29.8

Wildlife/Ecological Impacts

The site is less than 350 metres from Hellington Nature Reserve and Rockland Broad. Rockland Broad is part of the Broads National Park and has internationally recognised environmental designations: Broadland Ramsar Sites, Broadland Special Protection Area and the Broads Special Area of Conservation. The site is within a 3km “buffer distance” to these. Rockland Broad is also a designated SSSI and is part of the Yare Broads and Marshes SSSI.

Site VCROC1 is very close to a self-designated wildlife conservation area. Of particularly importance is that the site acts as a green buffer corridor between the denser housing of the main village and the much more loosely spread, small pockets of housing on the outskirts of the village. The area is popular with local and visiting birdwatchers and naturalists due to its wide variety of flora and fauna. Numerous animals’ inhabitant this area including bats and Skylarks - a bird on the red list of globally threatened species - have continually nested since 2018 in this zone marked for development.

There has been a significant increase in visitors/tourists to this end of the village (since the Covid pandemic) which has not diminished. Any housing development (both during construction and after) would place further pressures on, and so displace, wildlife such as bat population and Skylarks, by depleting their food sources and from the negative impact of building and human intrusion on their habitats. Currently, the green space helps maintain the sense of an open, rural and tranquil landscape for both people and wildlife.