



## **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

### **Queen Elizabeth II Sports Facility, Barnstaple**

Client: Fremington Parish Council

Date: May 2020

#### **Richard Green Ecology Ltd**

The Natural Selection

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**Date of survey:** 19/03/2020

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## Executive summary

It is proposed to construct a sports pavilion, by extending the existing changing rooms at Queen Elizabeth II Sports Facility, Tews Lane, Barnstaple, EX31 3XS, NGR SS 53143 31807. A preliminary ecological appraisal, consisting of a daytime visual inspection of the building and an extended phase 1 habitat survey of the site, was undertaken on 19 March 2020 by Richard Green Ecology Ltd.

The building contained several locations where bats could roost unseen, including between the roof lining and tiles, behind the barge board and on the gable wall top. No evidence of roosting bats was found. Due to the presence of locations where bats could roost unseen, and the suitability of the surrounding landscape for foraging and commuting bats, the building was considered to be of moderate bat roosting suitability.

In order to confirm the presence or absence of roosting bats within the building, and categorise any roost types which may be present, it is recommended that at least two bat emergence surveys be undertaken between May and August, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines (Collins, 2016) and Natural England standing advice (Natural England, 2013).

The proposals would result in the loss of approximately 310 m<sup>2</sup> of amenity grassland and a small area of hardstanding. The loss of these small areas of habitat are considered to result in a negligible ecological impact as they are common and widespread and of little ecological value.

It is recommended that the lighting of the site be designed in a way that avoids the illumination of surrounding habitats, particularly that of the hedgerow boundaries adjacent to the site, which are likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats.

In accordance with local planning policy and the NPPF, it is recommended to enhance the biodiversity value of the site. This could be done by creating a wildlife area within the unused area to the west of the proposed sports facility. This would increase the value of the area for people, foraging bats, reptiles, amphibians and birds. It is also recommended to provide bat and bird nesting provision within the proposed structure, as an ecological enhancement. The exact detail of these proposed features will be determined at a more detailed design stage.

# Ecological Receptor Checklist

Protected and priority species (Grid reference of site: NGR SS 53143 31807)

Species - terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Walkover shows that suitable habitat present and reasonably likely that the species will be found? <u>Yes or No</u>	Detailed survey needed to clarify impacts and mitigation requirements?	Detailed survey carried out and included?	Species Present or Assumed to be present on site <u>Indicate with P or A and name the species</u>	Impact on species?	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included?  Sets out actions needed in relation to avoidance / mitigation / compensation / enhancement	EPS licence required?
Bats (roost)	✓	✓	✗	Potentially present	To be confirmed following further survey	To be confirmed following further survey	To be confirmed following further survey
Bats (flight line / foraging habitat)	✓	✗	✗	A - Various	Potential lighting impact	✓	✗
Dormice	✗						
Otters	✗						
Great crested newts ( <i>*check consultation zone</i> )	✗						
Cirl buntings ( <i>*check consultation zone</i> )	✗						
Barn owls	✗						
Other Schedule 1 birds	✗						
Breeding birds	✓	✓	✓	Absent	✗	✗	✗
Reptiles	✗						
Native crayfish	✗						
Water voles	✗						
Badgers	✗						
Other protected species	✗						
NERC Section 41 species	✗						
Invasive species	✗						

## Designations / important habitats

Designation  Terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Within site or potential impact. <u>Yes or No</u>	Name of site / habitat	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included in report?	Relevant organisation consulted & response included in the application?
<b>Statutory designations</b>				
European designations - Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and RAMSAR site or within Greater Horseshoe consultation zone	x			
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	✓	Fremington Claypits SSSI	✓	N/A
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) (not before 2012)	x			
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	x			
<b>Non statutory wildlife designations</b>				
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	✓	Claypit Covert CWS	✓	N/A
Ancient woodland	x			
Special Verge	x			
Habitat of Principal Importance / BAP habitat	x			
Local Biodiversity Network (mapped by Devon Wildlife Trust / through Green Infrastructure work)	x			

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

It is proposed to construct a sports pavilion, by extending the existing changing rooms at Queen Elizabeth II Sports Facility, Tews Lane, Barnstaple, EX31 3XS, NGR SS 53143 31807.

A preliminary ecological appraisal, consisting of a daytime visual inspection of the building and an extended phase 1 habitat survey of the site, was undertaken on 19 March 2020 by Richard Green Ecology Ltd.

This report includes the findings of the survey and makes recommendations for further survey, and suggestions for potential ecological enhancements, in accordance with national and local planning policy and BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development.

## 1.2 Planning considerations

### 1.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019

The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) outlines the Government's commitment to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity value, and minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including the principle of refusing planning permission if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

# 2 Methods

## 2.1 Desk study

### 2.1.1 Designated sites

A search for sites designated for nature conservation and any notable habitats was undertaken on the DEFRA Magic website (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk>). This resource includes statutory designated sites (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, SSSIs) and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats. As impacts outside of the site are limited, only sites within 500 m of the site are noted. A search was also made using local planning policy documents (if applicable) to determine if there are any other local wildlife considerations.

### 2.1.2 Protected and notable species

Given the small size of the site and the limited scale of the proposals, it is considered that any protected species outside the site would be unaffected. As a detailed survey has been undertaken and any protected species present or potentially present on the site would have been identified, it was not considered necessary to obtain any species records from a local records centre.

## **2.2 Field survey**

### **2.2.1 Bat and bird survey - visual inspection**

The survey involved a thorough visual inspection of the building for any signs of protected species. Species likely to be encountered in such buildings include bats and nesting birds. A search for characteristic signs of bats was made, such as droppings, feeding remains, staining, and any bats present. A search was also made for any signs of bird nesting activity.

Equipment used and at hand included: Nikon 10x close-focusing binoculars, Lightway BMFL1265 720 lumen torch, Lightway 160 lumen torch, Ridgid Micro CA-300 inspection camera and a 3.8 m extendable ladder.

### **2.2.2 Extended phase 1 survey**

An extended phase I habitat survey of the site was undertaken following recommendations made by the former Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995). Note was taken of the more conspicuous flora, and any evidence of, or potential for the presence of protected and alien invasive species was recorded.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Weather conditions</b>
19/03/2020	Daytime visual inspection of building and extended phase 1 habitat survey	Daytime	Rory Chanter	8/8 Oktas, strong wind, dry, 8°C

### **2.2.3 Personnel**

Rory Chanter holds Natural England scientific licences to disturb dormice [2017-32925-CLS-CLS], bats [2019-40631-CLS-CLS] and great crested newts [2016-26682-CLS-CLS]. He is a graduate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

### **2.2.4 Constraints**

The survey was undertaken in the spring. It is possible that some botanical species were not recorded during the survey. However, it is considered that sufficient indicator vegetation was identified during the survey to provide an understanding of the site and any potential implications this may have on the proposal.

Richard Green Ecology Ltd accepts no liability for the presence of any invasive or protected species present that were not recorded during the survey.

## **2.3 Evaluation**

Habitat evaluations are based on guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). The level of value of specific ecological



receptors is assigned using a geographic frame of reference, i.e. international value being most important, then national, regional, county, district and lastly, local.

Value judgements are based on various characteristics that can be used to identify ecological resources or features likely to be important in terms of biodiversity. These include site designations (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), or for undesignated features, the size, conservation status (locally, nationally or internationally), and the quality of the ecological resource. In terms of the latter, 'quality' can refer to habitats (for instance if they are particularly diverse, or a good example of a specific habitat type), other features (such as wildlife corridors or mosaics of habitats) or species populations or assemblages.

## 3 Survey Results

### 3.1 Desk study

#### 3.1.1 Designated sites

Fremington Clay Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was located approximately 150 m south-west of the changing rooms. This SSSI is designated for its geological interest.

Claypit Covert County Wildlife Site (CWS), an area of rough grassland, pools, scrub and woodland, was located approximately 90 m west of the site, at the western boundary of the playing fields.

### 3.2 Field survey

#### 3.2.1 Habitats

The site (the area within the redline boundary) measured approximately 470 m<sup>2</sup>, consisting of the footprint of the proposed building and existing building.

The site consisted of hardstanding and regularly mown amenity grassland, consisting of annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), and common daisy (*Bellis perennis*) with occasional dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*).

A species-poor hedgerow was present approximately 10 m to the north of the site. The hedgerow consisted of willow (*Salix sp.*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*).

The wider landscape consisted of playing fields to the south, mature hedgerows with trees, residential areas to the north and east, and areas of rough grassland, pools, scrub and woodland (Fremington Clay Pits SSSI) to the west.

**Aerial photograph showing the site and surrounding landscape**



**Close-up aerial photograph of the site, showing the changing rooms and adjacent amenity grassland**



### 3.2.2 *The changing rooms*



The changing rooms were constructed from brick, with a natural slate roof lined with breathable roofing membrane. The western elevation featured a gable end, and the eastern elevation was hipped. The building contained a large loft space.

There were gaps in the barge board of the western gable end and gaps between slipped slates where bats could gain access to the roof structure of the building.

### 3.3 *Protected species*

#### 3.3.1 *Bats*

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Bats are likely to forage around the hedgerows near to the site. The adjacent Fremington claypits site is considered to be of high value to foraging and commuting bats, as it likely provides a range of foraging opportunities and invertebrate interest. It is considered that the site (the proposed area of the new building) is of limited value to foraging bats, as it consists of amenity grassland, which is typically of low invertebrate interest.

The building contained several locations where bats could roost unseen, including between the roof lining and tiles, behind the barge board and on the gable wall top. No evidence of roosting bats was found.

Due to the presence of locations where bats could roost unseen, and the suitability of the surrounding landscape for foraging and commuting bats, the building was considered to be of moderate bat roosting suitability.

### 3.3.2 *Nesting birds*

Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

No evidence of nesting birds was found in the building. It is considered that birds do not nest in the building. No bird nesting habitats were present within the site.

## 4 **Assessment, recommendations and mitigation**

### 4.1 ***Designated sites***

#### 4.1.1 *Impacts*

It is considered that the proposals would have no direct impact on the adjacent designated sites (Claypit Covert CWS and Fremington Claypits SSSI).

It is possible that insensitively designed lighting, such as floodlights, could illuminate the eastern boundary of Claypit Covert CWS, resulting in a reduction of the suitability of this habitat for foraging bats and a reduction in the biodiversity value of the CWS.

#### 4.1.2 *Mitigation*

Refer to section 4.3.3 for lighting recommendations.

### 4.2 ***Habitats***

#### 4.2.1 *Impacts*

The proposal would result in the loss of approximately 310 m<sup>2</sup> of amenity grassland and a small area of hardstanding.

The loss of these small areas of habitat is considered to result in a negligible ecological impact, as they are common and widespread and of little ecological value, i.e., they do not support a diverse range of species.

#### 4.2.2 *Enhancement*

In accordance with local planning policy and the NPPF, it is recommended to enhance the biodiversity value of the site. This could be done by creating a wildlife area within the unused area of amenity grassland to the west of the proposed sports facility. The wildlife area could comprise of unmown grassland (cut once a year in late summer), interspersed with mown paths and a mixture of native flowering and fruiting trees, with swales and small wildlife ponds.

This could be done at little cost and would be of benefit to local people and wildlife. This would increase the value of the area for foraging bats, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Full specification could be agreed at a detailed design stage.



North Devon District Council require all developments to result in a net gain in biodiversity, requiring a 10% net gain where possible. It should be relatively simple to achieve a 10% net gain by providing a wildlife area, as above. The exact habitat types and areas of habitat to be created would be determined by carrying out biodiversity offsetting calculations, which can be carried out at a detailed design stage.

#### **Potential wildlife area location**



### **4.3 Bats**

#### **4.3.1 Impacts**

If present, the proposal could result in the destruction or modification of bat roosts and the killing or injury of bats.

It is possible that insensitively designed lighting could deter bats from foraging and commuting around the playing fields, and possibly deter bats from foraging within the claypits at the western boundary of the site.

#### **4.3.2 Further survey**

In order to confirm the presence or absence of roosting bats within the building, and categorise any roost types which may be present, it is recommended that at least two bat emergence surveys be undertaken between May and August, in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines (Collins, 2016) and Natural England standing advice (Natural England, 2013).

#### **4.3.3 Mitigation**

Although bat use has not yet been determined, it is considered that mitigation measures could be employed to provide alternative roosting provision for bats,

minimise any potential disturbance to acceptable levels and maintain the favourable conservation status of any species that may be present. Outline mitigation measures may include:

- Timing the work depending on the results of further survey, e.g., working outside of the breeding period (May-September) if a maternity roost is confirmed.
- Carrying out works (e.g., roof removal and cutting in) under an ecological watching brief to ensure no bats are killed or injured.
- Provide suitable replacement roosting provision/access points for species/roost types affected.

Lighting should be designed following guidance in Guidance Note 08/18 (ILP 2018) in order to minimise illumination of the adjacent boundaries, and avoid deterring bats from foraging and commuting in the area, with particular focus on stopping the illumination of the western boundary.

#### **4.3.4 *Enhancement***

In accordance with the NPPF and local planning policy, it is proposed to provide ecological enhancement for roosting bats (beyond any compensation required under any bat licence, if required), in the form of integrated bat boxes on building. The location of these boxes can be agreed at a later, more detailed design stage, but the boxes should face suitable adjacent habitats and remain unlit.

The proposed wildlife area would increase the value of the site for foraging bats.

### **4.4 *Nesting birds***

#### **4.4.1 *Impacts***

The proposals are considered to have no impact on nesting birds.

#### **4.4.2 *Enhancement***

In accordance with the NPPF and local planning policy, it is proposed to provide ecological enhancement for nesting birds, in the form of integrated bird nesting boxes. The location of these boxes can be agreed at a later, more detailed design stage, but the boxes should be positioned away from the prevailing wind and rain, ideally on the north-east elevation.

The proposed wildlife area would increase the value of the site for foraging birds.

## 5 References

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Institution of Lighting Professionals (2018). Guidance Note 08/18 - Bats and artificial lighting in the UK Bats and the Built Environment series.

Nature Conservation Council (1990). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit. Peterborough: Nature Conservation Council.

Rose, F. (2006). The Wildflower Key: Penguin Books: London.

## Annexes

### A Photographs

The south-west elevation of the changing rooms



Gaps at the western gable end offering potential bat access





**The inside of the loft space of the changing rooms**



**The footprint of the proposed new facility, consisting of amenity grassland**



**Potential wildlife area**



**Potential wildlife area**



# Item 6

Parks & Playing Fields		Receipts		Payments		Current Balance	
Code	Title	Bal. B/Fwd.	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
		0.00	3,018.00	1,137.50	10,237.50	3,412.50	4,944.50
51	DCC - Grass Cutting	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,155.00	474.99	680.01
45	Ellerslie - Grass Cutting	0.00	1.00	0.00	10.00	0.00	9.00
46	Ellerslie - Rent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
148	Environmental/Climate Change	0.00	1.00	0.00	1,500.00	240.00	1,259.00
55	General/Various	0.00	0.00	0.00	567.00	210.00	357.00
47	Griggs Field - Grass Cutting	0.00	0.00	0.00	315.00	0.00	315.00
48	Griggs Field - Strimming	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	63.99	-63.99
139	Maple Grove Grass Cutting	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00
52	New Equipment	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	590.33	3,409.67
53	Play Equipment Renewal/Repairs	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,850.00	356.40	1,493.60
27	Tews Lane - Business Rates	0.00	0.00	0.00	500.00	71.30	428.70
31	Tews Lane - Electricity	0.00	0.00	0.00	410.00	0.00	410.00
102	Tews Lane - Gas	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	30.00	1,970.00
32	Tews Lane - General Maintenance	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	2,149.98	9,850.02
28	Tews Lane - Pitch Maintenance	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	428.58	171.42
30	Tews Lane - Water & Sewage	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00	400.00	12,600.00
149	Tews Lane Enhancements/Comple	0.00	0.00	8,000.00	0.00	0.00	-3,000.00
103	Tews Lane- Hire Charges	0.00	3,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	77.37
50	Village Green - Electricity	0.00	0.00	0.00	130.00	52.63	584.01
49	Village Green - Grass Cutting	0.00	0.00	0.00	783.00	198.99	
		£0.00	6,020.00	£9,137.50	42,557.50	£8,679.69	36,995.31