

WESSEX ECOLOGY



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

**LAND AT MAYLANDS FARM, WHADDON LANE
HILPERTON, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 7RN**

Postal Address:	2 Wessington Park, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0AT
Email Address:	wessexecology@gmail.co
Ecologist:	Iain Donald BSc (Hons)
Mobile Phone No:	07511354643
Wessex Ecology:	Ecological Consultants

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Client: Mr.Steve Yalland

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Surveyor: Iain Donald

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Whaddon Lane, Hilperton, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 7RN

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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
LAND AT MAYLANDS FARM, WHADDON LANE
HILPERTON, TROWBRIDGE, WILTSHIRE BA14 7RN

1. Introduction

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out at the request of Stuart Anderson of Willis & Co on behalf of their client Steve Yelland, the owner of the site. The site is a small holding which is used to graze sheep and cattle. There is a temporary rural workers dwelling (timber cabin) on the main site (not within the red line) and this application is to replace that building with a permanent dwelling within an adjacent field as shown within the red line by Figure 1 below. The site is north-east of the village of Hilpertont, Trowbridge, Wiltshire. National grid reference ST87926030 (please see Figure 1 below showing proposed development site within red line).

Figure 1. Showing application site within red line and proposed dwelling and drive.



2. Executive Summary

Protected & Notable Species

- No badger setts or signs were identified on the site during the walk over appraisal. The grassland represented potential badger foraging habitat. This proposal is not considered likely to affect badgers directly. No badger survey or mitigation was considered necessary in this case.
- There were no mature trees on the site. The only building on the site was a small timber cabin in the south-west corner of the site. It was in use as a holiday cabin and will not be affected by the proposal. Bats will likely forage over the site and so could be negatively affected by exterior lighting associated with the new dwelling. Recommendations in relation to lighting and enhancement provision for bats have been given in Sub-section 6.1 Bats, of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below.
- There were no trees or shrubs on the site of the proposed development, and therefore no bird-nesting habitat. A hedgerow on the western boundary of the site, which we understand would not be affected by the proposal, did have the potential to support nesting birds. Precautionary recommendations are given in relation to the hedgerow along with enhancement provision for nesting birds in sub-section 6.2 Nesting birds, of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below.
- The site consisted of grazed modified grassland, a habitat not likely to support reptile populations. No further survey for reptiles was considered necessary.
- There were no ponds or other still water bodies on the site. No ponds were identified within 500m of the site. No further survey for great crested newts was considered necessary.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- Under government legislation, some developments are now required to deliver a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity (BNG). This site is less than 2,000m² in area and this application will not be submitted until after the 6th making it exempt from 10% BNG.

3. Objectives

- Identify protected & notable species, wildlife sites and priority habitats within 1km of the site and make an appraisal as to whether any such species or sites might be impacted by the proposals.
- Determine the presence / potential presence of protected & notable species at the site. Assess any implications of the findings on the proposed future development and make recommendations further survey/assessment and/or for the production of mitigation and/or avoidance measures in relation to protected and notable species.
- Assess whether the proposal will require 10% BNG.

4. Methodology & Constraints

The site was visited on the 2nd of April 2026 by an experienced ecologist and was assessed in terms of its suitability to support protected and notable species, and an appraisal was made habitats on the site. The weather was good on the day of the site visit, clear and dry. This was a walkover appraisal of the site therefore *detailed searches for protected species were not carried out*. Any signs of protected species and habitats of ecological interest were recorded. Some plant species and general habitats were recorded, *but a detail botanical survey was not carried out*. A data search for protected and notable species, wildlife sites and priority habitats within 1km of the site was carried out by the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre. Please see section 5.1 Wildlife Sites and 5.3 Protected & Notable Species below for relevant records.

5. Results

5.1 Wildlife Sites & Priority Habitats

No statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites were identified within 1km of the site.

Priority Habitats

One small woodland classified as a priority habitat 'Deciduous Woodland' by the Priority Habitat Inventory was identified within 500m of the Site (Magic Maps): This was a small & unnamed piece of woodland approximately 180m to the west of the site. It is our assessment that the proposal for a dwelling at the application site would have no impact on this woodland.

5.2 Site Description

The application site, which was approximately 1,612m² in area, consisted of part of a pasture field. The majority of the site supported common grass species along with occasional common vascular plants; white clover, dandelion, meadow buttercup and daisy. At the time of the appraisal the grass was very short (<3cm) due to grazing by sheep. A Condition Assessment of the grassland was carried out with the results of which gave a Low distinctiveness rating. There were no trees or shrubs within the red line, however, there was a hedgerow on the site's western boundary (we understand that this hedgerow will not be affected by the proposal). This hedge was not species rich consisting mainly of blackthorn and bramble with some elm. There was one building at the south-west corner of the site which consisted of a new looking timber glamping cabin surrounded by a gravel hard standing area. There were no ponds or watercourses on the site. The site was surrounded by pastureland to the west (beyond Whaddon Lane), to the north and east with buildings and hard standings of Maylands Farm to the south. Please see Figure 2. & photos 1-6 below.

Figure 2. Baseline map of site showing habitats



Photo 1. Showing the site looking south



Photo 2. Looking at site from the south end



Photo 3. Showing glamping cabin (looking south-west)



Photo 4. Showing short grazed improved grassland



Photo 5. Showing hedgerow on eastern boundary



Photo 6. Showing temporary rural workers dwelling to the south of the application site



5.3 Protected & Notable Species

5.31 Badgers

No badger setts or signs were found during the walkover appraisal, although a detailed search was not carried out of the hedgerow. It is quite possible that badgers forage/commute on/over the site. The data search found 13 records of badgers within 1km of the site. No further survey or mitigation for badgers was considered necessary in this case as the proposal is not considered likely to affect badgers directly.

5.32 Bats

The only building on the site consisted of a timber cabin/glamping pod which would remain unaffected by the proposal, and which was assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats, as there were no potential access points in the building. There was a temporary rural workers dwelling (timber cabin) just south of the site that could potentially require removal as part of the application; this building was also assessed as having negligible potential for bats as it was fully sealed with no roof space or potential access points. There were no trees on the site. It is likely that bats forage over the site. The Data Search found 5 records of common pipistrelle, 6 records of chiroptere, 10 records of Myotis and 2 records of serotine bats from within 1km of the site. No further survey for bats was considered necessary, as no bat roosting habitat should be affected by the proposal; however, new exterior lighting could potentially have a negative impact on foraging bats. Please see sub-section 6.1 Bats of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below for advice regarding the requirement for a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of the temporary rural workers dwelling should it require removal, an assessment in relation to bats and lighting, along with enhancement suggestions.

5.33 Nesting Birds

There was no potential bird-nesting habitat on the site that would be affected by the proposal. There was a hedgerow on the western site boundary with nesting potential that should not be affected by the proposal. Please see section 6.2 Nesting Birds of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below for precautionary advice to protect nesting birds and suggestions for the installation of nesting locations on the new building.

5.34 Reptiles

The majority of the site consisted of heavily grazed improved pasture and as such was not considered likely to support reptile populations. The data search found historical records of a grass snake and slow worm from within 1km of the site. No further survey for reptiles was considered necessary.

5.35 Great Crested Newts

There were no ponds or other still water bodies on the site. A search of the OS 1:10,000 map identified no ponds within 500m of the site. The data search found no records great crested newts within 1km of the site. No survey for great crested newts was considered necessary.

5.4 Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain

Under government legislation, some developments are now required to deliver a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity (BNG). However, from the 6th of August 2026 new BNG rules introduce a 0.2-hectare exemption for smaller developments, Developments under 0.2 hectares (2,000 m²) will be exempt from the mandatory 10% biodiversity uplift, a significant increase from the previous minimal exemption of 25m². The existing exemptions for small-scale self-build and custom-build developments will be removed, meaning these projects will now need to comply with BNG requirements unless they fall under the new 0.2 hectare threshold. This site is 1,612m² in area and this application will not be submitted until after the 6th of August 2026, therefore making it exempt from 10% BNG.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Bats

Legislation

All species of British bat are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the European Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. As well as giving full protection from intentional and deliberate killing, injuring, disturbing and taking of bats, the cited legislation protects bat breeding and resting places (roosts) from damage, destruction and preventing access to such places. The legislation regarding roosts applies irrespective of whether the bats are present or not. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 added the word “reckless” to existing protection against “intentional and deliberate” actions

Conclusion

No potential bat roosting locations were identified on the application site (please see bullet point 1 with reference to the temporary rural workers dwelling outside of the application site). Bats will very likely forage over the site so any new exterior lighting that might be associated with the new building could have a negative impact on that foraging activity; therefore, if exterior lighting is required the following recommendations are given to mitigate the potential effects of that lighting. Bat roost locations should be installed on the new building should permission be granted:

Recommendations

- Should the existing rural worker dwelling (outside of the site red line) need to be removed or converted it should be assessed for bat roost potential with a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment.
- Exterior lighting (if any is proposed) should be kept to the minimum which meets the needs of health and safety and should be directed only on the area to be lit and not upwards or sideways in order to avoid deterring bats from foraging & roosting in the area. Exterior lighting should be designed in accordance with the latest best practice; Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night (Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2023).
- To give a net gain for bats, a small number of bat roost locations should be installed on the new building. These boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the ecologist in terms of type and siting.

6.2 Nesting Birds

Legislation

It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to damage or destroy the nests of breeding birds (with the exception of some pest species) and work should be done outside the months of March to August which is the usual nesting season.

Conclusion

There was no potential bird-nesting habitat on the site itself; there was however, a hedgerow around 15m from the development footprint on the western boundary with nesting potential, which should not, we understand, be affected by the proposed development. Please see precautionary advice in relation to the hedgerow and enhancement measures to give net gain for birds below:

Recommendations

- The hedgerow should be protected from disturbance during any building works. Any works that could potentially disturb hedgerows should be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season (which is March-August inclusive *although birds can sometimes nest outside of this period*). If any works close to hedgerows are required within the nesting season then the habitat should be checked by the ecologist prior to the works and if any nesting activity is identified the works delayed until the fledglings have left the nest.
- Enhancement measures to give a net gain for birds should be included as part of the development, should planning permission be granted. This would involve the installation of a small number of appropriate bird boxes on the new building.

These bird boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the ecologist in terms of box type and location.