



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Northwood Cricket Club, Duckshill Road, HA6 2NP

Colin Hulott

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Industry Guidelines and Standards

This report has been written with due consideration to:

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2020). Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- British Standard 42020 (2013). Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.
- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.

Proportionality

The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.

The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.

(BS 42020, 2013)

Executive Summary

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Colin Hulott to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Northwood Cricket Club, Duckshill Road, HA6 2NP (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The survey was required to inform a planning application for the creation of a junior cricket pitch (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development").

The following is work you will need to commission to comply with planning policy and legislation. Further information, along with opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, are outlined in Table 6 of this report.

Feature	Survey Results Summary	Impact Assessment	Recommendations
Habitats and flora	There are no notable habitats within the site, but five habitats are present within 2km of the site, the closets being deciduous woodland ~435m north. Habitats onsite comprise of modified grassland, dense scrub, treelined boundary and pond.	No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.	Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012).
Reptiles	Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for reptiles in the form of grassland and scrub. The tree-lined boundaries could provide suitable places for reptiles to seek shelter but there aren't any habitats which reptiles could bask within. Reptiles are highly unlikely to be present within the development areas but the presence of reptiles within peripheral habitats cannot be discounted.	The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local reptile populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction.
Badger	Although no evidence indicating the presence of badgers was recorded during the site survey, the site does have connectivity to the wider landscape for badgers. As such, the future presence of badgers foraging and commuting for transient periods cannot be discounted.	The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local badger populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of badgers, if present.	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction,
Hedgehog	Although there was no evidence of hedgehogs on the site. The site has suitable connectivity for the wider landscape. Therefore, the future presence of foraging and commuting hedgehogs for transient periods cannot be discounted.	The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally.	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction.

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context	6
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Site Location and Landscape Context	6
1.3 Scope of the Report	6
2.0 Methodology	7
2.1 Desk Study	7
2.2 Field Survey	7
2.3 Limitations	8
3.0 Results and Evaluation	9
3.1 Designated Sites	9
3.2 Field Survey Results	9
4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations	16
5.0 Bibliography	23
Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan	26
Appendix 2: Site Location Plan	27
Appendix 3a: Habitat Survey Plan	28
Appendix 4: Legislation and Planning Policy	29

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Colin Hulott to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Northwood Cricket Club Duckshill Road HA6 2NP (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The survey was required to inform a planning application for creation of a junior cricket pitch (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development"). A plan showing the proposed development will be provided in Appendix 1 when available.

The aim of the PEA was to obtain data on existing ecological conditions, and to conduct a preliminary assessment of the likely significance of ecological impacts on the proposed development. No previous ecology reports have been produced for this site by Arbtech Consulting Ltd or, to the author's knowledge, by any other consultancy.

1.2 Site Location and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference TQ 0791 9486 and has an area of approximately 0.8ha comprising hardstanding ground, modified grassland, hedgerow with trees, introduced scrub and an artificial pond. It is surrounded by Vernon village to the northwest and arable fields with Northwood Golf club to the southeast. The wider landscape comprises of scattered pockets of woodlands and arable field separated by hedgerows around boundaries. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

1.3 Scope of the Report

This report describes the baseline ecological conditions at the site, evaluates habitats within the survey area in the context of the wider environment and describes the suitability of those habitats for notable or protected species. It identifies possible ecological constraints as a result of the proposed development and summarises the requirements for further surveys and mitigation measures to inform subsequent mitigation proposals, achieve planning or other statutory consent and to comply with wildlife legislation. To achieve this, the following steps have been taken:

- A desk study has been carried out.
- A field survey has been undertaken to record baseline information on the site and surrounding area including habitat types and their suitability for notable or protected species.
- Invasive plant and animal species (such as those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act) have been identified.
- Potential impacts on features of value, as a result of the proposed development, have been identified.
- Recommendations for further surveys and mitigation have been made.
- Opportunities for the enhancement of the site for biodiversity have been set out.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

The desk study included a review of the magic.gov.uk database for statutory designated sites within a 2km radius of the site. Landscape value and the presence of notable habitats as well as granted European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) and notable species records held on magic.gov.uk database has also been considered where these are within influencing distance of the site.

2.2 Field Survey

The survey was undertaken by Beth Ellison-Perrett BSc (Hons) MSc, MRSB, Consultant (2023-11066-CL17-BAT) on 11th October 2023.

An extended habitat survey was undertaken, following the methodology set out in The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023). All land parcels are described and mapped and, where appropriate, target notes provide supplementary information on habitat conditions, features too small to map to scale, species composition, structure and management. Botanical species lists were compiled with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant; F = Frequent; O = Occasional; R = Rare).

For ease of reading, scientific names are omitted from this report for widespread, ubiquitous and well-known species. Scientific names are only included where deemed necessary in conveying correct information to the reader, for example where common names differ regionally or in specialised, notable, unusual or challenging taxa, or if there is any ambiguity in identification (e.g. where a species can only be identified to genus level).

During the survey, habitats were assessed for their suitability to support protected species, and field signs indicating their presence recorded. The assessment takes into consideration the findings of the desk study, the habitat conditions on site and in the context of the surrounding landscape, and the ecology of the protected species.

Ponds on and adjacent to the site were assessed for their suitability to support great crested newts using the *Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment Methodology* (Oldham et al., 2000).

A visual inspection of the trees on the site was undertaken from ground level using binoculars and, where accessible and safe to do so, an internal inspection of any features which bats could use for roosting was completed using an endoscope, torch and ladders. Trees were categorised according to the likelihood of bats being present and the types of roost that the identified features could support. This is summarised in Table 1 below. Roost suitability is classified as high, moderate, low and negligible and dictates any further surveys required before works can proceed.

Table 1: Features of a tree that are correlated with use by bats

Classification	Feature of tree and its context
Moderate to high (Difficult to separate moderate or high value trees from ground level without a close up inspection)	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. Trees with high suitability could support roosts of high conservation value such as maternity or hibernation roosts.

Low	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential to be used sporadically by individual or small numbers of bats. Potential roost features may be suboptimal for reasons such as shallow depth, poor thermal qualities or upwards orientation with exposure to inclement weather or predators.
Negligible	Unsuitable for use by bats.

2.3 Limitations

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape and the ecology and biology of species as currently understood.

No BRD was available at the time of writing this report and this should be obtained, and the report updated to enable a robust ecological impact assessment to be completed.

There was a limitation in the lack of access to the onsite pond due to shrub. These limitations have been taken into account during the evaluation of the site and requirement for further surveys and mitigation.

3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Designated Sites

Details of any statutory designated sites within a 2km radius of the site, including their reasons for notification, are provided in Table 2 below.

The site lies within the impact risk zone for Ruislip Woods Site of Scientific Interest. The proposed development type is not listed as a possible high risk with regard to this designation.

Table 2: Statutory designated sites within 2km radius of the site.

Designated site name	Distance from site	Reasons for notification from Natural England
Ruislip Woods Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)	1.3km South-east	The woodland varies widely in structure, with parts supporting mature high forest and more extensive areas supporting hornbeam coppice with oak standards. A diverse range of oak and hornbeam woodland types occur, with large areas managed on a traditional coppice-with-standards system. The Ruislip Woods also support a diverse range of breeding birds characteristic of woodland habitat. These include tawny oak, all three British species of woodpecker: green, greater spotted and lesser spotted, willow tit, nuthatch and the less common woodcock and hawfinch.
Ruislip national nature reserve	1.3km South-east	The nature research consists of a mosaic of woodland, open water and lowland grassland. Includes oak/hornbeam coppice woodland.

3.2 Field Survey Results

The results of the field survey are illustrated in Appendix 3. The weather conditions recorded at the time of the survey are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Weather conditions during the survey

Date:	11/10/2023
Temperature	19°C
Humidity	79%
Cloud Cover	100%
Wind	1.4 mph
Rain	None

Habitats and Flora

The following habitats are present within and adjacent to the site:

- Modified grassland (g4)

- Dense scrub (h3d)
- Build linear feature – fence (u1e 69)
- Treelined boundary (w1g6)
- Standing open water- pond (r1g 42)
- Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)

A description and photograph of each habitat is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Description and photographs of habitats within and adjacent to the site

Habitat type	Habitat description	Photograph
Modified grassland	A field of modified grassland, that is kept at a sward length of ~2cm. Species composition consists mainly of rye grass (D), creeping buttercup (A), chickweed (O), clover (O), broad-leaved dock (R), thistle (O), selfheal plantain (R), St John's wort (R). This area is of low ecological value due to the intensive management. There is a strip of approximately 10m wide which has been left unmown resulting in a sward length of ~5cm in length. The grassland has very little (<5%) of bare ground and no bracken cover. Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area.	
Build linear feature	There is a chain-link fence along all boundaries of the site, which will significantly reduce the ability for protected species especially badgers from gaining access to the site. However, this would not prevent reptiles or GCN from gaining access to the site, due to the type of fencing. In addition, there is a small fence line which runs through the site, going east to west, which splits the area of bramble and the pond from the remaining area of the site.	

	There are a few areas of dense shrub on the site comprising of brambles (O) with a small area of introduced shrubs and saplings within the bramble. The main area of bramble is located to the south of the site, to the north of the pond. The shrubs and saplings include buckthorn (O), dog rose (O), dogwood (O), silver birch (O), willow (O) and hawthorn (O). Additionally, there is a small area of bramble scrub to the west of the site. Dense scrub 
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	The site is enclosed by a continuous tree line around the whole site. The tree line consists of willow (A), buckthorn (A), hawthorn (F), hazel (O), maple (O) and ash (R) with an understorey of bramble (R). The trees are in semi-mature to mature in age and represent a fair to good structural condition. The highest trees are approximately 10-12m tall. There is little to no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by humans such as detrimental agricultural activity, herbicide or vandalism. There is no current regular pruning regime of the trees. Tree canopy is predominantly continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide. Tree lined boundary  
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Standing open waters - pond	There is one pond onsite which is manmade – indicted by the concrete edging. Around the pond was dominated by sweet flag, which faded into a mosaic of dense shrub which included bramble, dogrose, silver birch, willow, dogwood and hawthorn. This area has a medium ecological value. There was no suitable submergent vegetation which GCN could use to lay their eggs on. Additionally, there were ducks nesting within the rushes and using the pond at the time of the survey.	
Developed land; sealed surface	On the east boundary of the site, there is access through the tree line onto an area of hardstanding. The hardstanding is comprised of gravel and concrete and is of negligible habitat value.	

Fauna

An assessment of the suitability of the site for protected or notable species is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Assessment of the suitability of the site for protected or notable species.

Species	Assessment of suitability	Biological records data
Amphibians	Great crested newts exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton <i>et al.</i> 2001). A review of aerial imagery indicates the presences of one pond within 500m of the site located 246m south-east. The pond is separated from the site by urban and agricultural infrastructure, including tarmac roads, buildings and extensive manged grassland with a short sward length. Therefore, these features are suboptimal for great crested newts due to the lack of refuge from predation. As a result, and given the distance of these ponds from the site, these landscape features are likely to represent a significant barrier to dispersal eliminating connectivity to the site for great crested newts. The landscape features are likely to create a significant barrier which prevent amphibians from gaining access to the site.	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL, class licence or pond survey records for great crested newts within 500m of the site. However, there is one EPSL 1200m north for the destruction of GCN resting place.
Reptiles	Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for reptiles in the form of grassland and scrub. The tree-lined boundaries could provide suitable places for reptiles to seek shelter but there aren't any habitats which reptiles could bask within. The development areas are considered unsuitable to support reptiles due to an absence of structural and species diversity. Reptiles are highly unlikely to be present within the development areas but the presence of reptiles within peripheral habitats cannot be discounted.	A review of the MAGIC database returned no EPSLs for reptiles within a 2km radius of the site.
Badgers	Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for badgers in the form of grassland and a tree lined boundary. However, no evidence (e.g., latrines, snuffle holes, hairs and mammal trails) indicating the presence of badgers was recorded during the site survey and no badger setts are present on or adjacent to the site. Although no evidence indicating the presence of badgers was recorded during the site survey,	The MAGIC database does not hold records of badgers.

	the site does have connectivity to the wider landscape for badgers. As such, the future presence of badgers foraging and commuting for transient periods cannot be discounted. There were no buildings onsite, and the trees lacked suitable features for roosting bats. The tree line could be used for foraging and commuting. Additionally, the pond onsite could also be used by foraging bats.	A review of the MAGIC database returned 11 EPSLs for bats within a 2km radius of the site, involving common pipistrelles, soprano pipistrelles, brown long eared and lesser's bats. The closets EPSL was ~849m northwest of the site involving the destruction of a common pipistrelle resting place.
Bats	No evidence of dormice was found within the site. It is not anticipated that dormice are present on the site due to the lack of suitable habitats present. Furthermore, for isolated habitats in the UK, research indicates that dormice require 20ha of woodland habitat to support a viable population (Bright <i>et al.</i> 1994). There are no areas of woodland on or around the site that are big enough (20ha) to support a dormouse population.	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL for hazel dormice within a 2km radius of the site.
Hazel Dormouse	Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging, commuting, and refuge opportunities for hedgehogs in the form of tree lined boundaries and grassland. However, no evidence indicating the presence of hedgehogs was recorded on site. Although no evidence indicating the presence of hedgehogs was recorded during the site survey, the site does have connectivity for the wider landscape for hedgehogs. As such, the future presence of hedgehogs foraging and commuting for transient periods cannot be discounted.	The MAGIC database does not hold records of hedgehogs.
Hedgehog		
Riparian Mammals	The site has no watercourses present or immediately adjacent to support otter or water vole populations.	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records within 2km of the site.
Birds	Onsite habitat in the form of trees, scrub and hedgerows could provide abundant foraging and nesting habitats for birds. No birds' nests were found on site during the survey. Despite the dense shrubs on site, the urban surroundings are likely to reduce the suitability for wintering and breeding birds.	The MAGIC database does not hold records of birds.
Invertebrates	The habitat onsite, including the grassland, hedgerows, and shrubs will all provide suitable habitat for common invertebrate assemblages.	The MAGIC database does not hold records of invertebrates.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

Taking the desk study and field survey results into account, Table 6 presents an evaluation of the ecological value of the site and also details any ecological constraints identified in relation to the proposed development which will comprise summarise creation of a junior cricket pitch.

Table 6: *Evaluation of the site and any ecological constraints*

Feature	Survey Results Summary	Impact Assessment	Recommendations	Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities ¹
Designated sites	There are two statutory sites within 2km of the site, Ruislip Woods (SSSI) and Ruislip Woods (National Nature reserve) both of which are located 1.3km from the site. The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from Greenspace information for Greater London CIC.	No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.	None.	None.
Habitats and flora	There are no notable habitats within the site, but five habitats are present within 2km of the site, the closets being	No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well	Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012).	The following habitat and creation enhancement opportunities could be

¹ The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF (2021).

	deciduous woodland ~435m north. Habitats onsite comprise of modified grassland, dense scrub, treelined boundary and pond.	as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.	incorporated into the proposed development: Native tree, hedgerow and shrub planting
Amphibians	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPFL, class licence or pond survey records for great crested newts within 500m of the site. A review of the aerial imagery indicates the presence of one pond within 500m of the site located 246m south-east. The pond is separated from the site by urban and agricultural infrastructure, including tarmac roads, buildings and extensive managed grassland with a short sward length.	No impacts are anticipated on great crested newt, as a result of the proposed development as this species is considered to be absent from the site.	None.
Reptiles	Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities	Modified grassland and a small area of the tree lined boundary will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: The following habitat creation and enhancement

	for reptiles in the form of grassland and scrub. The tree-lined boundaries could provide suitable places for reptiles to seek shelter but there aren't any habitats which reptiles could bask within. The development areas are considered unsuitable to support reptiles due to an absence of structural and species diversity. Reptiles are highly unlikely to be present within the development areas but the presence of reptiles within peripheral habitats cannot be discounted.	be inconsequential to local reptile populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.	- Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles. - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. - In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.	opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for reptiles: - Creation of reptile refugia and hibernacula using debris and brash from site clearance. - Planting of native scrub and grassland to increase foraging opportunities.
Roosting bats	The trees on the site have negligible value for roosting bats due to a lack of potential roost features.	Bats are very unlikely to be roosting on the site and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on roosting bats.	In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice.	The installation of 2 bat boxes at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes will be installed on the retained trees. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a