



ECOLOGICAL REVIEW & ACTION PLAN

WEBHEATH, REDDITCH, B97 6PX
for
HEYFORD DEVELOPMENTS LTD

July 2013
6243/HEIApr2

Betts Ecology

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BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SITE AUDIT	
Surveyor	Craig Emms, David Newman
Date of site risk assessment	18/07/2013
Site address	Webheath, Redditch, B97 6PX
Project proposed if known	New Housing Estates
Boundary as specified by client	YES
Site area (ha) & central OS Grid Ref.	84.4 ha plus 57.5 ha not surveyed. SP01536743
Survey date	18/07/2013

REPORT CONTROL General Report Information	
Date report issued	08/08/2013
Contract manager	Lizzie Bryce

Report Version Control

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1.0	24/07/2013	David Newman	Document created
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INTRODUCTION

Betts have been appointed by Heyford Developments Ltd to review the ecological appraisals prepared by Aspect Ecology in October 2012 and April 2012.

The site, approximately 140 ha in total, is currently split into three phases. Heyford Developments are currently seeking to have the land allocated as development land forming an extension to Webheath and Redditch, although the land is located within Bromsgrove District.

The Ecological Appraisals and this Review document are to support the application for the area to be allocated as development land within the local strategic plan.

This report will also propose further survey work to be carried out on the site, a timetable for the work and recommendations for the protection and enhancement of the site's ecological assets over the period of construction and beyond.

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISALS

The Ecological Appraisal, prepared by Aspect Ecology is in two volumes:

LAND OFF FOXLYDIATE LANE, REDDITCH
Ecological Appraisal: Constraints and Opportunities
October 2012
ECO3086.EcoAp.dv2
Which covers Phases 1 and 3

And

LAND SOUTH OF CUR LANE, REDDITCH
Ecological Appraisal: Constraints and Opportunities
April 2013
ECO3086.EcoAp.dv2
Which covers Phase 2

The ecological appraisals follow the guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management technical guidance series: Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

The reports contain:

Desk study and local records search

Review of national and local policy framework

Overview of each type of habitat within each Phase area, with the constraints and opportunities associated with each habitat.

Overview of each protect species (European and UK) located in each Phase area, with the constraints and opportunities associated with each species.

A summary with recommendations for further detailed surveys.

A brief appraisal of additional areas promoted for development in North Redditch.

Comparison of Potential Ecological Constraints between the areas proposed for development North of Redditch.

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL REVIEW

Surveyors from Betts visited Phases 1 and 2 of the site on 18 July 2013. The weather was hot and dry with a clear sky; this was during a prolonged period of dry hot weather.

Access to Phase 3 was not permitted by the land owner.

The sites were found to be in accordance with the habitats and ecological features maps in the Ecological Appraisal reports. However, some of the ponds, for example P13 in Phase 2, were now desiccated, with no sign of aquatic vegetation in those.

A good water flow still existed in the stream along the western boundary of Phase 2; however, the ditch on the south-western edge of Phase 1 was also dry and the water flow under Cur Lane from Phase 1 to Phase 2 was minimal.

Phase 2 consists of rough, botanically diverse grassland supporting a varied associated fauna. It is being managed for hay and grazing. The hedges are well established with some veteran trees, with associated bat and owl nesting potential (barn owl pellets were found) and doubtless other birds as well as a rich invertebrate fauna.

Phase 1 consists primarily of arable land or agriculturally improved grassland. There are also small areas of low grade woodland. Generally the hedges were more managed in this area, not as well established as in Phase 2 and annually trimmed. Isolated trees with bat and owl/ornithological potential (tawny owl pellets were found at the base of one tree).

A roe deer was noted within a thick hedgerow on Phase 1; deer are probably roaming across all of the Phases and beyond.

Phase 3, although not actually entered, was observed to be similar ecologically to the Phase 1 area.

The Betts surveyors agree with the findings and recommendations contained in the Ecological Assessments.

Finer detail and more surveys are required within both survey areas; however, this should only be carried out once the scope of the whole project has been decided.

Neither phases visited contain any obvious over-riding ecological constraints as a whole but Phase 2 would be more challenging and may, subject to more detailed examination and consultation, present obstacles making it economically and/or ecologically unattractive. Nonetheless, the application of excellent Green Infrastructure planning principles and assurance of permanent nature conservation

care and management of retained and integrated green space connected to the wider countryside, may be able to offer planning and biodiversity gains.

SITE PLANS

Please see Ecological Reports: Area 2 - land south of Cur Lane, Redditch (Aspect Ecology, April 2013) and Areas 1 & 3 - land off Foxlydiate Lane, Redditch (Aspect Ecology, October 2012) for Study Area Location, Ecological Designations and Habitats & Ecological Features plans.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

Prior to any further surveys being commissioned, the site is to be put before the planning committee for a decision regarding whether the land can be included within the strategic allocation of development land within Bromsgrove District Local Development Plan.

The Ecological Appraisals as presented contain all the required outline ecological information to inform such a policy decision.

Following a positive outcome, the site will need to be screened by Bromsgrove District Council for a decision whether a full Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is required which would be likely to include an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), or whether a planning application can be submitted without this.

The scope of ecological surveys and their timescales will depend on the outcome of the EIA screening decision. If a full EIA is required and all three phases are included in the assessment, then extensive and detailed ecological surveys across the full site will be required through the seasons.

If an EIA is not required, then planning applications for small parcels of land, spread over a longer time period, will be submitted and the relevant ecological surveys for each application will be carried out at the appropriate time. It is important that each survey is as current as possible for each planning application: if a survey is carried out now and an application for that area not submitted for, say, two years, then the survey will be out of date and will need an up-date.

Many surveys are subject to seasonal restraints. Not all surveys will be required across the whole site; surveys will be targeted on specific appropriate areas.

Table 1 - Further Surveys and Seasonal Constraints already identified.

Survey Type	Areas to be surveyed	Seasonal Constraints
Phase 1 habitat survey	All Phases	Available all year but prefer not winter
Hedgerow & veteran trees surveys (if any hedgerows/veteran trees are to be affected by development)	Phase 2	Spring/Summer
River Corridor Survey of the watercourse at the western study area boundary (to include specific survey work for water vole, crayfish and other aquatic invertebrates, and otter)	Phase 2	March – September
Bat survey work to establish the presence/absence of any roosts and general levels of bat activity	Selected trees in Phase 1 & 3 and transect survey in Phase 2	April – September
Great crested newt survey of any suitable ponds within the study area and within 500m of the development boundary	All Phases	March – May

Reptile survey of any suitable habitat (e.g. rough grassland, scrub, etc.) within the development boundary	Phase 2	April – September
Dormouse survey of any suitable habitat (e.g. woodland, hedgerows, etc.) within the development boundary	Phase 2 and Cur Lane	May – September
Breeding bird survey	Phase 2	March – September
Barn owl Survey	Phase 2	January – July
Badger Survey	Phase 1 & 2 (& probably 3)	February – September
Terrestrial invertebrate scoping survey followed by detailed specialist group survey dependent on results	Phase 2	Late Spring–Summer
Up to date Local Records Search so that a full and recent set of information on all designated sites, important registered habitats and all recorded notable species are to hand.	Whole local area	Needed if more than a year passes from the last Records Search in April 2013.

N.B. Further surveys and areas may be required once the Phase 1 Habitat Surveys have been completed, for example phytosociological survey of any notable botanical communities in Phase 2.

The EIA will result in publication of the Environmental Statement covering all aspects of the impact the site will have on the local environment. One part of this will be the Flora and Fauna chapter detailing the findings of all the surveys and the mitigation and compensation measures incorporated into the site design in concert with full public and statutory body consultation.

The master plan will use “Green Infrastructure” planning to ensure the minimum impact is caused to the local ecology and the maximum benefit is gained for biodiversity.

Further requirements emanating from surveys notwithstanding, before any development or site preparation starts, a Management Plan for Biodiversity (MPB) will need to be written, agreed and implemented across the whole site, ensuring the permanent protection and care of the site’s ecological assets and retained green spaces.

Important

Please note that there is complex and strict legislation protecting many species and habitats. For European Protected Species (including bats, great crested newt, dormouse, otter, *etc.*) there is no longer a clear defence against harm being caused as an incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation. Full details are available on the web sites of DEFRA and the various statutory authorities, some of which now have direct powers of enforcement. If you are in any doubt about the status of species or habitats on your site, please be sure to contact us before undertaking any site work. You should also make sure that you are aware of, and have allowed for, all national and local planning policies relating to wildlife and nature conservation before proceeding.

Please be aware that, because the natural environment is dynamic, ecological reports generally have a limited period of currency. The inspection reported here is a snapshot and should not normally be regarded as being valid beyond three months from the visit date. Please remember that this brief eco-check will not be sufficient on its own for planning application purposes unless the site is clearly of negligible ecological value, and even then biodiversity enhancement should always be considered.

CAPABILITY and QUALITY ASSURANCE

Founded in 1985 to provide high quality professional services to meet an increasing market demand in applied environmental sciences, the Practice stems from the original Betts family business which was established in 1760 for the refining and recycling of high value industrial wastes and mineral ores. Betts thus offer an unusual blend of technological and practical expertise in a range of environmental disciplines, allied particularly to the biological conservation legislation and biodiversity policies of recent years. Contracts undertaken cover a wide spectrum of projects at local, national and international levels in the construction, extractive, agricultural, leisure, energy and general industrial sectors. Scientific staff belong to appropriate professional institutes by whose codes of practice they abide. Due consideration of the forthcoming British Standard BS42020 (Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development) is included in relevant work and applied where appropriate.

Craig Emms - MSc, MCIEEM - Ecological Consultant for Biodiversity

Craig is a professional ecologist with over thirty-five years of practical experience, both in the UK and overseas. He has carried out academic research on a broad range of wildlife, including insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, and published the results as scientific papers in a number of international peer-reviewed journals. He also has considerable experience as a field ecologist, especially regarding wildlife and countryside management. He is a licensed bat surveyor and roost visitor.

Dr Christopher Betts - BSc(Hons) PhD CBiol FBNA MSB MCIEEM MEnvSc - Chairman, Director of Science

Dr Betts holds a first class honours degree in ecology, land-use and biology and a doctorate in phytosociology. He is a Chartered Biologist, Fellow of the British Naturalists' Association and a Member of the professional institutes as above. He has twenty years' experience in heavy industry and twenty-seven in ecological professional practice with expertise and a lifetime's experience in a range of environmental science and natural history subjects. Dr Betts has a particular focus on legally protected species and on wildlife legislation as it affects land-use, industry, planning and commerce. He has served as a member of the Natural History Museum's Identification Qualification (IdQ) Advisory Board and is involved in various Professional Institute initiatives. He is also Editor of the Worcestershire Naturalists' Club's Transactions, one of the oldest natural history societies in Britain.

IMPORTANT NOTES

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Please note that this report is a basic ecological site check only of factors and features that may be significant for regulatory compliance and biodiversity policies relating to change of use or other disturbance. Such reports will generally not contain sufficient information for a planning application and further more detailed study will often be required.

Betts are a scientific practice. Any information relating to legal matters in this report is provided in good faith but does not purport in any way to give any advice on or interpretation of the law whatsoever. Professional legal advice should always be sought. Any designs, specifications, advice, suggestions, or comments written or verbal relating to construction or supervision of building-related work of any kind are provided for consideration only and under no circumstances are to be interpreted as provision of design, management or supervision sensu the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.



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