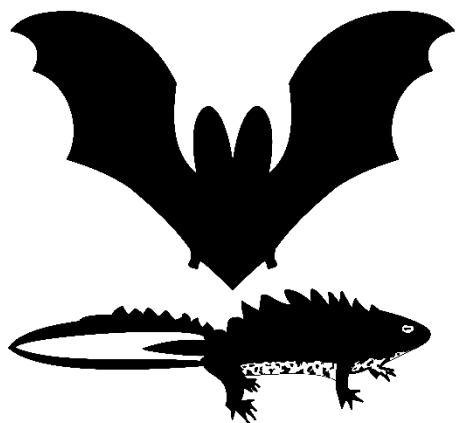




AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

The Old Woodyard

**Slaugham Lane
Staplefield
West Sussex
RH17 6AP**

Natalie Arscott

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The information and data which has been prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

1. Introduction & Site Background

1.1 AEWCLtd were commissioned by Jonathan Talley Architects Ltd on behalf of their client to produce a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for The Old Woodyard, Slaugham Lane, Staplefield, West Sussex, RH17 6AP to discharge Condition 6 of the planning approval.

1.2 The proposed development is for extension of the existing residential property utilising the adjoining property, to include internal and external alterations to the existing buildings. There will be some landscaping works including creation of a formal pond within the courtyard area adjacent to the building to improve the quality of this area. The remainder of the site will not be impacted by the development works.

1.3 The proposed development was granted permission in April 2025 by Mid Sussex District Council (planning reference DM/25/0489). Condition 6 of the planning approval states:

“Prior to any works above slab level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for protected and Priority or threatened species, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

- a) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;*
- b) detailed designs or product descriptions to achieve stated objectives;*
- c) locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans (where relevant);*
- d) persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures; and*
- e) details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).*

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details shall be retained in that manner thereafter.”

1.4 The purpose of this report is to provide a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy suitable for the site that meets the requirements of Condition 6 and will serve to enhance the site's biodiversity value.

Site Location

1.5 The proposed development site is The Old Woodyard, Slaugham Lane, Staplefield, West Sussex, RH17 6AP at central grid reference TQ 26934 28072. The site is located approximately 420m to the east of the A23 in a semi-rural part of West Sussex on the edge of the village of Staplefield and is immediately surrounded by agricultural land. The wider landscape comprises of agricultural land with hedge and tree line boundaries, residential properties with associated amenity gardens and areas of woodland. See Figure 1.



FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION

Site Description and Background

- 1.6 A site walkover was undertaken by suitably qualified ecologist Natalie Arscott on the 28th August 2025, to assess the existing habitats within the ownership boundary and devise a suitable enhancement strategy.
- 1.7 The land within the ownership boundary of The Old Woodyard is approximately 0.5ha in size. The site is a private residential property with a large garden.
- 1.8 In the western half of the site are the buildings which are surrounded by a gravel parking area. The courtyard adjacent to the east of the buildings, where new landscaping is proposed, comprises mostly gravel with rubble, discarded items, and colonising ruderal plants.
- 1.9 The garden area at the western edge of the site has already been subject to enhancement works. It comprises a combination of lawn and floral planting along with an array of logs that provide good deadwood habitat.
- 1.10 To the east of the buildings is a large area of short mown grass lawn.
- 1.11 A wet ditch runs along the northern boundary, which is bordered by a belt of tall, dense ruderal vegetation.

- 1.12 At the eastern end of the site is a pond with a central island. The pond had mostly dried out at the time of the survey following a very dry summer but is understood to hold a good level of water most of the time.
- 1.13 Along the southern boundary is a narrow belt of deciduous woodland with some mature trees. A small amount of cherry laurel was noted to be growing within the woodland, which is an invasive species that can negatively affect woodland habitat.
- 1.14 Whilst the central site area is developed and heavily managed, with low suitability for wildlife, the boundary habitats are of higher quality and have good potential to support wildlife including reptiles, amphibians, birds, and bats.
- 1.15 Bat surveys have been carried out by AEWC Ltd for the building proposed for conversion, which identified the presence of a bat roost. As such, the works will be carried out under a licence, through which mitigation, compensation and enhancements for roosting bats will be incorporated. As such, enhancements for roosting bats have not been included in this enhancement strategy.
- 1.16 See Figure 2 for the aerial view of the site and Photographs 1 – 6 below from the site walkover.

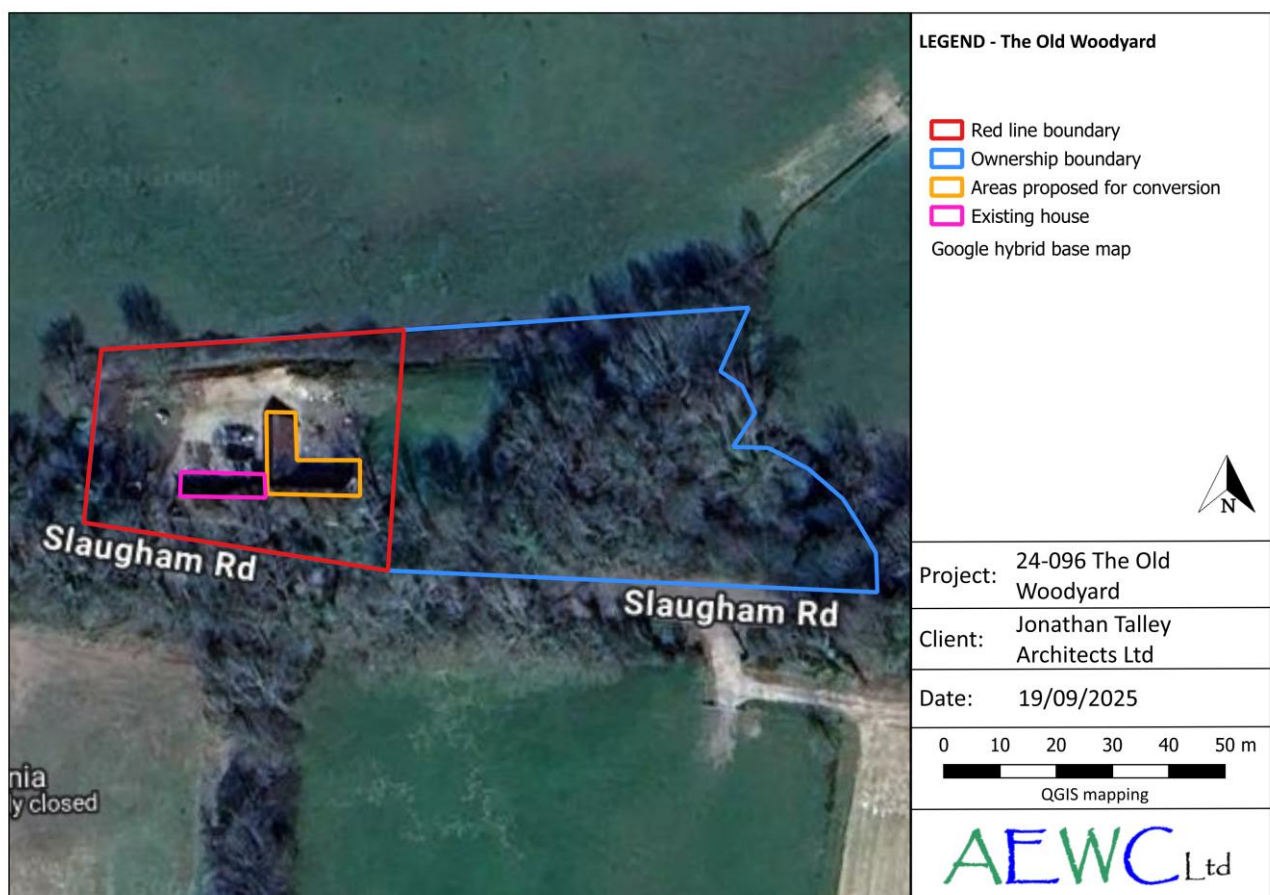


FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY



Photograph 1 – Courtyard proposed for enhancement.



Photograph 2 – Enhanced garden area at the western edge of the site.



Photograph 3 – Short mown grass lawn to the east of the buildings.



Photograph 4 – Wet ditch bordered by ruderal vegetation along the northern boundary.



Photograph 5 – Pond at the eastern end of the site.



Photograph 6 – Belt of woodland along the southern boundary.

2 Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

Purpose and Conservation Objectives

- 2.1 The purpose and conservation objectives of the proposed enhancement measures are:
- To provide new habitat features suitable for use by birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates;
 - To improve the ecological value of existing habitats; and
 - To increase the site's overall biodiversity value and scope to support wildlife.

Responsibilities

- 2.2 The implementation of the enhancement measures, initial aftercare, and long-term maintenance will be the responsibility of the property owners, Di and Mick Howe, who may appoint contractors to undertake the works as required.

Enhancement Measures

- 2.3 Locations of the enhancement measures are shown in Figure 3. Details are provided below.

New Planting

- 2.4 A Planting Plan has been compiled by Bright Green Horticultural Consultant for the courtyard area adjacent to the converted building and for around the existing pond. This has been reviewed and is considered to provide effective ecological enhancement. A range of native species and species of known benefit to wildlife, including pale coloured flowers that will attract the prey species of bats, have been incorporated into the design. Five small native trees, a mix of hawthorn and crab apple, will also be planted along the boundary between the courtyard and lawn with native woodland understory planting. Full details are provided in the planting plan.
- 2.5 The new plants and trees should be planted and cared for in line with instructions from the provider. Should any of the plants or trees fail, these are to be replaced during the next planting season.

Woodland Enhancement

- 2.6 Specimens of cherry laurel were seen to be growing in the belt of woodland along the southern boundary. Cherry laurel has invasive tendencies and can cause heavy shading as it spreads, inhibiting the growth of native woodland ground flora. The cherry laurel is to be removed to enhance the woodland.
- 2.7 Any cherry laurel plants present should preferably be removed through pulling or digging them out by hand. Spot spraying with chemicals is acceptable where required.
- 2.8 Ongoing surveillance for cherry laurel and other invasive species, such as rhododendron, is to be undertaken. Any invasive plants are to be removed at first sight before they can spread.

Bird Box

- 2.9 At least one bird box is to be installed on a mature tree within the woodland along the southern boundary. A traditional round-holed box is to be used of woodcrete construction or similar to ensure longevity. Examples include the 1B Schwegler Nest Box, Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Next Box, or Vivara Pro Seville 28mm WoodStone Next Box. The box is to be installed at a height of 2 – 4m, using an aluminium nail or screw to prevent tree damage. The box should be facing north or east to avoid overheating from sun exposure.
- 2.10 No maintenance of the bird box is required. However, if the box becomes damaged, it should be removed from the tree outside of the breeding bird period and either repaired or replaced.

Log Pile

- 2.11 A log pile is to be installed approximately halfway along the northern boundary, on the edge of the ruderal vegetation that borders the ditch. In this location, it will be subject to good sun exposure from the south and west and be well connected to habitat that reptiles and amphibians may use.
- 2.12 To build the log pile, a few large logs or thick branches are to be placed on the ground side-by-side, leaving small gaps between them. A second and third layer is then to be stacked in a criss-crossed pattern using mixed sizes of timber, creating lots of cavities. Include a few flat logs or boards on the top for basking surfaces and mix in brash, twigs and/or leaf litter to attract invertebrates. No treated timber is to be used.
- 2.13 The log pile should be inspected at least once a year to ensure access points are kept open. As old wood decays, it should be topped up with new logs or brash. This should be undertaken in late autumn or early spring for minimal impact.

Hibernaculum

- 2.14 A hibernaculum is to be installed near the southeast corner of the site, between the pond and the woodland where the feature will be mostly shaded and well connected to habitat that reptiles and amphibians may use.
- 2.15 To create the hibernaculum, dig a shallow pit about 1-2m² in area and approximately 40-60cm deep. Fill the lower pit with rubble, logs, bricks and/or stones, leaving plenty of gaps for voids. Layer this with more logs, brash, and woody debris, and mix in soil, leaf litter and/or turf to create insulation, but keep cavities intact. Finish with a mound of soil or turf approximately 30cm deep, planted with grass or wildflowers. Leave some of the log or stone edges exposed to provide access into the structure.
- 2.16 The hibernaculum should be inspected at least once a year to ensure the entrances remain open. Top up with logs and/or brash every 3-5 years as material decays. Do not disturb between November and February, when reptiles and amphibians may be hibernating.



FIGURE 3: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT LAYOUT