
Field adjacent to High Hill Farm

ECOLOGY RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

July 2024

Site Description and Evaluation

The following assessment is based on a single site visit to the field in question and several visits to the adjoining, 'main' site. Therefore, the following information should not be considered to be an exhaustive assessment of the Site's ecological potential.

Designated Sites

The nearest European designation to the site is Pevensey Levels which holds the multiple designation of Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is located approximately 3.6km west and southwest of the site. No other European designations are present within 15km of the site.

High Wood SSSI lies some 140m to the west of the site boundary. The woodland is ancient in origin, with the ancient woodland designation extending to the east, beyond the SSSI boundary, ending contiguous with the field boundary.

Kiln Wood, which lies contiguous with the northern boundary of the field is also ancient woodland.

There is an existing dormouse licence from 2019 for works associated with Kiln Wood from 2019 indicates that dormouse are present in the area.

Habitats

The grassland appears to be agriculturally improved and would be classified as a species poor, being similar in composition to the grasslands within the 'main' site.

Species

Dormouse have been recorded in Kiln Wood to the north. There are no records of great crested newt in the areas and the site appears to be in green zone on the NatureSpace Impact map. The nearest pond is some 500m to the east; eDNA results for this pond are pending.

Common lizard, slow worm and grass snake may be present within the site; surveys would be required to demonstrate and confirm their presence or absence.



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The adjoining hedgerows which connect the field to the 'main' site are used by up to six species of bats, with a relatively high proportion of *Myotis* spp. being noted during spring /summer 2024 surveys.

The site will provide some limited habitat for common, widespread breeding bird species, whilst the mature trees on site may provide opportunities for roosting bats.

Ecological Impact of the Development

Any development would likely result in the loss of much of the grassland, which is likely to be of low ecological value. It would be beneficial if the mature hedgerows, tree lines and stream will be retained, avoiding any significant ecological impact. A suitable buffer zone around the ancient woodland could also be accommodated.

If reptiles or dormouse are encountered within the Site, then a suitable mitigation strategy will need to be designed and implemented; it would appear that sufficient green space would be retained within the Site layout to accommodate any mitigation strategy.

If the surface runoff flows into the Pevensey Level system, then a sufficiently robust SuDs system will need to be put in place to ensure there is no impact upon the SAC.

Consideration would need to be given to ensuring the level of recreation disturbance did not increase significantly within either area of ancient woodland. High Woods SSSI is managed by Highwoods Preservation Society who currently manage it for informal recreation.

Ecological Mitigation and Enhancements

Combined with the 'main' site there appears to be opportunities within the Site to create valuable habitats within the landscape areas. There may also be the potential to include some land to the north to provide a significant Biodiversity Net Gain. This land could also be used for reptile and/or dormouse mitigation if it is deemed necessary.

