



# The Ecology Co-op

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## **Ecological Impact Assessment**

**Crouchlands Farm (Rural Food & Retail and Equestrian  
Centre), Plaistow, RH14 0LE**

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## **Report Summary**

- 1. Artemis Land & Agriculture Ltd instructed the Ecology Co-op to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment of a proposed development at Crouchlands Farm. Following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, including Phase 1 Habitat mapping, of the site by The Ecology Co-op in June 2018, further ecological surveys were undertaken, including protected species surveys and desk-top studies between May 2018 and October 2019 in order to provide sufficient baseline information for this assessment. This document presents the findings of these surveys, and a full Ecological Impact Assessment in accordance with CIEEM Guidelines to inform a planning application to create a Rural Enterprise and Equestrian Centre within the site.**
- 2. The site is approximately 16ha in area and comprises several agricultural fields of sown grass, with a working yard of bare ground; a barn and ruderal areas of vegetation exist towards the northern edge of the site. In addition, the redline boundary includes a linear section which cuts through two arable fields to the north-east of the site's main body and a small corner of a grassland field which is located at the entrance to Crouchlands Farm. Areas of woodland copse, a former orchard, tree lines and hedgerows are also included within the site.**
- 3. High-value priority woodland, orchard and hedgerow habitats are present within the application site and are considered to be the features of greatest ecological value within the context of the application site.**
- 4. The protected species surveys revealed:**

  - presence of a 'small' population of great crested newts (GCN) within two ponds located approximately 150m to the west of the site and past presence of GCN within a pond <50m to the north of the site – although this pond was dry in 2019.**
  - likely absence of common reptiles.**
  - likely absence of dormice.**
  - a number of trees with 'low'–'high' bat roost potential and one confirmed roost.**
  - use of the site by at least six species of foraging and commuting bats.**
- 5. Works will see the complete loss of tall ruderal vegetation and disturbed ground with ephemeral vegetation; there will also be a loss of improved grassland and arable land. Habitats to be created within the developed site include: buildings, hard-standing and scattered tree planting. The development will utilise existing access through the northern boundary and through an existing gap within the woodland at the eastern edge of the site.**
- 6. Impacts on priority habitats will be avoided through the establishment of suitable buffer zones between development and woodland/hedgerow habitats. Where sections of hedgerow are to be removed to create access, this loss will be compensated for through new hedgerow planting within the developed site. Impacts on the traditional orchard habitat**



will be avoided through exclusion of horses from the habitat through fence installation.

7. The development will result in the loss of GCN terrestrial habitat and works may potentially result in the killing/injury of newts. A European Protected Species mitigation licence, mitigation strategy and compensatory measures for GCN will therefore be required.

8. Impacts on foraging/commuting bat will be avoided through the adoption of a sensitive lighting scheme.

9. Impacts on breeding birds will be avoided through sensitive timing of any vegetation removal.

10. An area of species-rich grassland will be created within the developed site. This habitat will function as compensatory GCN terrestrial habitat as well as serving to achieve an overall biodiversity enhancement.

11. Further biodiversity enhancements will include:

- native tree/shrub planting
- provision of bat boxes
- provision of bird nest boxes
- provision of insect houses and log piles.