MARSH ENVIRONMENTAL
ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS

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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF LAND & BUILDINGS OF LAND AT BOX FARM BEDLAM LANE EGERTON TN27 9BY 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and including a daytime bat assessment of land and buildings at Box Farm, Bedlam Lane, Egerton, TN27 9BY. The survey and report were commissioned by Vernacular Homes on behalf of the client.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was conducted by Sean McMinn from Marsh Environmental on the 29th of September 2025, a suitably qualified ecologist.

Sean McMinn has been working as a professional Ornithologist and Ecologist for over thirty years both in the UK and overseas and was a consultant Wildlife Inspector for Defra's Global Wildlife Division for 17 years. He has a particularly diverse knowledge of British Fauna and Flora. Sean has been a regular contributor to various magazines, journals and periodicals throughout this period and is a regular advisor on conservation and legislative issues for both government and non-government organizations. Sean is also a holder of several protected species' licences that includes bats, great crested newts, barn owl, marsh harrier and peregrine falcon amongst several others.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Box Farm is located along Bedlam Lane, southwest of the village of Egerton, Kent and is set in a rural landscape with open farmland with scattered trees and hedgerow.

The site survey area consists mostly of hard standing, the main barn, maintained/modified grassland with boundary hedgerow and occasional broad-leaved trees. The site is located at TQ 88774 45912.

Site plan

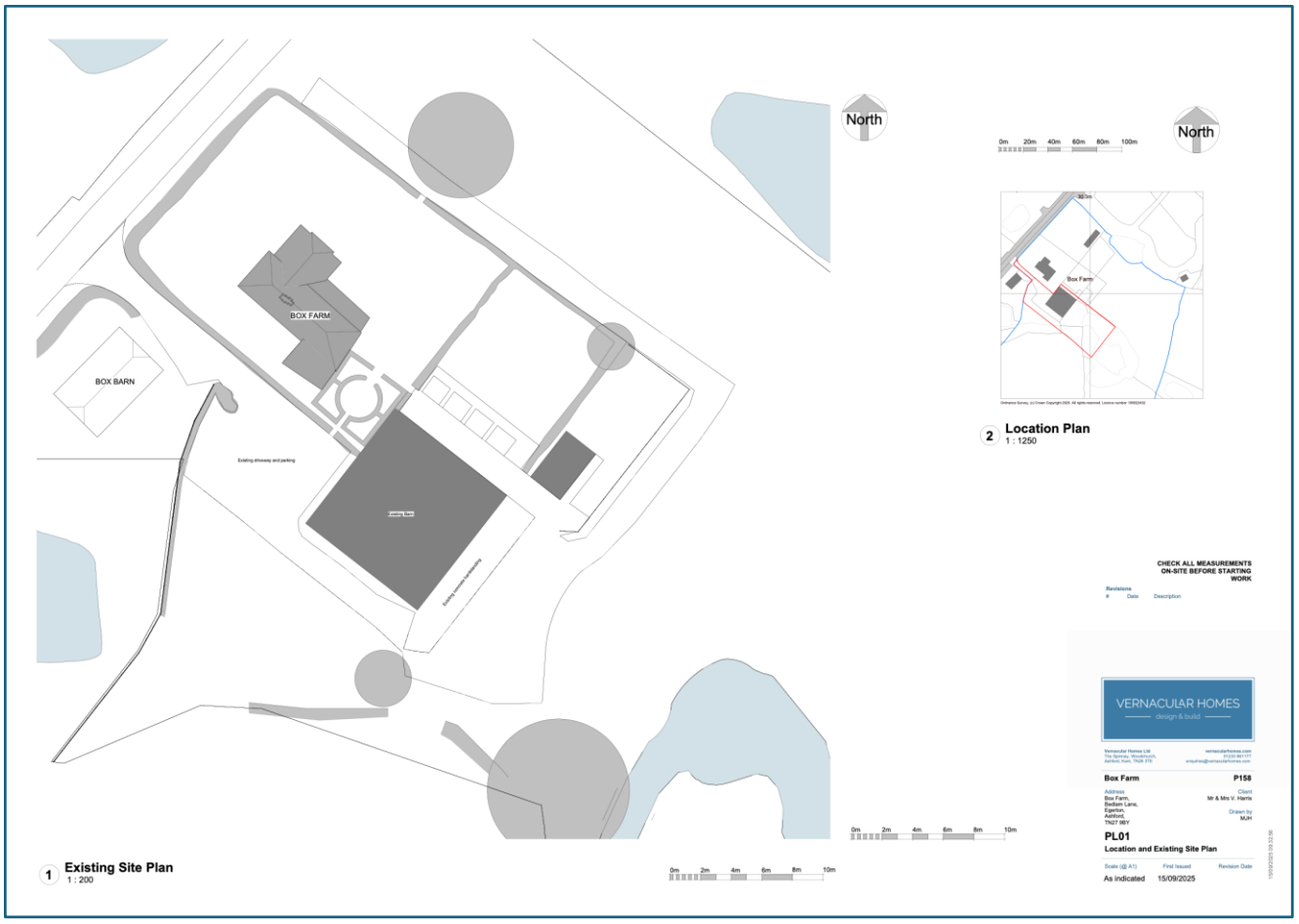
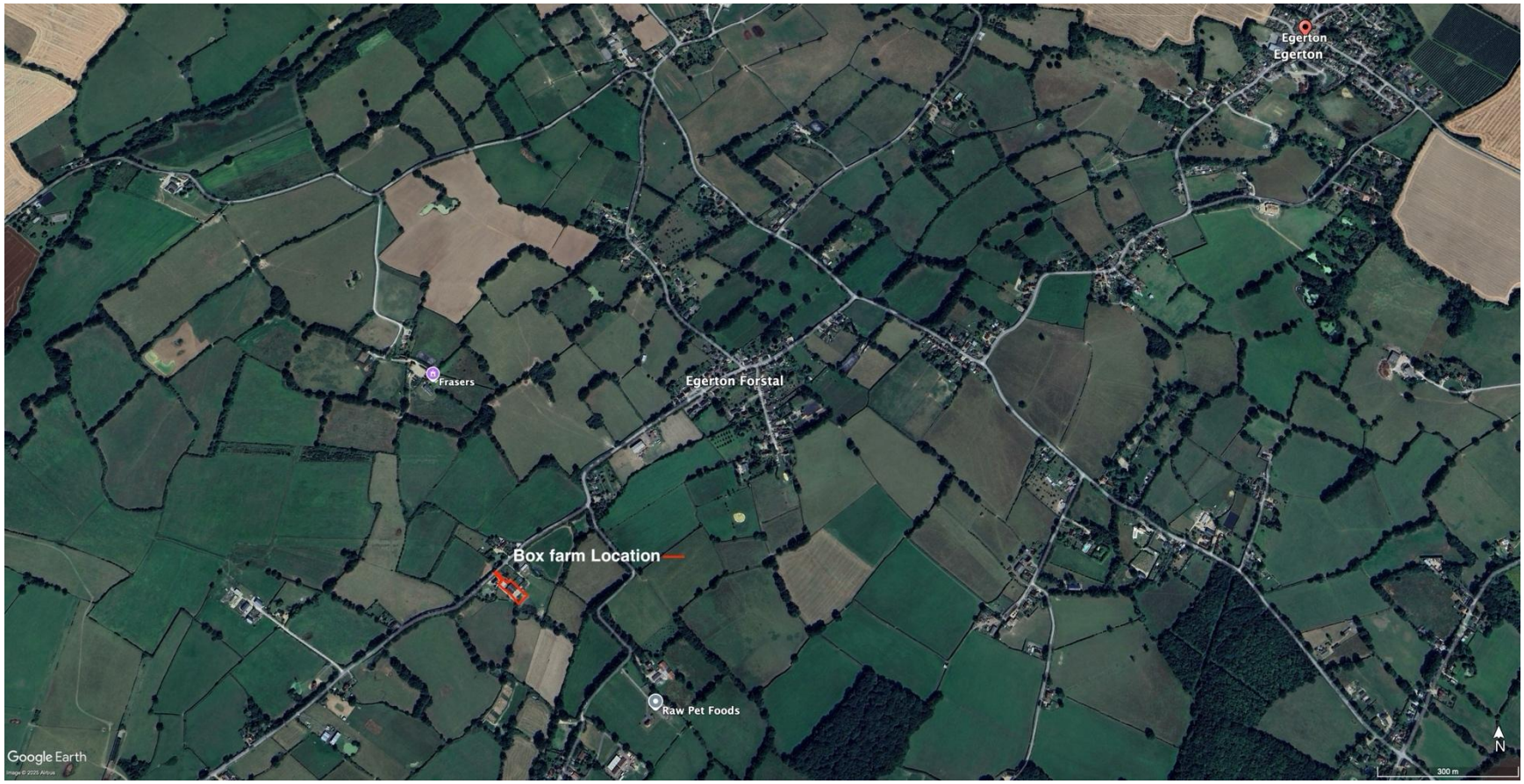


FIGURE 1: LAND AT BOX FARM EGERTON LOCATION



3. METHODOLOGY

Site Survey

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land and buildings at Box Farm, Bedlam Lane, Egerton, TN27 9BY was undertaken on the 29th of September 2025. The survey area concentrated on the land and buildings as defined in red on figure 1& 2.

The habitat survey was undertaken in general accordance with the UK Habitat Classification and standard best practice as recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management in their Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2023). A basic habitat plan illustrates the results in figure 2.

FIGURE 2: LAND AT BOX FARM PHASE 1 SURVEY HABITAT MAP

4. RESULTS – WHAT WE FOUND

Objectives

The objectives of this commission were to:

1. **Conduct a baseline ecological survey and appraisal of the above site and identify notable ecological factors/features;**
2. **prepare a 'Phase 1' Habitat Map with Target Notes to recognised standards;**
3. **produce a written summary of results;**
4. **provide appropriate recommendations for mitigation, biodiversity protection/ enhancement, *etc.***

Limitations

It should be noted that, whilst the investigation of the site was appropriately intensive within the intended framework of the commission, and we feel it is unlikely that significant matters have been overlooked, a single visit will inevitably miss species not apparent on the date of survey by reason of seasonality, mobility, habits or chance. The month of September is just inside the optimal survey period for many taxa of nature conservation interest in this part of the United Kingdom

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Habitats & vegetation (*NB.* Please be aware that several designated habitat types and many plants enjoy legal protection in Britain.)	
General description	Box Farm is located along Bedlam Lane, southwest of the village of Egerton Kent and is set in a rural landscape with open farmland with scattered trees and hedgerow. The site survey area consists mostly of hard standing, the main barn, maintained/modified grassland with boundary hedgerow and occasional broad-leaved trees. The site is located at TQ 88774 45912
Target Note (TN) 1-2 (for location of TNs please see plan above)	Lengths of species poor hedgerow that provide some nesting bird habitat.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Statutory designations (on/near)	Information from MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) Information on this site from MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) is as follows: There are the river Beult Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 4.10km southwest, Hothfield Common SSSI 7.65km east and Hoad's Wood SSSI 6.65km southeast of Box Farm at the nearest points. It is unlikely these designated sites will be directly impacted upon by the development proposals.
Non-statutory designations (on/near)	Information from MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) Information on this site from MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) is as follows: There are no non-Statutory sites within 1km of land at Box farm.
Notable hedgerows, woodland or scrub	None considered notable in the survey area. There are species poor native hedgerows at the boundaries.
Ecologically notable trees (*e.g.* veteran, wildlife significant)[1]	There are individual trees on or close to the site, (Oak and willow).
Ponds/water courses	There are no ponds within the building footprint. There are approximately 13 ponds within 500m of the site, the nearest being 20m to the southwest.
Notable communities	None observed on site.
Notable vascular plants	None observed on site.
Notable bryophytes	None present on site.
Notable lichens	None present on site.
Notable fungi	None present on site.
Other notable habitats/vegetation	None.
Features that should be retained	Individual trees and hedgerow where possible.
Mammals (*NB.* Several species and their habitats have very strict protection in British/European law.)	

[1] Please note that we do not check TPO status as this is a landscape/amenity planning classification.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Badger	There was no evidence of badgers during the survey and within the curtilage of the development however it is possible they are present in the surrounding areas.
Otter	No suitable habitat.
Other mustelids	None observed.
Bats	The double barns were examined for the potential to support roosting bats. The barns are typical agricultural barns with asbestos type roof covering, internal concrete framework with skylights in the roof and sides. No evidence of bats was found, and the barns are considered to have no potential for bats, due to the type of construction and the internal illumination via the skylights and windows, that make them unsuitable for daytime roosting bats. There is limited connectivity via hedgerow to more distant foraging habitat.
Water vole	No suitable habitat.
Common or hazel dormouse	Considered unlikely due to the lack of suitable habitat within the development area on site.
Deer	None observed.
Hedgehog	May use the site for foraging as suitable habitat exists.
Shrews	May use the site for foraging/breeding as suitable habitat exists.
Others	Other mammals such as fox, voles, rats and mice may use the site for foraging/breeding as suitable habitat exists. There was evidence of rabbits across the site.
Birds (*NB*. With the exception of eleven derogated pest or very common species, the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and amendments) gives protection to all wild birds in Britain from killing, injuring or taking as well as taking, damaging or destroying nests in use or being built, and taking or destroying eggs. Many species are also protected by European and international statutes. [2])	
Schedule 1	None.
Red list	None during the survey.
Active nests	No active nests found just out of the main nesting season. It is considered likely that a range of the common garden species may use the surrounding area to nest as suitable breeding bird habitat is present in trees and hedgerow and adjacent pond.

[2] Please also see http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/status_explained.aspx and http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u38/downloads/home-news/2011-11/SUKB%202011%20final.pdf for red and amber lists *etc.*, and explanations.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Other	blue tit, robin seen on site with moorhen and domestic geese on the adjacent pond. There are likely to be a greater range of bird species in the wider area.
Herpetofauna (*NB.* The grass snake, slow-worm, viviparous (common) lizard and adder (viper) are all protected from intentional killing and injury under Schedule 5, Section 9(1), of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended/reinforced by the CROW Act 2000. They are also protected under Schedule 5, Section 9(5) which prohibits selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale, or advertising for sale, any live or dead animal, or any part of, or anything derived from the species. Other species and their habitats have stricter protection at national and European levels.)	
Adder	None, and considered unlikely in this area.
Grass snake	None observed, Unlikely in the onsite habitats and near surrounds as the grassland is maintained.
Slow-worm	None observed, Unlikely in the onsite habitats and near surrounds as the grassland is maintained.
Common lizard	None observed, however possible as there is limited suitable habitat on site.
Rarer reptiles	None. (not found in this area).
Great crested newt	There is a pond <20m to the southwest, and a further 12 ponds within 500m however the terrestrial habitats provide poor foraging and resting habitat for this species, therefore considered unlikely within the pond on site. In addition, the pond has a number of wildfowl on it including moorhen and domestic geese and has a number of fish within it that further reduces the likelihood of great crested newts being present. There are great crested newt license returns 633m south and 3.13km south (smarden) of Box Farm at the nearest point. See Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) generated below.
Natterjack toad	No (not found in this area).
Other amphibia	Likely as there are aquatic habitats close to site.
Fish	
Significant fishery	None considered significant in this context however the pond does contain fish.
Macro-invertebrates (*NB*. Several species enjoy legal protection.)	
Notable assemblage (terrestrial)	None present or indicated on site.
Notable assemblage (aquatic)	No suitable habitats.
Crayfish	No suitable habitats.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Roman snail	None observed.
Lesser silver water-beetle	None.
Stag beetle	None.
Mining bees	None observed on site or signs of them.
Other notable spp or groups	None present on site.
Notable invertebrate habitat	None present on site.
"Invasive" species (There are an increasing number of these being listed by authorities, some subject to regulatory control.)	
Japanese knotweed (or related *Fallopia* spp.)	None present on site.
Giant hogweed	None present on site.
Himalayan balsam	None present on site.
Tree-of-heaven	None present on site.
New Zealand pigmyweed	None present on site.
Floating pennywort	None present on site.
Parrot's feather	None present on site.
Water fern (*Azolla*)	None present on site.
Weeds Act natives (common ragwort, creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks)	None recorded.
Other exotics that may cause problems such as *Rhododendron ponticum, Buddleia davidii*.	None recorded.

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Invasive animals (signal crayfish, killer shrimp, oak processionary moth, harlequin ladybird, zebra mussel, grey squirrel *etc.*)	None recorded.
Phytophthora ramorum and other serious plant diseases (sudden oak death, *etc*.)	None observed on site.
Policy	
Are there any known conflicts with local planning biodiversity policy	None anticipated.
Are there any known conflicts with national planning biodiversity policy	None anticipated.
Are there any known conflicts with European or international biodiversity policy	None anticipated.

GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION (Geodiversity is a material planning consideration)	YES/NO	ACTION REQUIRED IF "YES"
Are there any features of geological importance on the development site?	Unknown	
Are there any features of geological importance adjacent to the development site or that might be affected by the development (during or post construction)?	Unknown	

Habitat Suitability Index

An HSI is a numerical score where 0 indicates unsuitable habitat and 1 represents optimal habitats. The HSI for the great crested newt incorporates ten suitability indices, all of which are factors believed to affect this species.

Categorisation of HSI Scores[3]:

HSI		Pond Suitability
<0.5	=	poor
0.5 – 0.59	=	below average
0.6 – 0.69	=	average
0.7 – 0.79	=	good
>0.8	=	excellent

[3] Taken from: *Habitat Suitability Index – guidance note* – produced by National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS).

HSI Factor	Pond Score	Notes
SI 1 – Location	1	Ponds within optimal geographic location.
SI 2 – Pond area	0.2	Ponds measured at their highest level.
SI 3 – Pond drying	0.9	Pond never dries out.
SI 4 – Water quality	0.33	Moderate invertebrate community.
SI 5 – Shade (to 1m from edge)	1	Pond approx. 10% shading.
SI 6 – Fowl	0.67	Minor.
SI 7 – Fish	0.33	Moorhen and Domestic geese present
SI8 – Ponds	1	23 within 1km
SI9 – Terrestrial habitat	0.33	Surrounding habitat offers poor foraging and shelter.
SI10 – Macrophytes	0.4	Approx. 10% coverage.
HSI	0.46	Poor

NOTE: $HSI = (SI_1 \times SI_2 \times SI_3 \times SI_4 \times SI_5 \times SI_6 \times SI_7 \times SI_8 \times SI_9 \times SI_{10})^{1/10}$

Therefore, the ponds are classified at the following level of pond suitability for great crested newts:

Pond = Poor (value is calculated as 0.46)

FIGURE 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF LAND AT BOX FARM EGERTON

View of access

View southwest

View southeast

View south & hard standing

Wet ditch

View of barns

View of barns

Interior view

view northwest

View west over grassland

View northwest & grassland

Gravelled area / hardstanding

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are to meet compliance with current legislation, planning policy and best practice as recognised by the various statutory authorities. They are intended to fulfill ecological planning formalities and facilitate the implementation of the project.

FURTHER WORK LIKELY TO BE NEEDED	
From observations of this walk-over examination, is further work likely to be needed regarding notable/protected species, habitats, planning policy, biodiversity duty or related regulatory compliance?	YES

Work required if "yes":	Reason
Birds – The site has some potential to support nesting birds, in trees, hedgerow and to some extent the agricultural barns. Therefore, should any clearance be required it should be undertaken outside the bird breeding season (March – September). If this is not possible a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to any clearance.	Compliance with law protecting active birds' nests
To avoid the risk of infringement of regulations, conduct a pre-clearance search of all areas of the site using suitably qualified ecological scientists under a Marsh Environmental method Statement or one formally pre-agreed by us immediately prior to site stripping to move any vulnerable taxa to safety or allow other necessary precautions to be taken prior to the commencement of development activity.	Legal compliance, especially laws protecting mammals, birds and herpetofauna.
If there are any steep-sided excavations created during construction, please ensure they are covered overnight or provided with ramps to prevent any mammals becoming trapped. Re-fill such excavations as soon as feasible.	Prevention of cruelty.
Avoid unnecessary negative impacts of new lighting at night, *e.g.* on bats, invertebrates, plants, night sky. Minimise the hours when lighting is used, avoid "spillage" by using directional down-lighting, reduce brightness of necessary illumination and keep light from shining on any potential bat roost entries, mammal holes, *etc*.	Reducing ecological impact and compliance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 125.
Create new wildlife habitats appropriate to the site's context, *e.g.* through the use of log piles, "wild" corners and native planting; install bird, bat and invertebrate boxes and incorporate these into the project's landscape/building design scheme. (We can provide specific recommendations for models and siting on request, but they must be of good quality and durable.) Bat and bird boxes must be inspected annually and replaced when needed (usually after ten years). The development plans for the site should include the provision of 'hedgehog gates' at the bases of any boundary fencing to allow free movement of hedgehogs through the landscape.	Best practice and compliance with government policy on biodiversity protection and enhancement (see Biodiversity enhancement below).
Use native planting (preferably of local origin and reflecting local botany) wherever feasible in all	Biodiversity enhancement and helping to assure "no net loss".

FURTHER WORK LIKELY TO BE NEEDED	
landscaping. Where exotic species are planted, always avoid invasive species and choose those with wildlife value such as for nectar or shelter. (A selection of species is available from us.)	
Wherever possible, retain mature trees and established native hedgerows on site and at the periphery by designing around them. Protect trees in line with BS5837 and do not remove ivy, mistletoe, standing dead wood, snags or rot unless there is a clear and material safety risk or presence of a serious pathogen. (Ask for advice on pathogens from a qualified silvicultural ecologist if in doubt.)	Tree and biodiversity protection; BS5837: 2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.*

6. BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

Ecological enhancements should where possible be included in the proposed development plans to contribute towards the intended objectives of planning legislation below:

The UK Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged—(Para 118). The design and implementation of habitat enhancements can also be used to contribute towards the "Home Quality Mark" or similar accreditation, should this be a consideration for this site?

Biodiversity enhancements for the site could include some of the following:

- Provision of ready-made bird boxes (sparrow terrace timber boxes or house martin nests for instance or mix of open-fronted and hole-nesting boxes constructed from woodcrete suitable for blue tits, great tits and starlings and other hole nesting species).
- Provision of bat boxes on buildings or inclusion of bat bricks within newly constructed walls.
- Provision of reptile / amphibian hibernacula (as stand-alone or within new walls by creating recesses into wall structures).
- Provision of log piles for invertebrates (including stag beetles), reptiles and amphibians.
- Use native planting (preferably of local origin) in all landscaping. Where exotic species are planted, always avoid invasive species and choose those with wildlife value such as for nectar or shelter
- Priority should be given to species present on the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species list, and where there is the potential for that species to occur on site. The list includes great crested newt, common toad, viviparous lizard, slow-worm, grass snake, adder, house sparrow, tree sparrow, hedgehog, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, brown hare, water vole, harvest mouse, hazel dormouse, otter as well as many more species. https://www.kmbrc.org.uk
- Design and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in agreement with the Environment Agency or other relevant authority.

7. REFERENCES

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