

# Ecology Summary Proof of Evidence

Kenley Aerodrome, Victor Beamish Avenue, Caterham,  
Surrey

**Daniel Watney**

Development of the site for 80no. residential dwellings including 50% affordable housing, associated landscaping, amenity space and car parking (outline application all matters reserved aside from access)

**PINS APPEAL REFERENCE:**

APP/M3645/W/24/3354498

**APPLICATION REFERENCE:**

TA/2023/878

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. I hold a BSc (Hons) degree in Biology from Southampton University, an MSc in Conservation & Biodiversity from the University of Exeter and I am a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management. I have worked both on a voluntary and professional basis with a number of conservation organisations in the UK and overseas. I have undertaken consultancy work for a range of organisations, companies and individuals, joining Ecology Solutions Ltd in 2021.
- 1.2. I have experience in undertaking species surveys, assessing schemes and identifying mitigation strategies in relation to a range of ecological constraints including nationally and internationally designated sites, protected species, and habitats of high conservation importance. I have been involved with appeal work for a variety of residential-led schemes, and have often engaged with local ecologists, Wildlife Trusts and Natural England.
- 1.3. I have been involved in this project since June 2024 and am familiar with the site, the survey and assessment work undertaken, and the Appeal Proposals and package of avoidance, mitigation and enhancement proposals which these include.
- 1.4. Having been consulted on the Appeal Proposals Natural England returned a response of No Objection. Surrey Wildlife Trust raised a number of concerns which ultimately informed the Officer's Report and in turn led to a Reason for Refusal on Ecology grounds upon determination. Following subsequent engagement with Surrey Wildlife Trust and the submission of additional information these concerns have now been resolved and there is no remaining objection from either the LPA or SWT on the grounds of Ecology.
- 1.5. The Appeal Site has been subject to surveys over a number of years, with the results of these set out in the Ecological Assessment. A summary of the surveys results is also set out in Section 5 of my main evidence.
- 1.6. The habitats within the site are limited in their ecological value. The woodland and grassland – those habitats of relatively greater interest within the Appeal Site – are in poor condition due to lack of species or structural diversity, presence of non-native and

invasive species and signs of disease, and absence of management to promote their botanical diversity or suitability to support faunal groups.

- 1.7. The site is also of limited value to protected and notable species. Reptiles and Dormice are considered absent from the site, bat registrations recorded during activity surveys were attributed to common and widespread species, and whilst a small number of trees with features suitable to support roosting bats were identified these are all to be retained by the proposals.
- 1.8. Where concerns were raised by SWT these fell into a number of categories. Firstly additional detail was requested in relation to the survey work undertaken. Following the circulation of additional information including Reptile survey plans and commentary regarding the site's suitability for Dormice (set out in full in Section 7 of my main evidence), SWT were satisfied that these matters are resolved subject to the securing of draft conditions.
- 1.9. Additionally, the classification of the grassland and woodland were queried, however upon providing additional information regarding their characteristics and condition SWT were once again satisfied that an accurate assessment has been made. Furthermore, through the draft condition securing enhancement plans for the woodland and grassland it is considered that the Appeal Proposals represent an opportunity to deliver a betterment for these compared to what is currently present within the site.
- 1.10. Further information regarding the assessment of impacts was also requested, specifically in reference to the nearby designated sites to the north. Through further submissions discussed in detail in Section 8 of my main evidence, additional information was provided regarding potential impact pathways and justifying the conclusion that no adverse impacts on the nearby designated sites are likely as a result of the Appeal Proposals. Upon receipt of this SWT removed their previous concerns and this matter is also now agreed.
- 1.11. Finally, as set out in Section 9 of my main evidence, through the retention and enhancement of habitats across the Appeal Site, the delivery of targeted enhancement features such as bat and bird boxes, and the implementation of strategies such as the

sensitive lighting scheme to ensure connectivity is retained, improvements for biodiversity can be delivered by the Appeal Proposals.

- 1.12. In light of the above it is considered that the Appellant, the LPA and SWT are now in agreement that subject to the securing of a number of conditions, impacts on key ecological receptors can be avoided and moreover benefits for biodiversity can be delivered by the Appeal Proposals, and therefore there are no remaining reasons for refusing the Appeal on Ecology/Biodiversity grounds.