

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Grove Court Hotel Cleator Cumbria, CA23 3DT

Client:

Frank Scott Builders Ltd

Survey date:

22nd January 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Cumberland Council (Copeland Area). The proposal is described as:

The construction of six dwellings.

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

Site Location and Context					
The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference NY 01931 14062 and has an area of approximately 0.389ha. The site comprises an area of previously developed land, where a hotel building was previously situated. The building has since been demolished, with associated works approved in line with planning permission 4/23/2106/001. The site also contains a strip of grassland and single tree, on the southern boundary of the site. The site is located within the village of Cleator, Cumbria and is bound by the A506 to the south, and dwellings to the east and west, the presence of which is likely to present a significant dispersal barrier for a number of faunal groups, as detailed in subsequent sections of this report.					
Survey Details					
The site survey was undertaken by Gareth Hey BSc (Hons), MSc, ACIEEM (Natural England Protected Species Licence Numbers: [Bats] (2021-51195-CLS-CLS) [Great Crested Newts] (2017-30374-CLS-CLS) (Natural Resource Wales Protected Species Licence Number: [Bats] (S094455/1)					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
22/01/2025	7	92	100	4	None
Survey limitations					
It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the searches of historical biological records. A biological records data search has not been undertaken. However, given the location of the site, the nature of the habitats present and the assessed suitability of the site for protected or notable species, it is not anticipated that the purchase of biological records data will add any significant weight or alter the conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report.					

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or
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Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plan in appendix 3 and photos in appendix 4). Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> <i>(UKHab codes used)</i>	The site does not contain any habitats listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). The habitats within the site are common and widespread and have low ecological value. Notable habitats are present within 2km. On-site habitat descriptions <u>u1b6</u> – Other developed land On the northern and western boundaries of the site is an area of hardstanding, utilised for vehicular access to dwellings off-site to the north. This area also previously formed access to the former hotel. There is no associated vegetation, and the area is of minimal ecological value. <u>u1f</u> – Sparsely vegetated urban land with Ruderal/Ephemeral (81) Within the area of the site where the hotel used to be positioned is an area of previously developed land, where several opportunistic plant species have colonised. Species present include willowherb, rush, broadleaved dock, ragwort, chickweed, white clover, creeping thistle and dandelion, which are all present occasionally. The cover of vegetation within this area is approximately 50%. <u>g4</u> – Modified grassland Towards the southern section of the site is a strip of modified grassland, that previously formed an area of amenity grassland for the hotel. Species composition is poor, being dominated by a rye-grass mix, with occasional broadleaved herbs including

	white clover, dandelion, broadleaved dock, creeping buttercup, spear thistle and ribwort plantain all present, rarely. The sward height is consistently short across the parcel ranging from 4cm-8cm, less than 20% is more than 7cm. <u>Scattered trees g4 32</u> On the southern boundary of the site is a single semi-mature sycamore tree, situated within the strip of grassland. The tree is approximately 15m tall, with a DBH of approximately 65cm. Local notable habitats There are limited areas of priority habitat designated under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006 within a 2km radius of the site. The closest is an area of deciduous woodland, located 300m north-east of the site. The only other priority habitat present within a 2km radius is an area of purple moor grass and rush pasture.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site habitats The proposed development will result in the loss of all of the modified grassland and sparsely vegetated land. This could result in a net loss in biodiversity at the site. Notable habitats No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site habitats Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012). To compensate for the proposed habitat losses at the site, the following habitat creation measures should be incorporated: Planting of native trees and shrubs.

	Notable habitats None required. Biodiversity net gain The Environment Act (2021) requires all developments (excluding exemptions) to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity. Therefore, the planning application must be accompanied by a landscaping/habitat creation and enhancement strategy, biodiversity net gain calculations and a habitat management and monitoring plan to ensure the proposed development delivers a 10% net gain.
Locality and Designated Sites	
Summary of Survey Findings	On-site designations The site is not subject to any designation. Statutory designated sites (within 2km) There are two statutory sites within 2km of the site, as detailed below: • River Ehen (Ennerdale Water to Keekle Confluence) SSSI and SAC (200m east at closest point): ○ SSSI Citation – The River Ehen is on the western fringe of the Lake District. It forms the outfall from Ennerdale Water and flows some 20 km before reaching the Irish Sea at Sellafeld. For much of its upper length the River Ehen is classed as an oligotrophic, or nutrient-poor, river flowing over bryophyte-dominated substrates of shingle, pebbles and rock. Above Ennerdale Bridge the catchment is largely composed of acidic rocks of the Borrowdale Series and Skiddaw Slates. Downstream from Ennerdale Bridge the river is slightly enriched by streams flowing from Limestones and Millstone Grits of the Carboniferous Series. ○ SAC Citation – The River Ehen supports the largest freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Annex II species) population in England. Exceptionally high densities (greater than 100 m²) are found at some locations, with population estimates for the entire river exceeding 100,000. The conservation importance of

	the site is further enhanced by the presence of juvenile pearl mussels, indicating recruitment since 1990. The site also contains Atlantic salmon, but they are not a primary reason for site selection. • Clints Quarry SSSI (1.8km south-west): ○ SSSI Citation – Clints Quarry lies 1 km north of Egremont at an altitude of 70 m, on a belt of carboniferous limestone which runs in a north-south direction between Egremont and Cockermouth. The quarry has been closed for over fifty years, and in that time a rich limestone flora of a type rare in Cumbria has developed on the site. The floor is uneven with a fan of spoil heaps radiating out from the eastern side of the site, with a broken terrace around the perimeter. Rising above the terrace for some 20 metres on the northern, western and part of the southern sides are vertical cliffs, whilst on the eastern and remaining part of the southern side are steep spoil banks with rocky outcrops. Species-rich neutral and calcareous grasslands, along with woodland and shrub communities have become established within the quarry. The site lies within the impact risk zone for River Ehen (Ennerdale Water to Keekle Confluence) and Clints Quarry SSSI. Non-statutory designated sites The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from the local records centre.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site designations No impacts foreseen. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.

	The site lies within the impact risk zone for River Ehen (Ennerdale Water to Keekle Confluence) and Clints Quarry SSSI. However, when consulting the Natural England SSSI IRZ Web Tool, the proposed development is not listed as a reason for consultation with Natural England, as only when residential developments deliver 50 units or more, should they be consulted.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site designations None required. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The habitats present on-site, including grassland, sparsely vegetated land and tree, likely provide common invertebrates with opportunities to forage and shelter. The site contains no further notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Modified grassland and sparsely vegetated land will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats could result in a reduction in invertebrate habitat and could result in the fragmentation of the local landscape.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data

	A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the licence or will relocate to other known roosts sites in close proximity to the licensed site. No EPSLs are present within a 2km radius of the site. Foraging and commuting habitat Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide minimal foraging and commuting opportunities for bats. Low numbers may occasionally utilise the site for foraging, with the presence of the tree, modified grassland and sparsely vegetated land likely to attract insects, which bats prey upon. However, the site is surrounded by areas of built form, with minimal commuting corridors present within close proximity to the site. Roosting habitat The tree located on the southern boundary of the site has two bat boxes present on its eastern and western elevations, which provide suitable space for crevice dwelling bat species. However, the tree is to be retained and unimpacted by the proposals and as such, was not subject to a detailed assessment to determine its value for roosting bats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Foraging and commuting habitat The proposed development will result in the loss of small areas of modified grassland and sparsely vegetated land but given their low value and the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, this is likely to be inconsequential for bats. Artificial lighting

	The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained tree without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Artificial lighting A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of three bat boxes at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes will be incorporated into the fabric of the new dwellings. Suitable bat boxes include Habibat Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box or similar alternative brand. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Trees and vegetation No bird nests were identified within the vegetation on-site, however they all offer nesting opportunities and nest-building resources for birds. Barn owls The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls. Overwintering birds Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Trees and vegetation

	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests. Barn owls None foreseen. Overwintering birds None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Trees and vegetation Any vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. Barn owls None required. Overwintering birds None required. Suggested biodiversity enhancements

	The installation of a minimum of two bird boxes on the retained mature tree around on the site boundary or on the new buildings will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Schwegler No 17 Swift Nest Box (buildings) Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace (buildings) Schwegler 1B Nest Boxes (trees) Schwegler 2H Robin Boxes (trees) Woodstone Nest Box (buildings or trees) Or a similar alternative brand. Tree boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole. Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of a building and can be incorporated into the fabric of the building during construction.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability There is no suitable habitat present on site for reptiles due to a lack of habitats such as scrub and rank grassland which would offer refuge for these species. Further, the site is surrounded by urban development (i.e. roads and buildings) which is considered sub-optimal for reptile migration and therefore reptiles are considered unlikely to migrate from any nearby suitable habitats to the development site. As such it is likely that reptiles are absent from the development site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on reptiles as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Amphibians	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL and survey data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for great crested newts within 500m of the site. Further, no positive class survey licence return or DLL historic survey data (2017 – 2019) were present within 500m of the site. Aquatic habitat suitability (including ponds within 500m) Great crested newts (GCN) exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton et al. 2001). There are no ponds on the site, but a review of aerial imagery (MAGIC and OS Maps) indicates the presence of a singular pond within 500m; the pond (P1) is located ~0.35km north-east of the site and is separated from the site by areas of built form and roads. These landscape features are likely to represent a significant barrier to dispersal due to heavy traffic flow and high kerbs along the road, eliminating connectivity to the site for great crested newts. Terrestrial habitat suitability The site provides limited suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians given the lack of optimal habitat (i.e. scrub, rank grassland). The areas of hard standing and amenity grass offer sub-optimal habitat for terrestrial amphibians. Further, there is limited suitable terrestrial habitat across the wider landscape reducing the likelihood of amphibians being present on site and across the surrounding areas.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds within 500m of the site, the presence of GCN on-site is considered unlikely and therefore impacts to amphibians as a result of the proposed development are deemed to be acceptably low.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Badger	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No badger setts were noted on site or within a 30m radius of the site. The site is considered unsuitable for badgers given the lack of suitable sett excavation areas/ground. Further, there is limited suitable badger foraging habitat on site given the lack of fruiting trees/scrub. The site is also surrounding by urban development (i.e. roads and buildings), which is sub-optimal habitat therefore reducing the likelihood of badgers being present within the surrounding area of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on badgers as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for otters or water voles within 2km of the site. There are no water courses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability The site lies outside of the know current range for hazel dormice and there are no suitable habitats within the development area. As such it is considered likely that hazel dormice are absent from site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None foreseen.
Other e.g. hedgehog	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The habitats on site could be utilised by hedgehogs for foraging and whilst commuting to the wider landscape.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Areas of grassland and sparsely vegetated land will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs: • Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities. • Creation of brash piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas. • Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site.

Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 4: Habitat Photos

Hardstanding and sparsely vegetated land	
Photograph	Description
	Figure 1: The site is dominated by an area of sparsely vegetated land, with an approximate vegetation coverage of 40%. There is also a tarmacked road around the boundary of the site, utilised for access to houses at the rear of the site.
Modified grassland and scattered tree	
Photograph	Description
	Figure 2: Towards the southern section of the site is an area of modified grassland and a single tree.

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