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1: Introduction

1:1 Camber Ecology Limited were asked to conduct a basic walk over survey of land within the grounds of Hadlow Down playing field (postcode TN22 4JE), it is proposed to demolish the existing pavilion and replace with a newer, larger building more fit for purpose.

1:2 The site sits immediately east of School Lane and is accessed from that road, the playing field itself consists of several levels and the current pavilion is situated on the slightly elevated ground to the south east of the access gate. The current building is sited on land of low ecological value, but is immediately adjacent to mature native trees (see fig 1 below).

1:3 The new pavilion will be located on the lower level, nearer to the current entrance and parking area.

Fig 1 The footprint of development is situated on land of low ecological value, however, note the mature trees immediately adjacent to the building.



1:4 For precise details of the proposed building works please refer to the appropriate documents within the planning application pack; this report will deal only with ecological issues.

2: Site survey

2:1 A small area of semi hard standing is provided just inside the entrance gate for parking (see fig 2 overleaf); typical species here included Knotgrass (*Polygonum arvensis*), Pineapple scented mayweed (*Matricaria matricarioides*), Broad leaved plantain (*Plantago major*), Bent (*Agrostis sp*), Annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum sp*) and Clover sp (*Trifolium sp*)

Fig 2 Parking area just inside entrance, just off School Lane, adjacent to the lower level amenity area.



2:2 The parking area gives way to grassland managed for amenity purposes. Typical species here include Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), Broad leaved plantain (*Plantago major*), White clover (*Trifolium repens*), Black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Bent sp (*Agrostis sp*), Slender speedwell (*Veronica filiformis*), Common mouse ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) and Narrow leaved plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

2:3 A grassy bank separates this lower level amenity area from a larger elevated cricket pitch. This grassy bank is less intensely managed and this lighter mowing regime allows Bracken (*Pteridium*) to form dominant stands (see fig 3 overleaf). Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Dock sp (*Rumex sp*) were also noted suggesting areas of high nutrient.

Fig 3 A grassy bank effectively demarcates the lower level amenity area from the elevated cricket pitch; view looking west toward entrance and parking area.



2:4 The elevated area beyond this bank is larger and currently serves as a cricket pitch, comprising a similar species mix to the smaller lower level with additional species such as Cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) occurring occasionally suggesting areas of higher moisture retention.

2:5 A dry ditch surrounds much of the playing field (see fig 4 below), this is devoid of water for most of the year; however, species such as fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and Soft rush (*Juncus effuses*) do suggest some moisture retention. Other species noted here included Tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Willowherb sp (*Epilobium* sp), Common vetch (*Vicia sativa*) and Wood brome (*Brachypodium sylvatica*).

Fig 4 A dry ditch surrounds much of the site, but holds little, if any water for most of the year.



2:6 Most of the site is flanked by a line of mature trees and woody shrubs including Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) Sallow (*Salix cinerea*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and Field maple (*Acer campestre*).

2:7 The structure to be demolished is of partial breeze block construction supporting a timber frame. There is a flat timber roof with a covering of roofing felt direct to the timber. The timber frame is covered with timber cladding as shown below (Fig 5). The original structure was built in 1975 with an open timber balcony added later.

Fig 5 Note the timber frame sitting on breeze blocks with timber cladding.



There are several under story areas, one of which was not accessible on the day of the survey (see fig 6 overleaf)

Fig 6 Understory area.



2:8 Whilst on site the structure was inspected internally and externally for bats, or signs of occupancy by bats, with the exception of one under storey area which was not accessible.

2:9 No evidence was found of bats inside, or outside the building.

2:10 An inspection of the structure showed limited potential for purchase or concealment by crevice dwelling bats. These included gaps under wooden cladding and crevices between pieces of timber (see figures 7 below and 8 overleaf)

Fig 7 Gaps under tiles may provide some opportunity for concealment and purchase.



Fig 8 Gaps between timber pieces may provide opportunities for purchase and concealment by bats.



2:11 Rough surfaces such as breeze blocks can also offer a suitable material for bats to seek purchase hold.

3: Protected species

3:1 There is suitable **reptile** habitat around the periphery of the site and some small areas within the playing field itself. The dry ditch traverses around much of the periphery providing suitable forage and shelter whilst pockets of rough grassland within the playing field may provide additional areas and basking opportunities. However, these areas do not need to be affected by the proposed works so the possibility of encountering reptiles during construction and demolition is unlikely.

3:2. Mature trees and hedges that surround the playing field offer ideal commuting routes and foraging areas for **bats**. There is also at least one mature Oak tree within a few metres of the pavilion which is likely to be attractive to bats as a feeding area. The pavilion itself offers limited opportunity for purchase and concealment.

3:3 There are several ponds within a couple of hundred metres of the proposed works and the farmer who owns that land seems to think at least one of those ponds has **Great crested newt** present. These animals can move up to one kilometre away from the breeding ponds and although the immediate area of development is very poor habitat, a dry ditch and mature hedges immediately adjacent to the existing pavilion, offer suitable habitat for forage and shelter (see fig: 9 below) as well as a connective corridor for mobile animals such as mammals, birds and amphibians. Thus there is a minimal risk that Great crested newt could be encountered during demolition; under current guidelines of good practice any ponds within five hundred metres of a proposed development should be surveyed.

Fig: 9 Small pond located within the corner of the adjacent field, note good connective habitats radiating away from the pond.



A second pond (see fig 10 below) was located further away in an adjacent field, this one is still likely to be within five hundred metres of the proposed works

Fig 10 The second pond located a little further west.



3:4 There are no other protected species issues that need to be considered within the scope of this proposal.

4: Discussion/evaluation

4:1 It is fair to say that this proposal will not have any negative effect on the ecology of the surrounding area, the land upon which it is sited is of limited ecological value, being managed as amenity grassland. The area upon which the new building is to be sited is managed under the same regime so no significant habitat loss will be incurred.

4:2 In terms of protected species there is a minimal risk that Great crested newts or bats could be encountered during demolition; both species have full protection under both British and European law. This makes it an absolute offence to disturb, kill, injure, sell animals or obstruct, damage or destroy any place used by them for shelter and/or protection. However the long term impact on the breeding or conservation status of both these species is likely to be insignificant. With bats, there should be an opportunity to build into the new build bat friendly enhancement measures. As far as Great crested newt are concerned, there will be no loss of breeding ponds, connective corridors or suitable foraging habitat.

4:3 Although reptiles may be present in suitable habitat within and around the periphery of the playing field, the limited scope of the works will mean that this faunal group need not be affected by the works.

5: Recommendations

5:1 Although the potential of the existing building to provide a place of shelter and protection to bats is limited, usage by individual, or small numbers of animals cannot be totally discounted and under current guidelines of good practice, some further survey work is advised; this will take the form of at least one dusk emergence survey and one dawn survey using experience personnel with bat detectors. This is partly based upon the fact that the existing pavilion is placed in close proximity to excellent foraging and commuting habitat for bats. When considering the potential to provide a place of shelter and protection, adjacent habitats need to be taken into account, in this case there is excellent foraging and commuting potential within a few metres of the building.

5:2 The presence of several ponds within five hundred metres of the proposed development works, adjacent to excellent terrestrial habitat does raise a slim possibility that Great crested newt could be encountered during works; as such, Great crested newt surveys are recommended as a precautionary measure; if Great crested newt are shown to be present, then it should be fairly simple to exercise avoidance mitigation measures to ensure no disturbance to this species thus eliminating any likelihood of an offence being committed.

5:3 If at all possible the mature Oak tree near the existing pavilion should be left intact. Native Oak is considered one of the best trees for attracting a wide range of insects, which in turn, are important for larger fauna as a food source. There seems no real justification for this trees removal and it is likely to be important to foraging bats as well as a variety of other fauna.

5:4 Lighting for the new pavilion should not be directed onto surrounding trees and bushes as this can disrupt the foraging patters of bats. Low level lighting can be directed away from nearby potential feeding areas whilst still ensuring sufficient lighting is available to satisfy the need for leisure and safety.

6: References

Grasses A Guide to their Structure, Identification, Uses and Distribution in the British Isles: C E Hubbard.

The Wild Flower Key: *Francis Rose*.

Herpetofauna Workers Manual: *Joint Nature Conservation Committee*

Bat Survey Goods Practice Guidelines: *Bat Conservation Trust*

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Insurance cover:

Public liability to £2 million
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Camber Ecology offer a range of services including general scoping /habitat assessment surveys, vegetation work, protected species surveys (we have licences for Bats, great crested newt and Dormice). Reptile and amphibian surveys are undertaken and contacts are available for specialist work such as invertebrates, lower plants and lichens.