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ALDER ECOLOGY UK LTD

Working for the Client - Working with Wildlife

Tynings Barn, Church Lane, Wingfield, Wiltshire, BA14 9LW

AEUK 1469

Preliminary Ecological Assessment

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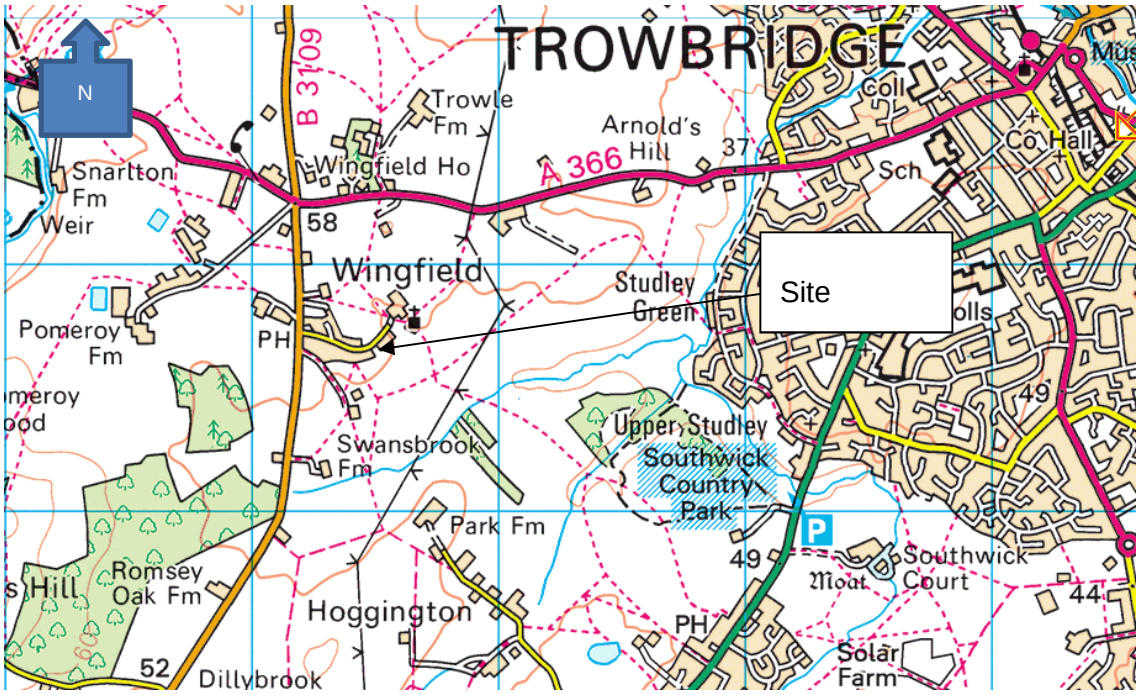
1. BACKGROUND

Commission

Alder Ecology UK Ltd was commissioned by David Robinson to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of Tynings barn, Church lane, Wingfield, Wiltshire, BA14 9LW with a proposal to covert an existing barn into a dwelling. The commission also looked at the potential of the site to contain protected species or habitats that may be impacted by the proposed works. The site is located at National Grid reference ST825565 (what3words force.avoid.point).

The site is a small plot approximately 0.233 hectares (0.576 acres) which is situated within permanent pasture fields. This application relates to the proposed conversion of an existing barn, access track and associated ground. The site contains grazed permanent pasture agricultural hedges and ruderal vegetation.



Map 1 shows site of the assessment

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Aerial 1 showing the approximate site footprint for the survey assessment

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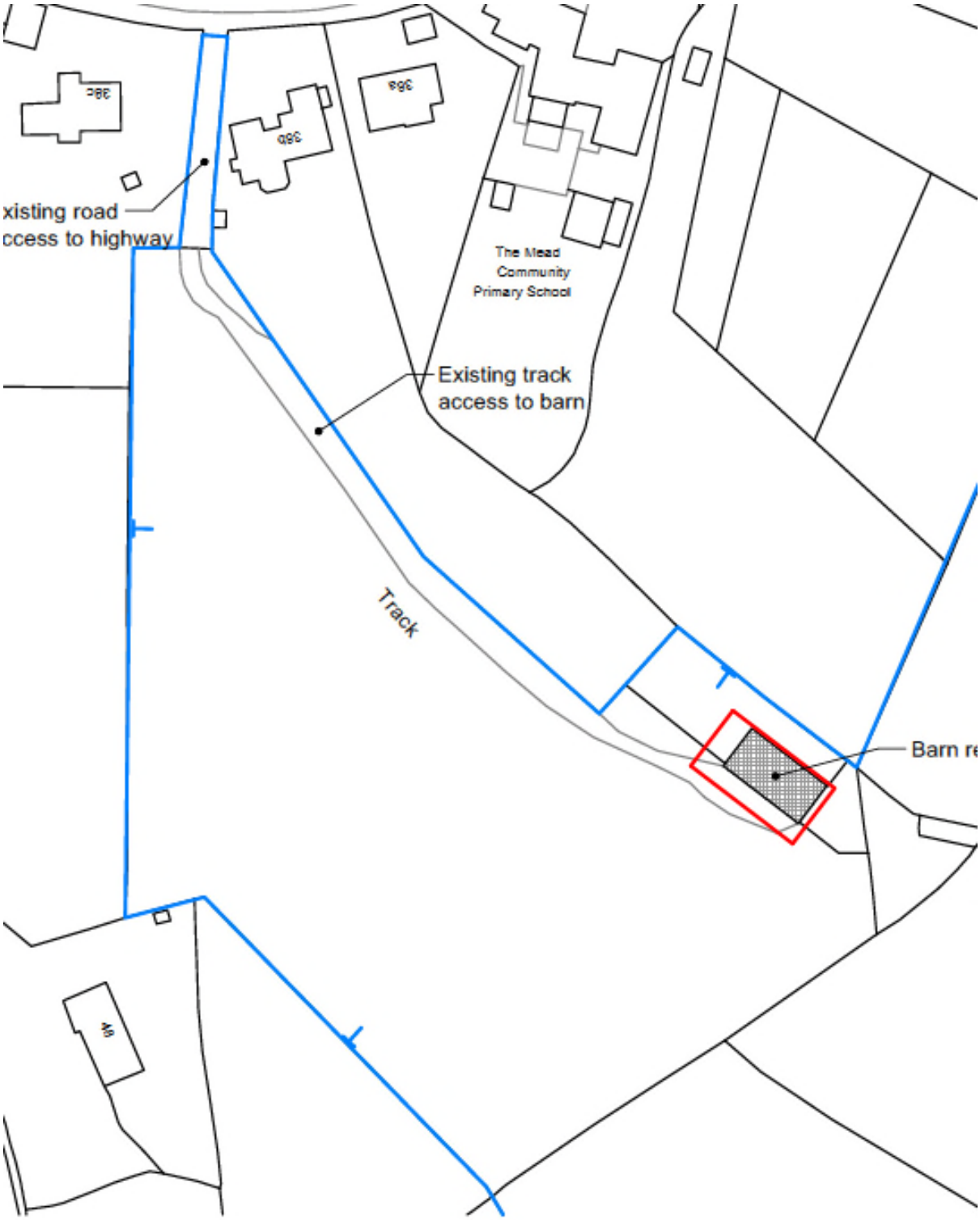

Plan 1 Showing proposed red line boundary for the site and blue line ownership boundary

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2. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) undertaken on 18th August 2023. An assessment has been provided on the potential value of the site for wildlife based on the PEA results obtained. Conclusions have been drawn about the site and an approach has been proposed to the way any development may proceed with enhancements for the site.

Mr Roger Martindale BA(Hons), MSc CEnv, MCIEEM, Ecologist at Alder Ecology UK Ltd who is a full member of The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv), undertook the PEA assessment during August 2023. The surveyor has over 25 years' experience of this type of work.

The aim of the PEA is to identify existing habitat types, to determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas and to identify the presence of any protected species or habitats suitable for supporting such species that may be impacted by the scheme.

The objectives of the PEA were to:

- Identify habitat types on site;
- Assess the importance of habitat types;
- Identify the potential presence of any protected species and recommend further survey
- Assess the likely impact areas within any potential development

3. FIELD STUDY

Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA)

This survey consists of a walkover survey of the site observing habitats and if they are considered important or have potential to hold protected species. This is not a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and therefore does not detail species compositions within identified habitat areas or assign them an alpha numeric code. The survey included a search for the presence or evidence of UK protected species and UK priority habitats.

4. LEGISLATIVE AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) affords protection to species of fauna and flora included in schedules 5 and 8 of the act. Additionally section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists species and habitats that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales. Those pieces of legislation together with national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) seek to safeguard areas containing protected species and habitats.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Section 41 list and the BAPs are used to guide decision-makers such as landowners in implementing their duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions. This legislation is further strengthened by the European Habitats directive 1992 which affords special protection to species and habitats of European importance. Protected species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process and an assessment of their presence/absence from a site and the likely impact of a development on such species or habitats must be undertaken prior to any planning submission.

5. LIMITATIONS TO THE ASSESSMENT

The PEA habitat survey was carried out at a optimal time of year for summer floristic species compositions but given the limited range of habitats on site is thought to be accurate. The timing of the survey may limit the ability of the assessment to recognise seasonal changes on site. Although given the baseline conditions and habitats present it is considered to be accurate. Full access was available for the site survey and a drone was used to aid survey techniques.

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6. DATA REVIEW

Table 1 Protected habitats 5km search

Site Name	Protected status	Distance from site to closest record	Comment
Grip wood Quarry	SSSI	3.8kmm N	Bat habitat
Iford Manor	SSSI	3.5km NW	Bat habitat
Southwick Country park	LNR	1km E	Woodland and grassland
Winsley Mines	SSSI, SAC	5km NW	Bat and Bradford on Avon bat SAC

Table 2 Protected and Notable Species Records 2km search

Name	Records	Distance from site to closest record	Date of most recent record	Comment
Bird assemblage	92	2km	2021	
Brown hare	12	2km	2014	
Daubentons bat	9	2km	2020	
Greater horseshoe bat	1	2km	2007	
Hedgehog	21	2km	2021	
Slow worn	2	2km	2016	

The list of species is limited which is likely due to the rural location and the lack of development in the area which can give raise to further background records.

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Bird assemblage

Of the 92 species of bird recorded within 2km of the site a total of 17 species are listed on section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as Species of Principle Importance for Nature Conservation and 5 species listed as schedule 1 species so the area has value in that respect. The species are listed below.

Species	Number of records	Priority species	Schedule 1 species
Barn owl	3		Yes
Brambling	22		Yes
Bullfinch	184	Yes	
Common Cuckoo	1	Yes	
Corn bunting	1	Yes	
Fieldfare	163		Yes
Grasshopper warbler	3	Yes	
Herring gull	28	Yes	
House sparrow	360	Yes	
Kingfisher	16		Yes
Lapwing	9	Yes	
Lesser redpoll	3	Yes	
Linnet	14	Yes	
Marsh tit	19	Yes	
Redwing	149		Yes

Reed bunting	12	Yes	
Skylark	13	Yes	
Song thrush	251	Yes	
Spotted flycatcher	3	Yes	
Starling	366	Yes	
Willow tit	2	Yes	
Yellowhammer	43	Yes	

None of the species listed will be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed scheme.

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7. PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES



Plate 1 showing the Barn and surrounding habitat looking north east



Plate 2 showing existing access track to the site

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Plate 3 Showing site looking south west hedge with dead English elm in foreground



Plate 4 single skinned roof of the barn offering no opportunities for crevice dwelling bats

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Plate 5 existing track to site with native hedgerows on field boundary



Plate 6 Barn single skin metal frame construction limited opportunities for wildlife

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Plate 7 interior of the barn with limited options for birds or bats



Plate 8 area inundated with ruderal species

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Plate 9 low quality habitat dominated by ryegrass



Plate 10 adjacent field to the south under 5 plants per metre square which is poor quality habitat

8. RESULTS

Habitats

Habitat Description

The site supports a limited range of generally low quality natural habitats and is primarily a track with a building and improved grassland with existing hedgerows which will be retained.

Table 3 Habitats on site

Habitat	***National importance***	***Regional importance***	***Local importance***	***Site importance***
Hard standing				
Building				
Hedgerows			*Yes*	*Yes*
Improved grassland				*Yes*
Ruderal species				*Yes*

Hard standing

The hard standing is the area of metalled track and the barn building pad and is a mixture of exposed concrete gravel and earth covered hard standing. Such areas are seldom important for wildlife with the exception of basking insects or reptiles and the areas are easily recreated. The areas will be retained as part of the proposed development. The hard standing is assessed as negligible value for wildlife.

Building

There is one permanent building on site, the barn which is a metal frame and timber construction building and will be renovated and re-designed by the proposed works. The barn due to its open nature normally would offer potential habitat for wildlife such as birds and bats but the single skin construction provides limited opportunities for occupation and no evidence of use by birds or bats was recorded. The structure has a well maintained corrugated asbestos roof which offers limited potential for wildlife occupation due to the single skin nature of the construction. The barn is assessed to be of negligible value for wildlife.

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Hedgerows

There are hedgerows running parallel to the track and hedgerows surrounding the barn to the north and west. The hedgerows contain native species with hawthorn dominating and they are maintained as agricultural hedges. The hedge to the north of the barn contains a high proportion of suckering English elm and a many specimens of trees affected by Dutch elm disease, but the hedge remains intact with few gaps. Hedgerows do provide opportunities for nesting bird species and foraging birds and bats. The hedgerows will not be impacted by the proposed works and will be maintained as agricultural hedges going forwards. The hedges are assessed to be of local value.

Improved grassland

The site contains an area of improved grassland to the south of the track which is species poor grassland with under 5 plants per metre square and is used primarily as grazing for cattle and sheep. This type of grassland is common within rural settings such as this but does have some limited value for foraging birds, mammals and reptiles. The improved grassland is assessed to be of site value but will not be significantly impacted by the proposed works.

Ruderal species

There are two areas of ruderal species at either end of the barn. The species in this area are thistles, docks, nettles and perennial ryegrass which have thrived due to nutrients from livestock manure from the barn. The area can be beneficial for insects and foraging birds but is easily re- created and can be significantly improved with appropriate management to benefit more species. The areas containing ruderal species is assessed to be of site value.

Non-Native Invasive Species

The site does not contain any non-native invasive species listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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Protected and Otherwise Notable Species

The site has limited opportunities for low numbers of common species primarily as a foraging resource but opportunities for permanent occupation by wildlife on site are limited to the site hedgerows.

Table 4 Potential protected species associated with the site as a foraging resource

	European importance	***National importance***	***NERC section 41 species***	***Local BAP species***
Bats	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bird assemblage			Yes	Yes
Hedgehog			Yes	Yes
Badger				
Reptiles			Yes	Yes
Amphibian species			Yes	Yes

Bats

The site has resources for bat foraging but there are limited opportunities for roosting bats on site. There are opportunities for foraging in the wider landscape away from the site with good links to the countryside which contains good quality habitats for bats and much better buildings for roosting. Further surveys will not be required to determine the use of the site by bat species. The site is assessed to be of moderate value to foraging bats and the barn is assessed to be of negligible value to roosting bats. The proposed works will not impact on the local bat sites (SSSI or SAC) and will not affect the integrity of such sites or the designatory features of the sites.

Birds

The wider landscape (within 2km) has records of a total of 17 species which are listed on section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as Species of Principle Importance for Nature Conservation and 5 species listed as schedule 1 birds. The site does not have sufficient habitats or connection to the wider landscape to support all such species for breeding and a limited ability

to support some of the species listed for foraging. The wider site has potential to hold low numbers of common foraging bird species and has potential to support breeding birds within the hedgerows on site. The site is assessed to be of local value to common, NERC and schedule 1 bird species as a foraging resource and moderate value as a breeding site within the hedgerows. The hedgerows will not be impacted by the proposed works.

Hedgehog

There are local records of hedgehog within 2km of the site and they are likely to occur close to the site or even on site. The habitats on site have value for foraging hedgehog within the improved grassland, hedgerows and wider landscape. The proposed works are unlikely to impact upon hedgehog habitat or breeding provided the works are undertake with ecological guidance. The site has been assessed to be of moderate value for foraging and breeding hedgehog.

Badger

Badgers have not been recorded locally according to the data search and there was no evidence of badgers using the site for foraging as a run and the site did not contain any setts or latrines. Suitable foraging habitat does exist on site for badgers within the improved grassland but the proposed development will not directly or indirectly impact upon badger habitat or breeding. The site has been assessed to be of low value to foraging badgers and negligible value to breeding badgers.

Reptiles

The wider site does contain habitat which is used be reptile species within areas close to the hedgerows and improved grassland for foraging. But the tightly grazed grassland reduces the foraging opportunities for reptiles and the wider landscape offers greater potential for species to thrive especially associated with residential gardens for species such as slow worms. The proposed works will not impact directly or indirectly upon reptile habitat or breeding sites. The site has been assessed to be of low value for reptile species.

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Amphibian species

The site does contain suitable foraging habitat for common amphibian species but contains no areas suitable for breeding amphibian species. The site is assessed to be of low value to foraging amphibians and negligible value to breeding amphibians.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The PEA concludes that any proposed development of the site will not significantly adversely change the ecological baseline or impact directly or indirectly on ecological receptors and that further surveys will not be required for the site.

The site does contain habitats that are nationally or locally significant such as hedgerows but they will not be impacted by the proposed works. The remaining habitats on site are of very limited conservation value and easily re-created. The site does not sit adjacent to habitats or sites that are locally or nationally significant.

The proposed works as described (the renovation/conversion of the barn will not impact on statutory designated or local wildlife sites and will not in combination affect the integrity of European protected sites or component parts of such sites and will not lead to permanent habitat loss.

The proposed works does not have the potential to impact upon protected species, species of principle importance for nature conservation and locally listed BAP species.

Overall the site has been assessed as being of low ecological value with the exception of the hedgerows which will be retained and are of local value. Any development of the site as is currently proposed will not impact on local ecological resources and will not significantly adversely change the ecological baseline. If the scheme implements the recommendations below they the ecological baseline can be significantly enhanced and become more beneficial for local wildlife.

10.RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the site:

- Provide a mixed native species hedgerow to run parallel to the existing track (field side) from the site entrance to the barn which would be approx. 140m in length.
- Provide a site pond in the copse area to the east connected to existing field ditches and drainage.
- Any development of the site provides biodiversity net gain by providing locally x2 bird boxes for common bird species such as house sparrow which are locally abundant.
- Any development of the site provides biodiversity net gain by providing locally x2 bat boxes suitable for pipistrelle species located on the new built structure or adjacent trees and positioned to avoid light spill from the property.
- Provide x2 insect hotels/bug boxes to provide opportunities for local insect population.
- Any landscape design for the site should where possible aim to use 50% native species in any design to help local native wildlife species.

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11.APPENDIX 1 - habitat Map

