Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The Fox Inn, Bucks Green

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NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | ECOLOGY | VISUALISATION

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	Name	Signature	Position	Date
Prepared by:	C Collier	CC	Graduate Ecologist	26/09/2025
Checked by:	D Harvey	DH	Associate Director	29/09/2025
Approved by:	D Harvey	DH	Associate Director	29/09/2025

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The Farm House, Church Farm Business Park, Corston, Bath BA2 9AP

Nicholas Pearson Associates Ltd. Registered Office: as above. Company Reg. No: 02715105. VAT Reg. No: 398 1148 22

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) has been commissioned by Hall & Woodhouse to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of The Fox Inn pub in Bucks Green, Rudgwick, RH12 3JP (OS Grid Reference: TQ 07781 33004) hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

1.2 The Site comprises an existing two-storey Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1354189) public house dating to the 17th century. The Site is positioned within a semi-rural area to the south-west of Rudgwick and is immediately surrounded by farmland to the north, commercial/residential development to the east and south, and residential development to the west. The Site is set between two areas of broadleaved woodland (Priority Habitat) to the north-west and south, both of which are well connected to the wider landscape and the latter directly linked to the River Arun located approximately 0.4km (to closest section) from the Site. The wider landscape comprises extensive areas of farmland and pasture interspersed with large areas of woodland.

1.3 Hall & Woodhouse are proposing to remove the existing brewery shed which adjoins to the main pub building to the north-west and replace it with a new flat roof cellar extension. The proposals also include the internal refurbishment of the main pub building.

1.4 To inform the above proposals, NPA undertook a desk study, an extended habitat survey of the pub grounds, and an assessment of the Site to support protected and/or priority species. This included a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the existing rear brewery shed and timber canopy.

1.5 This report sets out the results of the surveys and assessments undertaken above, identifies potential ecological constraints and opportunities in relation to the above proposals, provides opportunities for mitigation and/or enhancement, and offers recommendations for further survey.

2.0 Legislation

2.1 In carrying out this appraisal relevant legislation, planning policies, development plans and best practice guidelines were consulted.

Legislation

2.2 Species and habitats receive legal protection in the UK under various pieces of legislation, including:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 (as amended);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended);
- The Environment Act 2021;

- The Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended);
- National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF); and
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

2.3 The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to set out a strategic approach to make sufficient provision for "conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measure to address climate change mitigation and adaptation (Para 20)". Section 15 of The NPPF includes guidance outlining that policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. When determining planning applications "if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused (para 193a)"; "Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists" (para 193c); and Opportunities "to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate" (para 193d).

2.4 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

Local Planning Policy

2.5 The Horsham District Planning Framework (adopted November 2015) sets out the strategic policies for the district and "Chapter 9: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environment" relates to Nature Conservation.

2.6 The policies that relate to Nature Conservation include:

- Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character;
- Policy 26: Countryside Protection; and
- Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

3.0 Methods

Desk Study

3.1 Statutory Designated Sites were searched for using DEFRA's MAGIC website[1]. This included records of Statutory Designated Sites of international importance (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites) within 10km of the Site and of national importance or below (Local Nature Reserve (LNRs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)) within 5km of the Site. The SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) layer was also searched to determine if the proposals fall within the IRZ of a terrestrial SSSI and are of a type which would give rise to likely impacts on SSSIs.

3.2 Given the small site size and minimal works required, no data search was undertaken for Non-statutory Designated Sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)) and notable/protected species records. Should more significant works be proposed, it is recommended that a data search is requested from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC).

3.3 Online mapping (OS mapping, MAGIC, Bing Maps, Google Maps) was used to place the Site into local and regional context, including connectivity to the wider landscape, and to search for ponds with the potential to support Great Crested Newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* within 250m of the Site.

3.4 The European Protected Species (EPS) Licensing layer on DEFRA's MAGIC website[1] was used to search for granted EPS applications within 2km of the Site, and for GCN class Survey Licence Returns within 500m.

3.5 It should be noted that a lack of records does not necessarily indicate the absence of a particular species or habitat.

[1] MAGIC (n.d.) MAGIC [Online]. Available at: https://magic.defra.gov.uk/ (Accessed: 19 September 2025)

Extended Habitat Survey

3.6 A habitat survey of the Site was undertaken by an NPA ecologist on the 12 August 2025. All habitats and features of ecological value/interest were classified and mapped using the habitat types required for Biodiversity Net Gain[2], informed by Version 2.0 of the UK Habitat Classification system[3] at a minimum mapping scale (Minimum Mappable Unit or MMU) of 5m^2. The scope of the survey was extended to include an assessment of the Site to support protected species. This included a ground-based assessment of all on-site trees to support roosting bats.

3.7 All habitats identified during the habitat survey were subject to a condition assessment in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity metric condition assessment methodology[2].

3.8 The survey took place in sunny conditions with clear skies and good visibility.

Preliminary Roost Assessment of Structures

3.9 An internal and external inspection of the rear brewery shed and timber canopy was undertaken on the 12 August 2025 by an NPA ecologist and in accordance with Good Practice Guidelines[4].

3.10 The survey comprised a detailed ground-based inspection of the brewery shed and timber canopy to search for features suitable for roosting bats, potential exit/entry points and sign of bats (*e.g.* droppings, feeding remains). See Appendix 1 for photographs of elevations and internal areas.

3.11 The structure was then assigned a rating based on its potential to support roosting bats, as outlined below:

- Roost: Bats and/or evidence of bats recorded,
- High: one or more potential roosting sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats,
- Moderate: one or more potential roost sites, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status,
- Low: includes one or more potential roost sites that could be used opportunistically by individual bats,
- Negligible: no obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats, but a small element of uncertainty remains, and
- None: complete absence of habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats.

[2] Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK. [Online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides.
[3] UKHab (2023) *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* [Online]. Available at: https://ukhab.org/
[4] Collins, J (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th Edition. London: The Bat Conservation Trust.

4.0 Results

Designated Sites

Statutory Designated Sites

4.1 There is 1 Statutory Nature Conservation Designation of international importance within 10km of the Site, details of which are provided in Table 4.1 below.

4.2 There are no Statutory Nature Conservation Designations of national importance or below within 5km of the Site.

Table 4.1: Statutory Designated Sites of international importance within 10km

Site Name	Reason for designation	Distance from Site
The Mens SAC	An extensive area of mature Beech *Fagus sylvatica* woodland classified as the Annex I habitat type; Atlantic acidophilous beech forest. The SAC supports one of the largest areas of this habitat within the south-east extent of its UK range.	7.8km south-west (to closest compartment)

4.3 The development Site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone. Within this zone, proposals that would lead to an in water demand may have an adverse impact on the water supply associated with the Arun Valley SAC, SPA, and Ramsar Site.

Habitats

4.4 The habitat survey covered an area of approximately 0.34 hectares and comprised areas of hard standing forming the existing public house and car park, surrounded by areas of vegetated habitat including grassland, scrub, and scattered trees. Habitat descriptions and Target Notes should be read in conjunction with Figure 1: Habitat Plan. Photographs are provided in Appendix 1.

4.5 The following UK Habitat Classifications were recorded during the survey:

- Modified grassland;
- Introduced shrub;
- Ruderal/Ephemeral;
- Bare ground;
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface;
- Developed land; sealed surface;
- Individual trees; and
- Native hedgerow

Modified grassland

4.6 The majority of the Site comprised areas of species-poor grassland habitat with 2 – 9 species per m^2 (Appendix 1; Photos 1 – 3). The sward of this habitat was heavily managed and comprised a high cover of sub-optimal species (up to 45%), including White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, and Greater Plantain *Plantago major*. Grass species comprised of Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, both locally Dominant, with Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*, and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* also present. Other forb species included Common Dandelion Agg. *Taraxacum officinale agg.*, Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Seal-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*. Knot Grass *Polygonum aviculare* appeared locally and was patch forming in some localised areas.

Introduced shrub

4.7 Beds of non-native/ornamental shrubs were present at the periphery of the grassland habitats to the north and south-west of the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 4).

Ruderal/Ephemeral

4.8 An area of disturbed land with short/patchy plant associations was present to the south-west of the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 5). This habitat comprised several planting beds (appeared disused at time of survey) surrounded by areas of sparsely vegetated bare ground/aggregate. Some of these beds were vegetated with Strawberry *Fragaria sp.*, and Oregano *Origanum sp.*

Bare ground

4.9 Patches of bare ground were present along the eastern and western boundaries of the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 6). A section of the eastern habitat comprised a compost heap (Target Note 3).

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

4.10 Small (~15m^2) area of sparsely vegetated unsealed surface was present to the east and west of the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 7).

Developed land; sealed surface

4.11 Areas of hard standing and paving comprising of buildings, patios, roads, footpaths, and car parks were present across the Site (Appendix 1; Photos 8 and 9).

Individual trees

4.12 Individual trees comprising of Lime *Tilia sp.*, Apple *Malus sp.*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Walnut, and Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* were present across the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 10).

Native hedgerow

4.13 A species-poor native hedgerow dominated by Common Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* was present along the eastern boundary of the Site (Appendix 1; Photo 11). Common Hazel *Corylus avellana* was also present.

Species

Desk Study

4.14 DEFRA's MAGIC website[1] showed there had EPS licence applications for both bats and GCN within 2km of the Site, and GCN Class Licence Returns within 500m of the Site, details of which are provided in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Summary of Species Records

Species/Species Group	Record Summary
Bats	EPS licence granted in 2017, for the loss of a Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* roost approx. 1.5km north-east of the Site.
GCN	Two EPS licences granted, in 2015 and 2017, approx. 1.5km north-east of the Site. GCN Class Licence Return, in 2016, approx. 500m east of the Site.

Bats

Preliminary Roost Assessment of Structures

4.15 Table 4.4 below describes the features of the structures and any evidence of suitability for roosting bats.

Table 4.4: Preliminary Roost Assessment Overview and Results

Overview
Existing timber shed and canopy (Appendix 1; Photos 12, 13 and 14). Canopy adjoined to main pub building on north-west elevation and shed on south-east elevation. Timber shed and canopy currently used as brewery/food store Timber canopy connected to cold room shed on north-east elevation. External wall-mounted lights fitted to shed/canopy. Batten lights mounted to ceiling of canopy. Walls – Timber cladded. Base/Floor – Timber shed set on timber sleepers (centre of base unknown) and timber canopy over concrete. Shed is timber boarded internally.

Roof – Timber boarded and lined with bitumen felt.	
Structure	**Description/evidence**
Brewery Shed	No signs/evidence of bats recorded. Access internally limited to small holes in corner of shed. Very warm internally.
Timber Canopy	No signs/evidence of bats recorded. Canopy permanently open on one side. Canopy very warm due to presence of heat pump. 2 no. large gaps where canopy joins roof of main building with depths of approx. 1ft (Appendix 1; Photos 15 and 16). Hole in brick wall of main building (beneath canopy and partly covered by timber). Suitability for bats reduced by presence of lighting (off at time of survey but likely switched on periodically) and occasional presence/disturbance caused by staff.

4.16 Based on the results above, the brewery shed is considered to offer 'Negligible' potential to support roosting bats. However, the features associated with the timber canopy, which ties into the roof of the main building, did contain features suitable for roosting bats.

Roosting (Other)

4.17 The main pub building contained multiple features for roosting and has the potential to support a high-status bat roost. The covered well (Target Note 6) could also be used by roosting bats.

4.18 The on-site trees also contained features that could be used by roosting bats.

Foraging/Commuting

4.19 The trees, shrub and hedgerow on Site offers some foraging/commuting opportunities.

4.20 There is more extensive/suitable areas of foraging/commuting habitat (consisting of broadleaved woodland) adjacent the north-west and to the south-east of the Site, directly linking the Site to the wider landscape and commuting corridors for bats *e.g.* the river Arun to the south-east.

4.21 The Sites suitability for light-shy bat species is reduced by the presence of festoon lighting within the pub garden.

Birds

4.22 The buildings, trees, shrub and hedgerow offers suitable habitat for nesting birds.

4.23 During the field survey, multiple birds' nests were recorded within the trees (*i.e.* trees T3, T4 and T9) on Site.

Badgers

4.24 No setts/evidence of Badger was recorded on or adjacent to the Site during the field survey.

4.25 The grassland offers some foraging opportunities; however, the Site is open and subject to high-levels of human disturbance, and therefore unlikely to be used by Badger for sett building if the current use of the Site remains the same.

4.26 There is suitable sett building habitat (consisting of broadleaved woodland) adjacent/to the north-west and south-east, and within 30m of the Site.

Hazel Dormice

4.27 The Site is located adjacent to extensive areas of broadleaved woodland to the north-west and south-east, however, there is no suitable habitat (*e.g.* scrubby vegetation/understory linking trees) for foraging, sheltering, breeding and hibernating on Site. As such the Site is not considered to be suitable for Dormice.

Herptiles

4.28 The desk study identified one pond approximately 150m south of the Site, and there is broadleaved woodland linking the Site to the off-site pond. However, the Site offers limited terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

4.29 The log/building material pile (Target Note 2) and compost heap (Target Note 3) offers suitable refugia/hibernacula for reptiles/amphibians, however, there is no suitable habitat (*e.g.* long grass) linking these features on Site.

Hedgehogs

4.30 The ruderal/ephemeral habitat, introduced shrub, hedgerows, log piles and compost heap offers suitable foraging/resting habitat, and the Site is open to the wider landscape, allowing hedgehogs to move freely across the Site.

Invertebrates

4.31 All of the habitats on Site are common and widespread and are likely to support a typical range of invertebrate species.

5.0 Ecological Constraints and Opportunities, and Recommendations

5.1 Whilst overall the Site is considered of low ecological value (given its small size and lack of higher distinctiveness habitats) a number of ecological receptors have been identified. Table 5.1 below sets out measures to avoid/minimise negative impacts on these receptors and provide biodiversity enhancements in accordance with national and local planning policy.

Table 5.1 Key Constraints/Opportunities and Recommendations for Further Survey

Ecological Receptor	Constraints/Opportunities	Further Survey / Assessment
Nature Conservation Designations	There are no nature conservation designations on or adjacent to the Site, or within 5km of the Site. Being within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone, which requires new development to be water use neutral to avoid increased impacts on the Arun Valley SAC, SPA, and Ramsar Site.	Evidencing that the proposals would not lead to an increase in water demand. If this is not the case, then a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) should inform the proposals.
Habitats	The footprint of the new cellar extension is proposed over an area of existing hard standing (*i.e.* no on-site habitats will be lost). Proposals should seek to increase the biodiversity value of the Site *e.g.* through native tree/shrub/hedgerow planting.	On the basis the scheme won't impact ≥25m2 of habitat or ≥5m of hedgerow, the planning application would be exempt from Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
Bats	Damage/ disturbance of a potential bat roost where the timber canopy joins the main building and/or where the proposed extension would tie into the main building. Damage/ disturbance of a potential bat roost if works are proposed to potential roosting features on the main building, trees or the well. Proposals should seek to protect roosting bats by avoiding the loss of trees and increasing the roosting resource available to bats through provision of bat boxes installed on retained mature trees / integrated into the new build.	Detailed assessment (endoscope survey by licensed bat worker) of the area where the timber canopy joins into the main building roof line. Scope of assessment to be informed by design of proposed extension / understanding of how it would tie into the main building. Dependant on the results of the above bat emergence surveys may be recommended during the bat survey season, which runs from May – August/September inclusive. Review and confirmation of any proposed works to trees, covered well and/or remaining areas of the main building e.g. works to the

Ecological Receptor	Constraints/Opportunities	Further Survey / Assessment
	The Site provides suitable foraging/commuting opportunities for bats. Proposals should seek to protect bats through retaining suitable foraging/commuting habitat on Site, minimising light spill on surrounding habitats during and after the construction phase, particularly the adjacent broadleaved woodland, with a sensitive lighting plan produced. Opportunity to enhance habitat through provision of new foraging/commuting habitat, including by strengthening the boundaries of the Site through native shrub/hedgerow planting.	roof, chimneys, roof voids, windows. Any potential areas of impact would require further survey. Bat activity surveys not required on the basis of the small Site size, presence of existing external lighting, and minimal/sensitive lighting proposed. Should this not be possible, then bat activity surveys over the course of the bat activity season (April-October inclusive) should inform the proposals.
Birds	The buildings, trees, introduced shrub and hedgerow on Site offers suitable habitat for nesting birds. Multiple birds' nests were recorded within the trees on Site. Proposals should seek to protect nesting birds through avoiding works (*i.e.* the demolition of the existing rear brewery shed and timber canopy) within the recognised nesting bird season, retaining existing suitable habitat, and through provision of alternative habitat *e.g.* nest boxes, including mounted boxes on retained mature trees.	If any demolition works/vegetation clearance is required during the nesting bird season (March – August inclusive), then a nesting bird check will be required prior (within 24hrs) of works commencing and undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. In the event that an active nest is found at this time, then the nest will be protected with a suitable buffer until the chicks have fledged.
Badgers	No setts/evidence of Badger recorded on or adjacent to the Site. Potential for a Badger sett to be created on-site if left undisturbed and within the off-site broadleaved woodland adjacent/within 30m of the Site. All excavations during construction should be covered overnight or means of escape (*i.e.* ramps) provided.	A check for Badger setts on and adjacent to the Site should be undertaken ahead of the works.
Reptiles	The log/building material pile and compost heap offers suitable refugia/hibernacula for reptiles. If these are to be removed, then this should be undertaken sensitively/by hand outside of the hibernation season and overseen by a suitably qualified ecologist. Proposals should seek to protect reptiles by retaining these features of Site, relaxing the management regime	None

Ecological Receptor	Constraints/Opportunities	Further Survey / Assessment
	of existing habitats (*e.g.* reduced frequency of grassland cuts) and through provision of alternative habitat (*e.g.* habitat piles). All temporary arisings during construction should either be stored in a way that prevents reptiles using them as a resting place (*i.e.* on hard standing, raised off the ground, away from vegetation) or removed at the end of the working day.	
Amphibians	There is a pond approximately 150m south of the Site, and there is broadleaved woodland linking the Site to the off-site pond. However, the habitats on Site offer limited terrestrial habitat. Given the Sites distance from the off-site pond, and scale of works proposed (*i.e.* no vegetated habitats will be lost), the risk of GCN being present, disturbed, killed or injured is considered highly unlikely in accordance with Natural England's GCN risk assessment tool. If this is no longer the case, then the risks to GCN should be re-evaluated. All excavations should be covered overnight or means of escape (*i.e.* ramps) provided.	None
Hedgehogs	The log pile and compost heap provides suitable resting habitat. If these features are to be removed, then this should be done sensitively/by hand outside of the hibernation season. All temporary arisings during construction should either be stored in a way that prevents hedgehogs using them as a resting place (*i.e.* on hard standing, raised off the ground, away from vegetation) or removed at the end of the working day. All excavations should be covered overnight or means of escape (*i.e.* ramps) provided.	None

Ecological Receptor	Constraints/Opportunities	Further Survey / Assessment
Invertebrates	The habitats on Site are common and widespread and are likely to support a typical range of invertebrate species. Proposals should seek to increase suitable habitat for invertebrates through native species planting and provision of resting places.	None

NICHOLAS PEARSON ASSOCIATES
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | ECOLOGY | VISUALISATION
npaconsult.co.uk npavisuals.co.uk +44 (0)1225 876990

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Appendix 1: Photographs

Photo No.	
1.	 Area of modified grassland to north-west of Site.
2.	 Area of modified grassland to south-east of Site.

3.	 Close-up view looking down at sward.
4.	 Bed of non-native/ornamental shrub planting at periphery of grassland to south-west of Site.

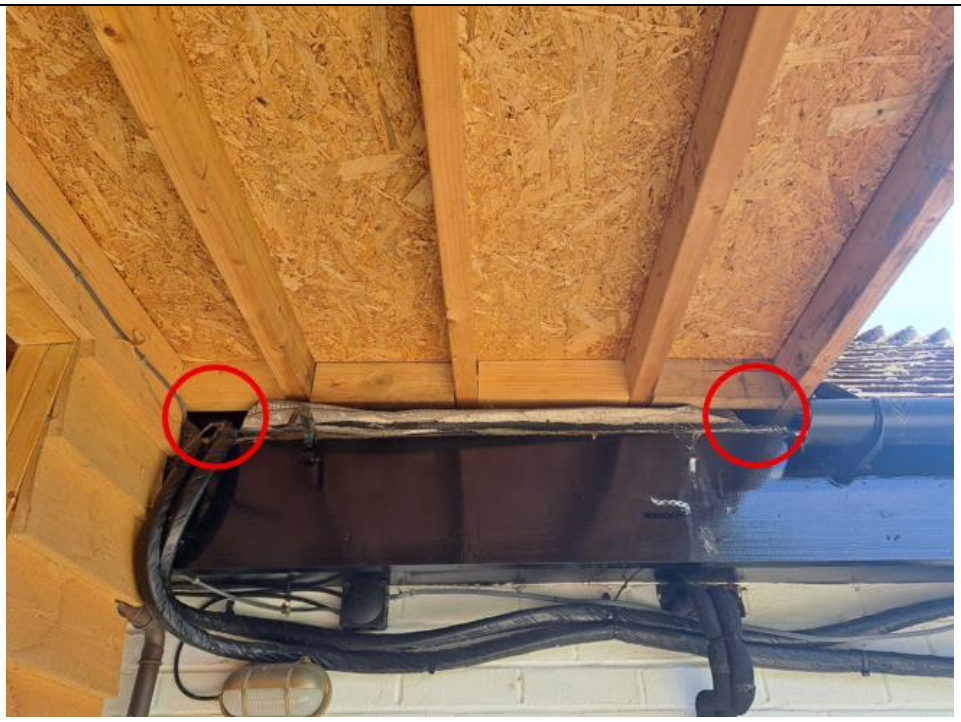
5.	 Area of distrubed land with short/patchy plant associations and planting beds to south-west of Site.
6.	 Area of unvegetated bare ground to west of Site.

7.	 Small area of sparsely vegetated, unsealed surface to west of Site.
8.	 Area of hard standing forming car park to east of Site.

9.	 Area of hard standing forming paved patio to south of pub building/Site.
10.	 Very lage Ash tree (T4) at southern boundary of Site.

11.	 Species-poor hedgerow along eastern boundary of Site.
12.	 View of timber shed and canopy – North-east elevation.

13.	 View of timber shed and canopy – South-west elevation.
14.	 Internal view of timber canopy.

15.	 Potential roosting features at join between timber canopy and main building roof.
16.	 Close-up view of feature to right in photo 15 above.

Appendix 2: Target Notes

Target Note No.	
1.	 Tree stumps to east of Site.
2.	 Pile of logs/building materials to east of Site.

3.	 Compost heap present to east of Site.
4.	 Single tree stump to east of Site.

5.	 Tree stump covered by dense Ivy to north of Site.
6.	 Covered well to north-west of Site.

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