# Proposed Sports Hub, Horsford, Norfolk – Ecology Note

## Background

1.1 Applied Ecology (AE) was appointed by Endurance Estates Land Promotion Ltd (EELP) to prepare an ecological appraisal of an area of land (11.0 ha) located between Broadland Northway (A1270) and Holt Road, south of Horsford, Norwich ("the Site") with central OS grid reference TG 19714 14770. The location of the Site is shown by **Figure 1**. The Site forms a draft allocation in the emerging Horsford Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 14 Version October 2025), under Policy SS2A, for a sports hub on land south of Holt Road for sport and recreation uses.

1.2 The appraisal is based on a review of existing information, including a biological record search undertaken by Norfolk Biological Information Service (data received 31 March 2026), ordnance survey maps and online aerial photographs, and any publicly available ecological survey information for other nearby development projects. The appraisal reviews the Site's suitability for sports use from an ecology perspective, and concludes with recommendations on further detailed ecology work that may be required to support a future planning application for the Site.

## Designated Wildlife Sites

### Statutory wildlife sites

1.3 The locations of statutory wildlife sites and ancient woodland are shown by **Figure 2**. The closest statutory wildlife is the **River Wensum Site of Special Scientific Interest** (SSSI), which is located 2.06km to the south of the Site, and has additional Natura 2000 designation as a **Special Area of Conservation** (SAC).

1.4 The Site is not in a SSSI Impact Zone relevant to the development being proposed, but is located in an area where potential impacts on European Sites are identified in relation to water quality/nutrient impacts and recreational pressure impacts. Significant impacts on European Sites are not anticipated in relation to the development being proposed at this stage, but potential issues and concerns will need to be fully considered as development design emerges, alongside the need and scope of any further assessment likely to be required to support a planning application.

### Non-statutory wildlife sites

1.5 The closest non-statutory County Wildlife Site (CWS) is **Canham's Hill CWS** which is located 0.94km to the south and is an area of mature woodland, bracken and unimproved neutral grassland. **Black Park & The Thicket CWS** is located 1.04km to the northeast at its closest point and is characterised by oak dominated acid woodland and with unimproved acid grassland around the southern monument. Other non-statutory wildlife sites within 2km are Drayton Wood CWS, Horsham Meadows CWS, Littlewood Drayton CWS and Drayton High Road Roadside Nature Reserve.

1.6 The closest block of ancient woodland is known as The Wilderness which forms part of Black Park and is located 2.0km to the northeast.

# Habitats and Plants

1.7 The Site does not support or adjoin any habitats included on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory[1]. With reference to online aerial photographs, the Site appears to consist of a single field of arable land with gappy hedgerows and trees along the western, eastern and northern boundaries, and an adjoining south-facing grass embankment with young scattered scrub to the south along Broadland Northway.

1.8 No rare or notable plant records for the Site were provided by the NBIS, but the presence of notable and declining arable weeds cannot be discounted.

# Protected Animal Species

## Overview

1.9 The Site appears to be an intensively managed field of limited value to protected animal species in overall terms, but with boundary hedgerows and trees offering some potential to be used by animal species for breeding, feeding, shelter and as habitat corridors.

## Birds

1.10 Ground nesting birds, such as skylark, could be present if arable cropping type and rotations provide suitable conditions. A range bird species have been recorded locally according to the NBIS data although no records, with the possible exception of buzzard *Buteo buteo*, appear to be from the Site itself. The gappy but well-established hedgerow boundaries are likely to support a range of common nesting birds, and the presence of farmland specialists such as yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, linnet *Linaria cannabina* and barn owl *Tyto alba* (if suitable old boundary trees are present) cannot be discounted.

## Amphibians and reptiles

1.11 With reference to online OS maps and aerial photographs, no waterbodies that could support amphibians, including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN), are located within 250m of the Site. The closest records of GCN provided by NBIS are located 1.15km to the west (2017 record) and 1.58km to the east (2006 record).

1.12 No habitats suitable for reptiles appear to be present on the Site. The closest reptile record provided by the NBIS was of slowworm *Anguis fragilis* from Horsford in 2008 located 400m to the north of the Site, with the only other records relating to adder *Vipera berus* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* near to Diamond Jubilee Plantation, 1.5km to the north.

## Badger

1.13 Badger appear to be relatively widespread locally based on NBIS records, although no records relate to the Site itself. The presence of badger setts in boundary hedgerows would need to be checked.

## Bats

1.14 A range of bat species have been recorded locally, including from the Site itself, with the presence of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Nathusius's pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* and

[1] https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::priority-habitats-inventory-england/about

barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* recorded from the northeast corner of the Site by the Norfolk Bat Survey and Norwich Bat Project in June 2016 based on NBIS data.

1.15 No buildings are present within the Site, but Boundary trees could be suitable for roosting bats by possessing potential roost features such as holes, crack and crevices, particularly associated with maturity and old growth.

1.16 As suggested by the NBIS data, the Site is likely to be used by a range of bat species for foraging and possibly commuting with such activity likely to be concentrated on boundary features. The rare barbastelle bat is known to occur locally, with maternity colonies known from Rackheath and Morton[2], both around 7km away to the east and west, respectively[3]. It is of note that a pole mounted bat gantry is located across the Broadland Northway to the south of the Site and aligns to the Site's western boundary hedgerow. Details of the specific bat survey findings that supported the need and placement of this gantry to mitigate the habitat severance resulting from construction of this road are not known. However, the hedgerow was presumably identified as an important commuting route or flyway for bats generally or for barbastelle more specifically.

# Recommendations on Future Work to Support a Planning Application

## Survey requirements

1.17 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site would be undertaken to record and map the habitats present, to record the plant species and to assess the Site's potential to support protected animal species. The need and scope of follow-up protected species survey would be determined as part of the PEA and reflecting on any likely impacts associated with the development being proposed. The most likely survey requirement based on existing information would be for bat activity surveys. Such survey may be necessary to confirm use of the Site by bats for foraging and commuting, with a specific focus on boundary habitats and the rare barbastelle bat.

1.18 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations would be undertaken using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric based on the Site's baseline and reflecting development proposals and landscaping.

## Initial design recommendations

1.19 The following recommendations are considered relevant to early-stage design and planning:

- Retain and gap-up existing hedgerows by supplementary planting of mixed native shrubs.
- Ensure boundary habitats, in particular the western boundary hedgerow, remain as dark unilluminated corridors that can be used by local bats for foraging and commuting.
- Provide wildlife friendly habitats, such as wildflower grassland, in marginal areas where not required for amenity use.
- Incorporate integrated bat and bird boxes into the new pavilion.

[2] Harris, J (2020) A review of the barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* in Norfolk based on the work of the Norfolk Barbastelle Study Group. *British Islands Bats*, Volume one, pp. 33-49.

[3] It is possible that other maternity colonies have been found since 2020.




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# Land south of Holt Road, Horsford

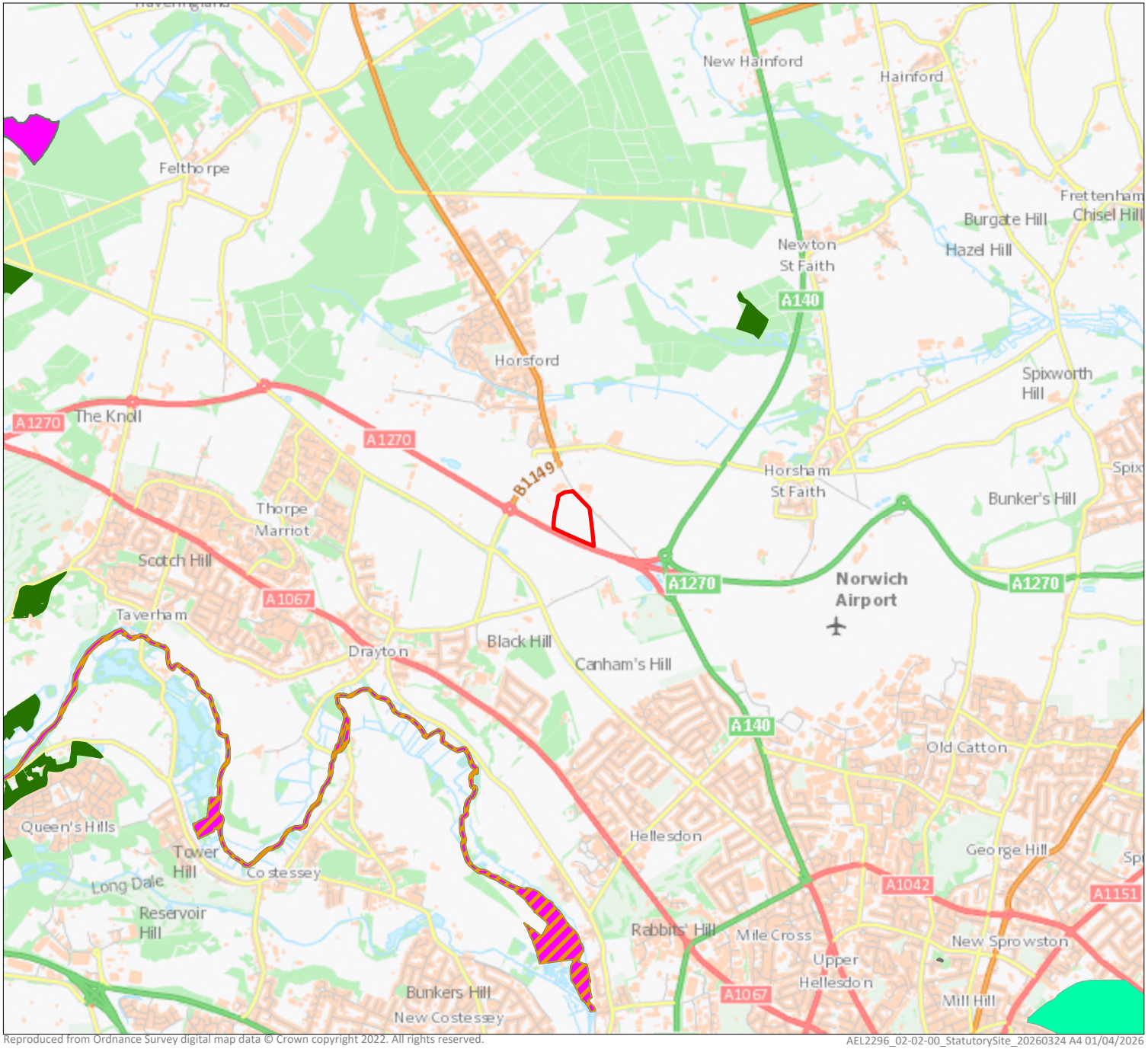
## Site location

Site boundary

**Figure 1**

**Map Scale @ A4: 1:10,000**

| | |
|---|---|
| Surveyed by: n/a | |
| Survey date: n/a | |
| Drawn by: RJH | |
| Checked by: DP | |
| Status: Final | |




# Land south of Holt Road, Horsford

## Statutory wildlife sites and ancient woodland

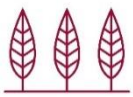
- Site boundary
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Ancient woodland

**Figure 2**

**Map Scale @ A4: 1:50,000**

| | |
|---|---|
| Surveyed by: n/a | |
| Survey date: n/a | |
| Drawn by: RJH | |
| Checked by: DP | |
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