secured through condition.

Assuming key mitigation actions are implemented, alongside the recommended enhancements for the site (including wildlife friendly landscaping, marginal planting for the pond and bioswale, bird and bat boxes and invertebrate habitat features), then the proposals stand to result in an increase in value for biodiversity.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Greengage was commissioned by Arcady Architects to undertake an update of the 2020 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (ref: 551478ltMay20FV03_PEA) of land to the North of Stickling Green in Clavering, Essex, now known as Eldridge Close.

This document is a report of this survey and has been produced to support an outline planning submission for the site which seeks to develop up to 32 residential units with associated gardens and vehicular access as well as a pond and an area of bioswale within communal space.

This survey aimed to reconfirm the ecological value of this site and the presence/likely-absence of notable and/or legally protected species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

2.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The survey area extends to approximately 1.3 hectares and is centred on National Grid Reference TL 48088 32929, OS Co-ordinates 548088, 232929.

The site remained largely the same, comprising predominantly of an overwintering grass crop with a bare ground public right of way dissecting through the site. The site is bounded by fences to the north and south and species-rich hedgerow with trees along the eastern and western boundary. Behind the northern fence is a row of Cupressus sp. trees.

The site is located on the northern outskirts of the rural village of Clavering. Immediate surroundings include residential housing and associated gardens. The site abuts a large area of arable farmland and open greenspace surrounding the village.

2.2 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Summary information with regard to relevant policy and legislation is provided within Appendix C.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The PEA (which included an Extended Ecological Phase 1 Survey) was undertaken in accordance with guidance in the UK Habitat Classification System (UKHab)¹ and the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal², in accordance with BS42020:2013: Biodiversity³. The overall assessment consisted of:

- Site specific biological information (desk top review) gained from statutory and non-statutory consultation; and
- A site walkover, protected species scoping assessment and UKHab habitat survey.

The original desk study provided the ecological context for the site survey carried out on the 12th May 2020. The desk study was reviewed and updated in November 2022 and the site walkover was then undertaken on 25th November 2022 to verify the habitats and conditions on site.

The survey boundary and existing site is shown at Figure A.1 (Appendix A).

Greengage undertook both the original and updated site walkover during dry and sunny weather conditions. Features within the site boundary and accessible features immediately bordering it were evaluated and the extent and distribution of habitats and plant communities were recorded and supplemented with target notes on areas or species requiring further commentary. Fauna using the area were recorded and areas of habitat suitable for statutorily protected species were identified where present, with an active search carried out for evidence of such use.

3.1 DESKTOP REVIEW

A review of readily available ecological information and other relevant environmental databases (included Defra's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website⁴) was undertaken for the site and its vicinity. In addition, a local biological records search from Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) was reviewed to identify the location and citations of local non-statutory designated sites and presence of records for notable and protected species. This provided the overall ecological context for the site, to better inform the site survey.

3.2 ON SITE SURVEYS

Flora

The extent and distribution of different habitats on site were identified and mapped according to the standard UKHab methodologies, supplemented with target notes describing the dominant botanical species and any features of interest. Any present protected plant species and invasive/non-natives were also noted. A habitat map has been produced to illustrate the results, as shown at Figure A.1 (Appendix A).

Fauna

The survey specifically included assessments to identify the potential value for notable, rare and protected species at site. This involved identifying potential habitats in terms of refugia, breeding sites and foraging areas in the context of species known to be present locally and regionally.

The likelihood of occurrence is ranked as follows:

- Negligible - While presence cannot be absolutely discounted, the site includes very limited or poor-quality habitat for a particular species. The site may also be outside the known national range for a species;
- Low - On-site habitat is poor to moderate quality for a given species, with few or no information about their presence from desk top study. However, presence cannot be discounted due to the national distribution of the species or the nature of on-site and surrounding habitats;
- Moderate - The on-site habitats are of moderate quality, providing most or all of the key requirements for a species. Several factors may limit the likelihood of occurrence, habitat severance, habitat disturbance and small habitat area;
- High - On-site habitat of high quality for given species. Site is within a regional or national stronghold for that particular species with good quality surroundings and good connectivity; and
- Present - Presence confirmed for the survey itself or recent, confirmed records from information gathered through desk top study.

The species surveyed for included:

Badger (*Meles meles*)

The potential for badger to inhabit or forage within the study area was assessed. Evidence of badger activity includes the identification of setts (a system of underground tunnels and nesting chambers), grubbed up grassland (caused by the animals digging for earthworms, slugs, beetles etc.), badger hairs, paths, latrines and paw prints.

Bat Species (*Chiroptera*)

The site visit was undertaken in daylight and the evaluation of bat potential comprised an assessment of natural features on site that aimed to identify characteristics suitable for bat roosts, foraging and commuting. In accordance with Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines⁵ and methods given in English Nature's (now Natural England) Bat Mitigation Guidelines⁶ consideration was given to:

- The availability of access to roosts for bats;
- The presence and suitability of crevices and other places as roosts; and
- Signs of bat activity or presence.

Definite signs of bat activity were taken to be:

- The bats themselves;

- Droppings;
- Grease marks;
- Scratch marks; and
- Urine spatter.

Signs of possible bat presence were taken to be:

- Stains; and
- Moth and butterfly wings.

Features with potential as roost sites include mature trees with holes, crevices or splits (the most utilised trees being oak, ash, beech, willow and Scots pine), caves, bridges, tunnels and buildings with cracks or gaps serving as possible access points to voids or crevices.

Additionally, linear natural features such as tree lines, hedgerows and river corridors are often considered valuable for commuting and semi-natural habitats such as woodland, meadows and waterbodies can provide important foraging resources. Consideration was given to the presence of these features both immediately within and adjacent to the assessment area.

Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

During the walkover survey the potential for dormouse to be present on site was assessed. This included observations for suitable habitat such as well-layered woodland, scrub and linking hedgerows, particularly those comprised of species offering suitable food sources such as honeysuckle and hazel, in addition to direct evidence such as characteristically gnawed hazelnuts, chewed ash keys and honeysuckle flowers, or nests.

Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*)

Water vole potential was assessed during the walkover survey. The potential is identified by the presence of ditches, rivers, dykes and lakes with holes and runs along the banks. Latrines, footprints or piles of food can also be noted.

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

An assessment was carried out to identify any potential habitats that may support great crested newt (GCN) and other native amphibians. The aquatic and terrestrial habitats required generally include small, still ponds or water bodies suitable for breeding; and woodland or grassland areas where there is optimal invertebrate prey potential.

Reptiles

The potential for reptile species on site was assessed during the walkover survey. Possible species include grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), adder (*Vipera berus*), common and sand lizard (*Lacerta vivipara* and *L. agilis*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). These native reptile species generally require open areas with low, mixed-height vegetation, such as heathland, rough grassland, and open

scrub or, in the case of grass snake, waterbody margins. Suitable well drained and frost-free areas are needed so they can survive the winter.

Birds

During the walkover survey, the potential for breeding, wintering and migratory birds was assessed. In particular, this includes areas of trees, scrub, heathland and wetlands that could support nests for common or notable species.

Invertebrates

As part of the walkover survey the quality of invertebrate habitat and the potential for notable terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate species was considered. There is a wide variety of habitats suitable for invertebrates including wetland areas, heathland, areas of bare sandy soil, ephemeral brownfield vegetation and meadows.

Biodiversity Action Plan priority species/ Species of Principal Importance

Where consultation and desk-study indicate the presence of BAP priority species (Species of Principal Importance) not protected by statute, effort was made to establish the potential for the site to support these species.

3.3 SURVEYORS

Jaimy Hodgetts, who undertook the updated site survey, has 4 years' experience in ecological surveying and 8 years' experience in botanical identification. Jaimy has worked on numerous ecological projects ranging from field surveys to large infrastructure projects.

Sarah White, who wrote this report, has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science (BSc Hons) and is a Qualifying member of CIEEM. Sarah has one years' experience in conservation habitat management and one seasons' experience undertaking ecological surveys.

Stephanie Harper, who reviewed and verified this updated report, has a degree in Environmental Biology, a Natural England bat licence, and 15 years' experience in ecological survey and consultancy.

This report was reviewed and verified by Stephanie Harper who confirms in writing (see the QA sheet at the front of this report) that the report is in line with the following:

- Represents sound industry practice;
- Reports and recommends correctly, truthfully and objectively;
- Is appropriate given the local site conditions and scope of works proposed; and
- Avoids invalid, biased and exaggerated statements.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

The update survey was undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist with full access to the site.

The updated site walkover was undertaken outside of the optimal survey season. Due to the mild weather conditions this year and the agricultural nature of the site the broad habitats on site were still able to be confirmed. The original site survey was undertaken during the optimal survey season and habitats have not changed greatly between the two surveys; therefore it was not considered a significant constraint.

No significant constraints that stand to impact conclusions drawn in this report therefore presented themselves.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 DESKTOP REVIEW

Designations

Consultations with the local biological record centres Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the MAGIC dataset have confirmed that there are no statutory designations of national or international importance within the boundary of the site or within a 2km radius of the site.

The site does lie within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of Quendon Woods and Debden Water both statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located over 4km away.

Records from EWT identify six non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the site boundary. LWS are recognised by LPAs as important wildlife sites.

Table 4.1 below gives the locations and descriptions of a selection of the nearest/most relevant local designations.

Table 4.1 Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites within Search Radius

Site Name	Approximate Location	Description
Statutory Designations		
Quendon Woods SSSI	4.3km southeast	The site lies within the Impact risk zone of Quendon Woods. Quendon Wood is an ancient coppice-with-standards woodland supporting an unusually rich and varied flora associated with a range of soil types. The Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam woodland includes both the rare Birch-Hazel variant and the Ash-Maple variant, developed over Chalky Boulder Clay and glacial gravels.
Debden Water SSSI	4.9km northeast	The site lies within the Impact risk zone of Debden Water. Debden Water is a small freshwater stream which runs through a narrow sheltered valley on the Chalky Boulder Clay of north-east Essex and forms a tributary to the River Cam at Newport. The surrounding land has a varied topography and supports a range of habitat types including tall fen vegetation within the flood plain, unimproved neutral grassland, broad-leaved woodland, species-rich calcareous grassland on the valley slopes, and sandy areas surrounding a number of small disused gravel pits.
Non-Statutory		
Stickling Green (LWS)	0.6km west	This site comprises a series of unmown grassland patches along the main road through the village. A varied grass mix

Site Name	Approximate Location	Description
		includes Quaking Grass (<i>Briza media</i>) and Yellow Oatgrass (<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>). Lady's Bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>) is plentiful throughout, whilst other species of interest include Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), Bee Orchid (<i>Ophrys apifera</i>), Spiny Restharrow (<i>Ononis spinosa</i>) and Salad Burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>).
Scotts Pasture (LWS)	0.7km south	This piece of chalky clay grassland retains a varied flora, with Salad Burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>), Lady's Bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>) and Upright Brome (<i>Bromus erectus</i>) being characteristic species.
Green Man Meadows (LWS)	1.3km north	These two meadows support a varied flora. The sward is mainly composed of Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>), Yorkshire Fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>), Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>) and Bent-grasses (<i>Agrostis spp.</i>). Of interest amongst the herbs are Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), Salad Burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>) and Lady's Bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), whilst Lady's Smock (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>), Bee Orchid (<i>Ophrys apifera</i>) and Common Spotted Orchid (<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>) have also been reported.
Arkesden Chalk Pit (LWS)	1.3km east	The value of this site lies in its diverse chalk grassland flora. This includes Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), Lady's Bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>), Quaking Grass (<i>Briza media</i>), Wild Thyme (<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>), Clustered Bellflower (<i>Campanula glomerata</i>), Small Scabious (<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>) and Knapweed Broomrape (<i>Orobanche elatior</i>). Rough Mallow (<i>Althaea hirsuta</i>) has also been recorded. Scrub invasion and excessive human disturbance may pose a threat to the unique flora of this site.
Clavering Mill Special Roadside Verge (LWS)	1.5km west	This section of verge has been designated in recognition of its flora, which includes Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>).

Biodiversity Action Plans

UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been developed which set priorities for nationally important habitats and species. To support the BAPs, Species/Habitat Statements (otherwise known as Species/Habitat Action Plans) were produced that provide an overview of the status of the species and

set out the broad policies that can be developed to conserve them. A list of priority species of conservation importance was also developed.

The UK BAP was succeeded in 2012 by the UK-Post 2012 Biodiversity Framework which informed the creation of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy; England's contribution towards the UK's commitments under the United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity.

Despite this, the UK BAP priority species lists and conservation objectives still remain valid through integration with local BAPs (which remain valid), and in the form of the Habitats and Species of Principle Importance list (as required under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act).

The desk top review identified records of the following UK BAP habitats and species within 2km:

- The only UK BAP priority habitat present at site or in the immediate vicinity is 'Hedgerows'.
- Scarlet Malachite Beetle (*Malachius aeneus*) is a UK BAP species found within Essex; and
- Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) ensure that national action plans (the UK BAP/Biodiversity 2020) are translated into effective action at the local level and establish targets and actions for locally characteristic species and habitats.

Essex BAP

The Essex BAP includes Habitat and Species Action Plans (HAPs and SAPs) for priority habitats and species in the county. The following elements of the Essex BAP are of potential relevance to this assessment:

- Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*);
- Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
- Song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*);
- Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*);
- *Pipistrellus* sp. bats;
- Stag beetle (*Lucanidae* sp.);
- Cereal Field Margins (HAP); and
- Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows and green lanes (HAP).

Species Records

The information provided in the biological data search from EWT identified records of a number of protected and BAP priority species within 2km search radius of the site. Among others, these include the following species of relevance to the site:

- Terrestrial mammal species, including European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), badger (*Meles meles*) and polecat (*Mustela putorius*);
- Bat species, including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and western barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*);
- Bird species, including skylark, hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), red kite (*Milvus milvus*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and redwing (*Turdus iliacus*); and
- Invertebrate species, including stag beetle, cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and scarlet malachite beetle.

The species listed above are primarily those known to be in the area that may be impacted by any proposals at the site, or that stand to benefit as a consequence of potential ecological enhancements at the site and inform site-specific mitigation and enhancement recommendations described in the following chapter.

4.2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: HABITATS

The updated walkover in 2022 confirmed habitats had remained largely the same as in 2020 and are presented as the following UKHab categories:

- Cereal crops;
- Ruderal/ephemeral species;
- Native species rich hedgerow with trees; and
- Unvegetated, unsealed surface (bare ground public right of way across the site).

Under the new mapping system, the ruderal / ephemeral habitat and bare ground covers too small an area to be mapped independently of the cereal crop.

The habitat map is shown in Figure A.1 (Appendix A).

The management of the site is intensive and has not changed since 2020; no changes to the immediate surrounds were noted either.

Cereal Crops

The majority of site comprised of uniform arable cereal crop.

Figure 4.1 Cereal crop on site during 2020 site survey (top) and 2022 site survey (bottom)



Ruderal/Ephemeral Species

The ruderal habitat on site is associated with the field margins. Species include cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and cleaver (*Galium aparine*). This habitat has remained largely unchanged with the addition of further typical and common species including bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), broad leaf dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) red dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*), bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*),

pendulous sedge (*Carex pendulum*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), willow herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and dove's foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*).

The small ditch on site was still present but wet at the time of the survey, with an underground pipe feeding it what is most likely run-off rainwater from the field to the north.

Figure 4.2 Ruderal/Ephemeral species on site during 2020 site survey (top) and 2022 site survey (bottom)



Hedge with trees

The eastern and western perimeters are bordered by a native species rich hedgerow with trees. Species included horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), birch (*Betula sp.*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) elm (*Ulmus procera*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), English oak (*Quercus robur*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and goat willow (*Salix caprea*).

Figure 4.3 Native species rich hedgerow with trees during 2020 site survey (top) and 2022 site survey (bottom)



Unvegetated, unsealed surface

A well-worn, bare ground public right of way footpath dissected the site.

Figure 4.4 Bare ground public right of way dissecting site as seen during 2020 site survey (top) and 2022 site survey (to the left of the bottom photo)



4.3 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: SPECIES

Badger

The crop on site provides some value for foraging badgers however no evidence of foraging was observed during the update 2022 survey. No evidence of badger activity including active and inactive setts, latrines or footprints was identified during the survey.

Whilst the treelined margins could not be fully inspected there were no signs of spoil heaps or excavations which would be visible across the flat land, and site photos from previous visits were reviewed when the crops were not present which do not show signs of any setts. There was also no evidence of sloping ground that badgers would often choose to make a sett in.

Overall, the site is considered to be of **low** value to badgers.

Bats

Foraging

There are records of six bat species within 2km of the site including the Essex BAP *Pipistrellus* sp.

The site is situated within a reasonably dark landscape with tree lined hedgerows that are likely to attract common invertebrate prey species for foraging bats, as well as provide linear features for commuting bats.

However, the majority of the site consists of arable crop with low floral diversity and therefore, unlikely to attract diverse invertebrate prey species.

The site is therefore considered to have **low** potential to support commuting and foraging bats with the potential confined to the linear features, primarily the hedgerow with trees on the eastern and western boundaries.

Roosting

Potential roosting features (PRFs) in the trees on site have increased from the previous 2020 site survey. The updated survey observed three trees as having **low-moderate** potential for roosting bats. The PRFs of each tree are described below. There were no buildings on site.

The dead tree in the northwest corner has not changed status from the 2020 site survey and is still considered to have **low** potential to support a small number of roosting bats in slits in the flaking bark (see target note 1 on Figure A.1 and photo in Appendix B).

Various PRFs were observed in the large ash tree on the western boundary of the site (see target note 2). It has six woodpecker holes on the eastern face, a broken limb wound on the southern face and a pruning cut wound on the western face, all with potential to support roosting bats. This tree is considered to have **moderate** potential to support roosting bats (Figure 4.5). Photos of this tree are provided below in Figure 4.5.

Dead stands of elm within the hedgerow with trees also contain flaking bark, considered a **low** potential roosting feature (see target note 3).

A weeping willow located just offsite has three pruning cut wound PRFs (see target note 4 and photos in appendix B) with moderate potential for roosting bats.

Figure 4.5 Potential roosting features (PRFs) seen on the large ash tree with moderate potential to support roosting bats on site.



Dormouse

There are no records for this species within 2km of the site. The site is lacking in dense woodland, hedgerows and scrub that would support dormouse populations. The potential for dormouse to be present is considered to be **negligible**.

Water Vole

The only ditches running parallel to the site were dry during the original survey and only contained an inch of water during the recent survey. The site is poorly connected to other suitable habitat likely to support these species and there are no records within 2km of the site.

Therefore, the potential for the site to support water vole is **negligible**.

Great Crested Newt

There are no records of great crested newts within 2km the site and there are no waterbodies on site suitable to support breeding populations of great crested newts.

The ruderal ephemeral habitat at the margins of the cereal crop and the hedgerow with trees on site have some, albeit limited, potential to support great crested newts.

According to records on the MAGIC website, there are two ponds within 250m of the site, one immediately east of the site (target note 5) and one 0.2km west of the site; both lie within residential gardens. These have previously been surveyed in 2018 and GCN were found to be likely absent from both. It is likely that GCN are still absent from these ponds as the residential and intensively managed arable fields surrounding these ponds are likely to act as significant barriers to dispersal.

Taking everything into consideration and although minor suitable habitat is present it is considered that the site is of **negligible value** to great crested newt.

Reptiles

No records of reptiles were provided within the desk study search.

Habitat on site comprises largely uniform arable crop which is unsuitable for reptiles. The margins of the field comprised taller flora such as nettles, cow parsley and cleaver leaving limited opportunities for reptiles to bask. There were three log piles observed in the ruderal/ephemeral species to the north of site which provide a limited area of potential suitable habitat for reptiles on site.

Furthermore, the site is isolated, surrounded by residential development or intensively managed arable farmland which would limit opportunities for dispersal.

Therefore, the site is considered to have **negligible** potential to support reptiles.

Birds

Records of a wide range of common and rare bird species were provided within the desk study.

The treeline on site provides good habitat for nesting birds on site including the Essex BAP species song thrush and house sparrow.

During survey there were no acoustic or visual signs of farmland birds such as skylark noted. The field was bounded by a high treeline and skylark typically do not like to nest close to high hedges as it

increases their risk of predation. There are much more vast open and less densely vegetated arable fields surrounding the site with higher suitability.

As such, the site is considered to have **high** potential for common woodland nesting birds although this potential is confined to the hedgerow and trees on site. However the potential for skylark and other ground-nesting farmland birds is **negligible**.

Invertebrates

There are records for UK BAP invertebrate species such as the scarlet malachite beetle in the local area.

Much of the site footprint supports habitats of limited invertebrate value, being dominated by arable land up to the field margins and the field margins supporting only a low diversity of very commonly occurring ruderal plants. There is not the diversity of habitats or sufficient presence of food plants to support populations of rare and notable invertebrates.

Overall, the site is considered to be of **negligible** value for notable invertebrates.

Other BAP Species

The Essex BAP species brown hare was observed during the survey. Given the large area that brown hare requires for its territory, the presence of large open farmland habitat in the wider surrounds, and the small size of the site, overall the site is considered to have **Low** value for brown hare.

5.0 EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

Discussion is provided below on the key ecological receptors that stand to be impacted/benefit from proposed works; high level commentary on appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions is also provided.

5.1 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There are currently no detailed design proposals therefore the following recommendations are fairly general and comprise a mitigation and enhancement strategy for the site. More detailed recommendations should be provided at the detailed design stage. This section has been updated from the 2020 report.

An Ecological Management Plan (EMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be produced and implemented for the site providing greater detail on the below, which should be secured through planning condition in accordance with BS 42020: 2013 Biodiversity.

Trees and hedgerows should be protected during construction in accordance with BS 5837 (2012) Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction.

5.2 DESIGNATED SITES

Statutory

There are no statutory sites within 2km of the site boundary. The site does however lie within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) of Quendon Woods SSSI and Debden Water SSSI.

The impacts listed as potential risks to these SSSI apply to developments of 50 residential units or more and therefore does not apply to this scheme. Direct impacts associated with the construction of the development are unlikely to extend to these designated sites which are over 4km away. Furthermore, increased visitor footfall to the designated site would be minimal.

No significant impacts are therefore identified.

Non-Statutory

Potential direct impacts associated with construction of the proposed development, such as pollution events, dust deposition and noise pollution/vibration will not affect designated sites due to the distance, as the nearest site is over 0.6km away.

No significant impacts are therefore identified.

5.3 NOTABLE/RARE HABITATS

The native species-rich hedgerow with trees is classified as BAP habitat. It is understood the proposals seek to retain the hedgerow, and enhance this area with additional planting which should be native species rich using species such as hawthorn, field maple, plum cherry (*Prunus cerasifera*), hazel,

blackthorn, crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*).

Significant deadwood within the hedgerow such as the dead ash (target note 1) should be retained for its value for saproxylic invertebrates.

No significant impacts are therefore identified.

5.4 BADGER

No badger setts were identified during the PEA site visit or evidence of badger activity. However, badgers regularly use arable fields to forage through, and it is possible that badgers could use the site during construction. Therefore, some standard mitigation measures should be incorporated within a CEMP to ensure that any badgers using the site are protected during the construction phase of development. Measures would include:

- Avoidance of nighttime works;
- Where practicable, excavations more than 0.5m deep should be fenced or covered overnight with a means of escape such as wooden planks that could be used as a ladder set in place, or excavations should be profiled so as to enable badgers to escape; and
- An emergency procedure should be put in place for if a badger or sett is found during construction. This procedure should involve immediately halting works within 20m of any new suspected sett entrance and contacting an ecologist to provide an assessment as to whether further surveys, mitigation and/or a Natural England licence would be required.

5.5 BATS

Foraging and Commuting

Proposals seek to retain and enhance the native species-rich hedgerow with trees which is likely to be of value to commuting and foraging bats as a linear corridor.

Impacts upon foraging and commuting bats will be in the form of increased levels of external lighting associated with the development. As such, it is proposed that a bat sensitive lighting strategy in accordance with available best practice guidance should be implemented. The Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018)^{vii} provide guidance on lighting design to avoid impacts to bats, and this should be used throughout the design process. Specifically, consideration should be given to:

- Avoidance of metal halide and fluorescent light sources;
- ‘Warmth’ of luminaires. Any external areas should incorporate light at a <2700K where possible, with peak wavelengths higher than 550nm;
- Use of screens/hoods to make any external lighting as directional as possible, avoiding light spill on any natural features;

- Height of lighting column. Where possible, external lights should be as low to the ground as possible; and
- Lighting controls. Appropriate controls to minimise the duration lights are illuminated should be instated.

The tree lined hedgerow should remain unlit, particularly between April and October, inclusive. By minimising the impacts of external lighting, impacts upon foraging and commuting bats should be sufficiently minimised.

Roosting

The current planning application is in Outline with details of layout reserved for later Reserved Matters approval. At this stage the site layout is not determined. However, all the trees with identified PRFs are in locations where they may reasonably be retained by any proposed development, and there are currently no plans to fell any of the existing trees onsite.

Trees with moderate potential roost features

As part of detailed design for the site, it is recommended that no buildings should be constructed within 20m of the trees with moderate potential, and the site layout designed to retain a 20m buffer of natural habitat (such as garden) around the trees with lux levels no greater than 0.5 lux within this area.

If this is not possible, further bat surveys will be required in accordance with published guidance. In the first instance for the moderate ash tree onsite (target note 2) an endoscopic inspection of PRFs should be made from a mobile elevated working platform (MEWP) as the condition of the tree and height of the woodpecker holes indicates that a climbed inspection would be unsafe. This will determine the suitability of the features to support bat roosts, and inform the number of emergence and re-entry surveys required and appropriate mitigation and compensation.

It is unlikely that access would be gained to the adjacent tree offsite (within a residential garden) for surveys and therefore a precautionary approach may be required for site design, mitigation and compensation.

Trees with low potential roost features

No further surveys will be required for the trees with low potential. Should any trimming or felling works be required, a precautionary soft fell is recommended. In accordance with BCT guidance the limbs should be carefully removed, lowered and left on the ground for 24 hours before being cleared.

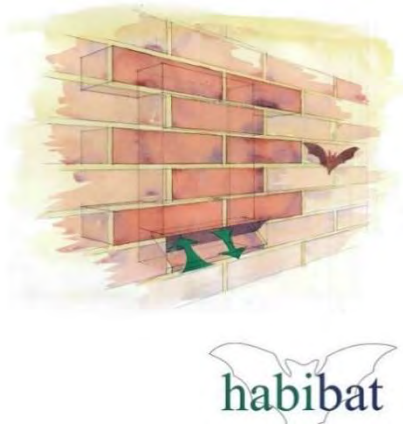
Enhancement for roosting bats

It is recommended that one bat brick is installed in each new residential building across the site facing towards retained hedgerows, to increase roosting opportunities for bats in the area.

The optimal height for bat bricks is 2 to 5 metres with an entrance free from obstruction and obstacles.

Figure 5.1 Example of bat bricks that should be incorporated within the built form.

HABIBAT ACCESS BOX
003



5.6 BIRDS

No further surveys are recommended.

The hedgerows on site should be protected through the provision of a 5m root protection area and exclusion zone, this would protect any birds nesting or foraging within the hedgerow.

Should any of the hedgerows on site require removal, this should be completed outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive). If clearance cannot be avoided within this period, it must only take place after a suitably qualified ecologist has confirmed the absence of nesting birds.

The development provides opportunities to integrate a variety of bird nest boxes to target UK BAP species. The following recommendations are made in the absence of detailed design proposals:

- Swallow boxes should be integrated within buildings across the site, with access via a permanent opening such as a door or window.
- Starling boxes with 45mm entrance holes should be installed on buildings, within relative proximity to each other, as starlings like to form loose colonies. Starling boxes should be set at least 2.5m high in sheltered locations.

It is suggested that the total number of bird boxes across the site is equal to the number of residential dwellings provided by the final development scheme.

Figure 5.2 Example of starling boxes (left) and swallow boxes (right).



5.7 BAP SPECIES

All relevant BAP species should be considered through development and enhancement actions should specifically target these species to help meet conservation objectives.

The relevant BAP species (UK and Essex) identified in Section 4.1 are considered in more detail below:

BAP Species	Comment
Brown hare	Observed onsite. Development of the site and resultant loss of a small area of arable habitat would not affect the conservation or breeding status of this species within the area, due to its small size. No mitigation considered to be required. General biodiversity enhancements recommended below may benefit this species although this is unlikely to be significant.
Dormouse	Not present; site has negligible value for this species. Where hedgerows are to be enhanced, inclusion of hazel within hedgerows (recommended in Section 5.3) may benefit this species should the surrounding landscape become more wooded in the future, and the species migrates or is introduced into the area.
Pipistrellus sp. (bats)	Site has suitable roosting and foraging / commuting features for this species; recommendations are made above (5.5 Bats) and landscaping enhancements in Section 5.3 and below; these will provide benefits.
Song thrush	May utilise hedgerows onsite for breeding; development proposals will not adversely affect this species as hedgerows to be retained and enhanced. Landscaping recommendations (5.3 and below) may enhance the site for this species.
Skylark	Site not suitable for this species. No mitigation or enhancement considered to be required.

BAP Species	Comment
Swallow	Limited foraging habitat present onsite. Enhancements are proposed in Section 5.6 above.
Starling	Limited foraging habitat present onsite. Enhancements are proposed in Section 5.6 above.
Great crested newt	Very limited suitable habitat onsite; no records within 2km; considered to be likely absent. Enhancements proposed below (creation of a pond and bioswale) will benefit amphibians and reptiles generally, and will benefit this species should it migrate into the area or be introduced in the future.
Stag beetle	Limited habitat currently onsite in the form of small log piles. Presence not confirmed by either 2020 or 2022 survey. Significant deadwood within the hedgerow such as the dead ash (target note 1) should be retained for its value for saproxylic invertebrates. Enhancements proposed below will benefit this species.
Scarlet Malachite Beetle	Limited habitat currently onsite and presence not confirmed by either 2020 or 2022 survey (only detectable in May to mid-June). Species only known at 8 sites nationally. Enhancements proposed below will benefit this species.

5.8 FURTHER BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, local policy drivers and recent changes to the legislative context, (Appendix C), proposals should seek to provide measurable net gains in biodiversity. These should aspire to a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity, which should be evidenced through a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) using the Natural England Biodiversity 3.1 metric⁷ or similar.

To enable proposals to deliver the desired net gains, the following measures should be considered for incorporation into the landscaping plans:

- Wildlife-friendly landscaping within areas of communal space and along the hedgerow margins. A wildflower seed mix should be sown to provide a nectar food source for pollinators and a range of herbaceous species would benefit the Essex BAP species scarlet malachite beetle. In addition to pollinators and beetles, wildflower planting provides biodiversity value and will benefit a number of BAP species including Pipistrellus sp. bats and song thrush;
- Proposals seek to create a pond and area of bioswale. Enhancements such as 10m of marginal planting should be included for these areas with species that can survive period of droughts as well as submergence. Species selection should also favour small birds and invertebrates, e.g. Juncus spp., Cyperaceae spp., Iris spp., cardinal flower (Lobelia cardinalis), elder (Sambucus nigra), male fern and royal fern (Dryopteris filix-mas and Osmunda regalis);

-
- Gardens and field margins should be made permeable to allow free movement of small mammals such as hedgehog, amphibians and reptiles to and from the arable margins offsite and the garden habitats to be created onsite. This may include provision of small mammal holes at the base of any fencing or walls.
 - Invertebrate habitat features should be incorporated in communal areas or at site margins (where they will not be removed by residents) to provide features of interest as well as ecological function. Loggeries, which benefit species such as Essex BAP species stag beetle, should be placed in shady areas amongst trees to provide forage and shelter for saproxylic invertebrates in larval stage, whereas solitary beehives and habitat panels should be placed within soft landscaping in suitable, sunny locations.

6.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Greengage was commissioned by Arcady Architects to undertake an updated PEA of Eldridge Close in Clavering, Essex in order to reconfirm the ecological value of this site and its potential to support notable and/or legally protected species.

The PEA identified value for a number of notable and protected species and habitats.

- UK BAP habitat in the form of hedgerows;
- Moderate potential for roosting bats within two trees on site and adjacent;
- Low potential for commuting/foraging bats; and
- High potential for nesting birds associated with the native hedgerow with trees on site.

It is understood that the BAP habitat hedgerow with trees is due to be retained and therefore no further surveys are required for foraging bats. A bat sensitive lighting scheme should be put in place to ensure the hedgerow with trees remains unlit to allow its continued use as a potential foraging resource and linear feature for commuting.

No further bat surveys are recommended if the detailed design for the site ensures that any construction works and buildings are more than 20m away from trees with moderate PRFs, and that these trees may be retained without disturbance. If this is not possible, a further PRF inspection survey is recommended to determine the suitability of the large ash tree on site to support roosting bats, to inform further emergence / re-entry surveys and appropriate mitigation, enhancement and licensing if required.

Any vegetation clearance at the site should be taken outside of nesting bird season (March-August inclusive) unless confirmed absent by a suitably qualified ecologist within 48 hours prior to clearance.

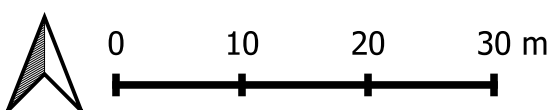
Protection measures for badger and other mammals generally during construction comprise provision of ramps in excavations left open overnight.

Key mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions are described to enable legislative and policy compliance (see context at Appendix C), aiming to achieve net gains in biodiversity for the site.

Key actions should be included within EMP and CEMP documents for the site which could be secured through planning condition.

APPENDIX A SITE PLAN AND HABITAT MAP

Figure A.1 Site plan and habitat map



ELDRIDGE CLOSE

Fig 1.0 Site Plan and Habitat Map

Project Number 552231
 November 2022
 1 to 600 at A3
 [Background map: Google Satellite]

- Site Boundary
- Target notes
- Hedges
- Ditch
- Fence
- Native hedgerow with trees

- Habitats
- Cereal crops
- 73 - Bare ground



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APPENDIX B SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure B.1 PRFs on willow tree adjacent to site.



Figure B.2 Example of one of the log piles on site.



Figure B.3 *Dead ash tree to northwest of site with low potential roosting features.*



APPENDIX C RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

C.1 LEGISLATION

Current key legislation relating to ecology includes The Environment Act⁸ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)⁹; The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 ('Habitats & Species Regulations')¹⁰, The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act)¹¹, and The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006¹².

The Environment Act, 2021

The Environment Act, 2021 will mandate the requirement for new development in England to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), as measured by the agreed metric (the current relevant version being the Natural England metric 3.0), secured through planning condition as standard (as per schedule 14 of the Act). Approach to the delivery of BNG must follow the mitigation hierarchy, with avoidance of impact and on-site compensation/gains prioritised, ahead of the use of offsite biodiversity unit offsets, or the purchase of biodiversity credits.

The Act introduces the condition that no development may begin unless a biodiversity net gain plan has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority (LPA).

The Act also amends requirements of the NERC Act, 2006, adding the need to not just conserve, but enhance biodiversity through planning projects. Furthermore, it introduces the need for the LPA to have regard to relevant local nature recovery strategies and relevant species/protected site conservation strategies, when making their decision.

Under the Act, the enhancements must be maintained for at least 30 years.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations replace The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)¹³, and transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora ('EU Habitats Directive')¹⁴, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('Birds Directive')¹⁵ into UK law (in conjunction with the Wildlife and Countryside Act).

Regulation 43 and 47 respectively of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2 (European protected species of animals), or pick, collect, cut, uproot, destroy, or trade in the plants listed in Schedule 5 (European protected species of plant). Development that would contravene the protection afforded to European protected species requires a derogation (in the form of a licence) from the provisions of the Habitats Directive.

Regulation 63 (1) states: 'A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which —

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects); and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site;

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.'

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain. This legislation is the means by which the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats¹⁶ (the 'Bern Convention') and the Birds Directive and EU Habitats Directive are implemented in Great Britain.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

The Wildlife and Countryside Act has been updated by the CRoW Act. The CRoW Act amends the law relating to nature conservation and protection of wildlife. In relation to threatened species it strengthens the legal protection and adds the word 'reckless' to the offences of damaging, disturbing, or obstructing access to any structure or place a protected species uses for shelter or protection, and disturbing any protected species whilst it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Biodiversity Action Plans provide a framework for prioritising conservation actions for biodiversity.

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species of flora and fauna and habitats considered to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The list, a result of the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken in the UK, currently contains 1,149 species, including for example, hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and 65 habitats that were listed as priorities for conservation action under the now defunct UK Biodiversity Action Plan¹⁷ (UK BAP). Despite the devolution of the UK BAP and succession of the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework¹⁸ (and Biodiversity 2020 strategy¹⁹ in England), as a response to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020²⁰ and EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS)²¹, this list (now referred to as the list of Species and Habitats of Principal Importance in England) will be used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 'to have regard' to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Legislation Relating to Nesting Birds

Nesting birds, with certain exceptions, are protected from intentional killing, destruction of nests and destruction/taking of eggs under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the CRoW Act. Any clearance of dense vegetation should therefore be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season, taken to run conservatively from March to August (inclusive), unless an ecologist confirms the absence of active nests prior to clearance.

Legislation Relating to Bats

All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law. Since the first legislation was introduced in 1981, which gave strong legal protection to all bat species and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales, additional legislation and amendments have been implemented throughout the UK.

Six of the 18 British species of bat have Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) assigned to them, which highlights the importance of specific habitats to species, details of the threats they face and proposes measures to aid in the reduction of population declines.

Although habitats that are important for bats are not legally protected, care should be taken when dealing with the modification or development of an area if aspects of it are deemed important to bats such as flight corridors and foraging areas.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) was the first legislation to provide protection for all bats and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales (earlier legislation gave protection to horseshoe bats only.)

All eighteen British bat species are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and under Annexe IV of the Habitats Directive, 1992 as a European protected species. They are therefore fully protected under Section 9 of the 1981 Act and under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which transposes the Habitats Directive into UK law.

Consequently, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats;
- Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time);
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

This legislation applies to all bat life stages.

The implications of the above in relation to the proposals are that where it is necessary during construction to remove trees, buildings or structures in which bats roost, it must first be determined that work is compulsory and if so, appropriate licenses must be obtained from Natural England.

Biodiversity Action Plans

Non-statutory Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been prepared on a local and regional scale throughout the UK over the past 15 years. Such plans provide a mechanism for implementing the government's broad strategy for conserving and enhancing the most endangered ('priority') habitats and species in the UK for the next 20 years. As described above the UK BAP was succeeded in England by Biodiversity 2020 although the list of priority habitats and species remains valid as the list of Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation.

Regional and local BAPs are still valid however and continue to be updated and produced.

Detail on the relevant BAPs for this site are provided in the main text of this report.

C.2 PLANNING POLICY

National

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021²² sets out the Government's planning policies for England, including how plans and decisions are expected to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Chapter 15 of the NPPF focuses on conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, stating plans should 'identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity'.

It goes on to state: 'if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused'. Alongside this, it acknowledges that planning should be refused where irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland are lost.

Local

Uttlesford Local Plan 2005²³

Policy ENV3- Open Spaces and Trees

The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.

Policy ENV5 - Protection of Agricultural Land

Development of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted where opportunities have been assessed for accommodating development on previously developed sites or within existing development limits. Where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise

Policy ENV7 - The Protection of the Natural Environment - Designated Sites

Development proposals that adversely affect areas of nationally important nature conservation concern, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the particular importance of the nature conservation value of site or reserve.

Development proposals likely to affect local areas of nature conservation significance, such as County Wildlife sites, ancient woodlands, wildlife habitats, sites of ecological interest and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the local significance of the site to the biodiversity of the District.

Where development is permitted the authority will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's conservation interest.

Policy ENV8 - Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation

Development that may adversely affect the following landscape elements:

- Hedgerows;
- Linear tree belts;
- Larger semi-natural or ancient woodlands;
- Semi-natural grasslands;
- Green lanes and special verges;
- Orchards;
- Plantations;
- Ponds;
- Reservoirs;
- River corridors;
- Linear wetland features; and
- Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats.

Will only permitted if the following criteria apply:

- a. The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;
- b. Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality. Appropriate management of these elements will be encouraged through the use of conditions and planning obligations.

C.3 UTTLESFORD CORPORATE PLAN - DELIVERY PLAN 2022/23²⁴

Uttlesford has created a 2022-2026 Corporate Plan, within which the 2022/23 Delivery Plan outlines key actions the council will be taking throughout the year to deliver the corporate plan. The third section '*Progressive custodian of our rural environment*' details priorities the council is taking affirmative action on to combat the effects of climate change locally. It outlines they will:

1. Take action on climate change
 - a. Adopt policies to meet new environmental national guidelines/standards as they emerge
 - b. Drive policies to deliver low carbon homes
 - c. Improve average energy efficiency of council housing stock
 - d. Increase the number of trees in the district
 - e. Oppose a second runway at Stansted Airport
 - f. Set a net zero carbon goal for the council and implement supporting policies
 - g. Increase walking, cycling and sustainable transport
 - h. Recognise the district's 'greenest' business and developers
2. Conserve our natural resources
 - a. Implement and enforce policies that protect water and reduce energy consumption
 - b. Drive programmes that increase biodiversity
 - c. Support local energy production initiatives
 - d. Implement programmes to reduce single-use plastics
 - e. Work to reduce per-capita landfill in the district
3. Protect and enhance our rural character and heritage
 - a. Meet or exceed national standards for open and green spaces
 - b. Encourage positive planning that values and protects our heritage
 - c. Work with others to increase access to the heritage and history of our district
 - d. Work with our rural partners and developers to maintain habitat and wildlife corridors
 - e. Target littering and fly-tipping
4. Take strong action on dealing with pollution
 - a. Increase air quality monitoring across the district
 - b. Deliver reductions in pollution at identified problem areas.

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