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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Stoke Fruit Farm

June 2020

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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for: Stoke Fruit Farm, 77 Havant Road, Hayling Island, PO11 0PT

Report for:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Jenny Bennett Ecology was appointed by Sam Wilson to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the development site at Stoke Fruit Farm (77 Havant Road, Hayling Island, Hampshire, PO11 0PT: NGR SU 7213 0204). This report has subsequently been prepared to support a planning application for: proposed new vehicular access for use by tractors and goods vehicles (application reference APP/19/00083).

1.2 Site location

The site at Fruit Farm is located just to the south of the A3023 on Hayling Island (see Figure 1). The site is surrounded on 3 sides with residential and farm buildings with the A3023 forming the northern site boundary. A pond is situated in the garden of the farmhouse. The built-up areas of Stoke and Fleet extend to the north and south along Castlemans Lane and the A3023. Arable fields and pasture with an extensive network of hedgerows lie beyond the built-up areas.

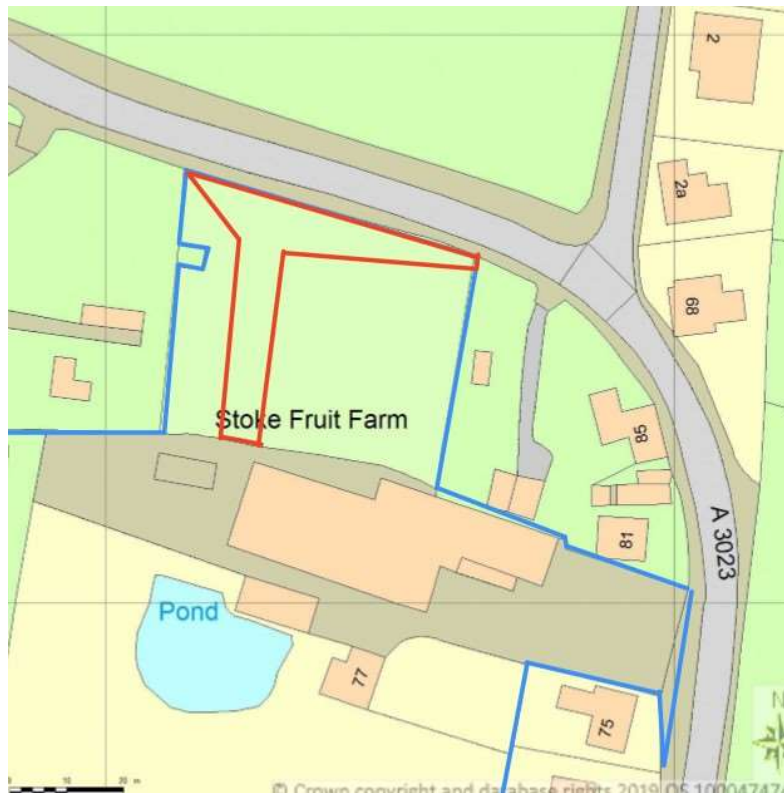


Figure 1. Location of the site at Stoke Fruit Farm



Figure 2. Landscape setting for the site at Stoke Fruit Farm

2. Survey Methodology

2.1 Desk study

The MAGIC website was checked for statutorily-designated sites located within 5km of the development site; and also records of European Protected Species licences in the area. The Havant Borough Council Interactive Policies Map was checked for details of any locally-designated sites within 1km of the development site.

A full request for records to the Hampshire Biological Information Centre (HBIC) has not been made at this stage.

2.2 PEA survey

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) survey of the site was undertaken by Jenny Bennett BSc MSc MCIEEM PIEMA on the 24th June 2020 in accordance with Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017) and BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development (British Standards Institute, 2013).

The survey identified the habitat types currently present across the site and in immediately adjacent areas. The survey followed the standardised system for classifying British habitats as set out in the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit (Joint Nature Conservancy Council, 2016). During the survey, the potential of habitat features within the site to support protected and notable species was also recorded.

3. Results

3.1 Desk study

Statutorily-designated sites within 5km of the site at Stoke Fruit Farm are shown in Figure 3 and described in Table 1. The legislation and policy that provides protection for these sites is summarised in Annex I.

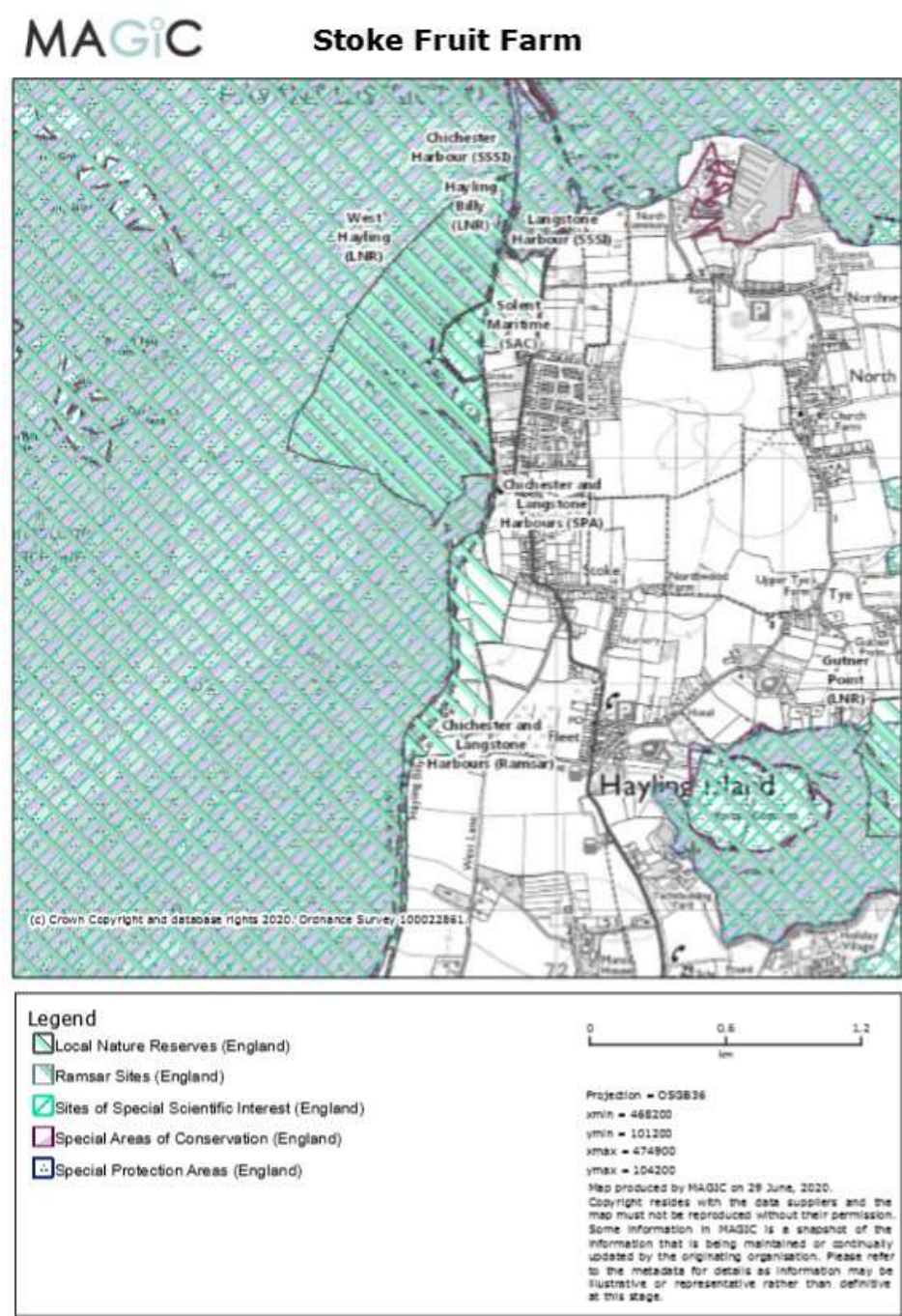


Figure 3. Statutorily-designated sites (taken from MAGiC)

Table 1. Statutorily-designated sites within 5km of the site at Stoke Fruit Farm

Site	Description	Distance from development site
Hayling Billy Local Nature Reserve	Coastal footpath, bridlepath and cycleway along the shoreline of Langstone Harbour, following the route of the former Hayling Billy railway and with access points to the foreshore of Langstone Harbour. Notable for rare plants and birds.	400m west
Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (overlapping national designations: Chichester Harbour SSSI and Langstone Harbour SSSI)	Designated on the basis of 3 Annex I habitats (estuaries, <i>Spartina</i> swards and Atlantic salt meadows). A series of additional Annex I habitats are also present, but not a primary reason for selection (sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time; mudflats and sandbanks not covered by seawater at low tide; coastal lagoons; annual vegetation of drift lines; perennial vegetation of stony banks; <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising sand and mud; and shifting dunes). The site also supports Desmoulin's whorl snail.	580m west and 560m east
Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) (overlapping national designations: Chichester Harbour SSSI and Langstone Harbour SSSI)	The large, sheltered estuarine basins comprise of extensive sandflats and mudflats exposed at low tide. The mudflats are rich in invertebrates and also support extensive beds of algae, especially, eelgrasses (<i>Zostera</i> spp.) and <i>Enteromorpha</i> species. This site supports breeding little tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) and sandwich tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>); on passage little egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>); overwintering bar-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) and little egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>). The site also supports the migratory species of ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>), black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>), dark-bellied brent goose (<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>), dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>), grey plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>), redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) and ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>). The area also regularly supports an assemblage of at least 20,000 waterfowl.	580m west and 560m east
Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar (overlapping national designations: Chichester Harbour SSSI and Langstone Harbour SSSI)	Two large estuarine basins linked by a channel and including extensive intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, sand and shingle spits, and dunes supporting reedbeds and some grassland. Numbers of wintering waterbirds regularly exceed 20,000 individuals and include internationally and nationally important numbers of several species. Site supports important plant and invertebrate assemblages.	580m west and 560m east

A review of Havant Borough Council Interactive Policies Map found that the following Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) are located in the vicinity (see Figure 4):

- A series of coastal SINC sites, 440m to the west at the closest point (designated under Hampshire SINC Criteria 6A, 2D, 2B and 4A);
- A SINC site located 450m to the south east (designated under Hampshire SINC Criteria 4A and 6B).



Figure 4. Locally-designated sites (taken from the Havant Borough Council Interactive Policies Map)

There is no habitat present within the development area that supports the network of internationally and nationally designated sites associated with Hayling Island. In particular, the development site is not included within the network of non-designated terrestrial wader and brent goose sites that support the Solent Special Protection Areas (SPA) as part of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy. In addition, there is no potential source-receptor pathway that would result in potential indirect impacts on the designated sites. As such, there is no likely significant impact arising to the European sites; and designated sites have not been considered further in this report.

A search of the MAGIC website found that no European protected species licences have been granted within or in the immediate vicinity of Stoke Fruit Farm. In addition, there are no records on MAGIC of great crested newt arising from pond surveys or survey licence returns.

3.2 Habitats

Habitats recorded within the site boundary have been described below. The Phase I map has been provided at Annex II.

Bare ground

The site had been recently cleared of vegetation and bare earth comprises the dominant habitat (including 100% of the land within the application boundary) (see Plate 1).



Plate 1. Bare earth within the site

Building

There is an agricultural shed and a portacabin located immediately to the north of the site (see Plate 2).



Plate 2. Building immediately to the north of the site

Fence

A fence demarcates the eastern site boundary (see Plate 3).



Plate 3. Fence along the eastern site boundary

Defunct species-poor hedge

An overgrown species-poor hedge demarcates the western site boundary (see Plates 1 and 4). Woody species include sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, elm *Ulmus sp.*, plum sp. *Prunus sp.*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.* and elder *Sambucus nigra*. The ground flora is dominated by ivy *Hedera helix* with occasional cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum* and cleavers *Galium aparine*.



Plate 4. Western boundary hedgerow

Scattered broad-leaved trees

There are several scattered broad-leaved trees in the vicinity of the site, including:

- a mature sycamore adjacent to the junction with the A3023 (see Plate 5);
- a mature ash plus several leggy semi-mature trees in a line adjacent to the junction with the A3023 (see Plate 6); and
- and a mature oak *Quercus robur* adjacent to the south eastern corner of the site (see Plate 7).



Plate 5. Mature sycamore, western side of the junction



Plate 6. Line of scattered trees, including mature ash, eastern side of the junction



Plate 7. Mature oak adjacent to south eastern corner of the site

Scattered conifer trees

A line of Leylandii *Cupressus × leylandii* trees demarcates part of the northern site boundary (see Plate 8).



Plate 8. Leylandii trees, northern site boundary

Scrub

Occasional scrub associated with the site boundaries includes elder and elm (see for example Plates 4 and 8).

Short perennial/ ephemeral and tall ruderal

A narrow strip of vegetation comprising a mix of short perennial / ephemeral vegetation and tall ruderal vegetation runs parallel to the fence on the eastern site boundary (see Plate 3). Characteristic species here include: nettle *Urtica dioica*, nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, smooth sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, prickly sow-thistle *Sonchus asper*, prickly lettuce *Lactuca serriola*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, opium poppy *Papaver somniferum*, garlic mustard *Alliaria petiolata*, feverfew *Tanacetum parthenium*, American willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum*, hoary willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*, scentless mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, dandelion *Taraxacum agg.*, sun spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, scarlet pimpernel *Lysimachia arvensis*, sterile brome *Anisantha sterilis* and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*.

Dry ditch

A dry ditch runs west from the south western corner of the fence (see Plate 9). There was no vegetation associated with the ditch. The landowner confirmed the ditch takes highway drainage and runoff from the farm site.



Plate 9. Dry ditch

3.3 Protected and notable species

The area within the development site boundary is currently comprised of bare ground devoid of vegetation and is considered to have negligible potential to support protected or notable species. The defunct hedgerow and scattered trees adjacent to the development site are considered to have potential to support common species of nesting bird such as blue tit, great tit or wren.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The area within the development site boundary is currently comprised of bare ground devoid of vegetation and is of negligible ecological value. The site has negligible potential to support protected or notable species.

There are some features immediately adjacent to the site which have ecological value at the site level, including the defunct hedgerow and scattered trees. It is understood that these will be retained.

The development proposals are therefore considered to result in negligible ecological impact and minimal ecological mitigation measures are recommended, to include the following:

- Retention of all existing hedgerows, trees and scrub on the site. Ensure that the root protection zone of all retained mature trees remains intact and undisturbed during the development works; and
- No lighting should be erected in conjunction with the new access to ensure no potential impact on bats.

National and local planning policy (see Annex I) requires biodiversity net gain to be achieved in association with development. As such, the following biodiversity enhancement measure is recommended (see Figure 5):

- Plant up gaps in the line of trees on the eastern side of the junction with native scrub species aimed at establishing a wide hedgerow and trees. Suitable species would include hawthorn, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, field maple *Acer campestre*, grey willow *Salix cinerea*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and wild plum *Prunus domestica*.

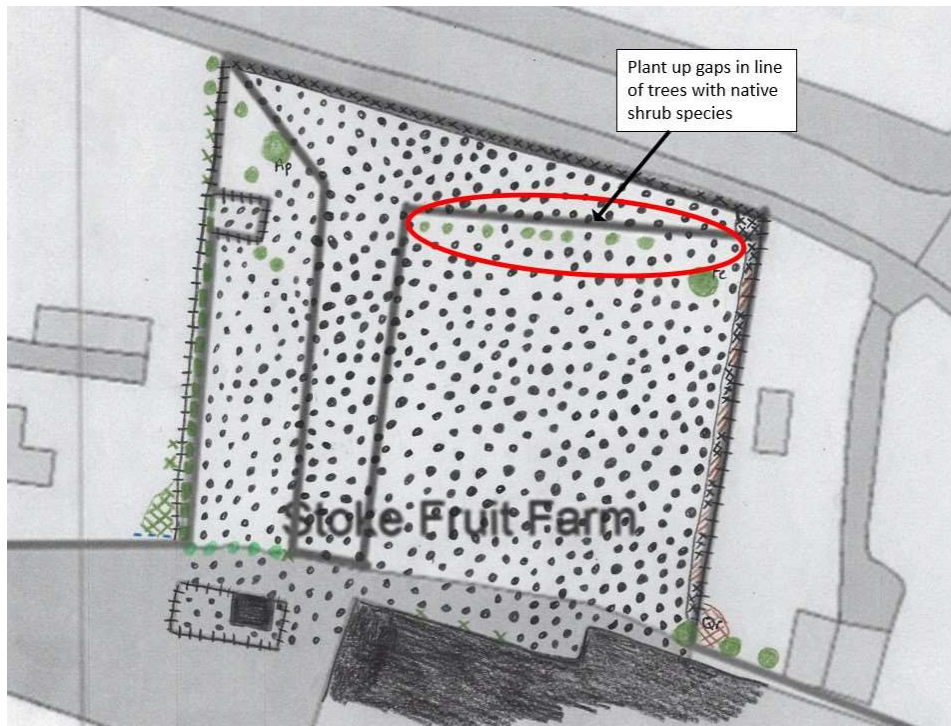


Figure 5. Recommended biodiversity enhancement measures

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Annex I. Legislation and planning policy relating to this PEA

Sites – legal protection

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) receive stringent legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). Development proposals with the potential to affect a SAC or SPA must be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment by the Competent Authority (in this case, the local planning authority). Where the assessment concludes that there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of a SAC or SPA, the development must be refused planning permission, unless certain stringent tests are met (i.e. the development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest; there are no alternatives; and suitable compensatory measures are available to secure the network of European sites).

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention, an intergovernmental treaty agreed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. Contracting Parties are expected to 'manage their Ramsar Sites so as to maintain their ecological character and retain their essential functions and values for future generations.' Statutory protection for Ramsar sites is underpinned by overlapping designation as SSSI and usually SAC and SPA. In addition, the NPPF (see below) extends the same protection to Ramsar sites at a policy level as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) provides statutory protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, disturb or destroy land known to be an SSSI or intentionally or recklessly disturb the wildlife in an SSSI. Statutory bodies (including Local Planning Authorities) have a general duty to take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of the special feature of SSSIs. The NPPF extends additional policy protection to SSSIs (see below).

Legal protection for relevant species

All species of wild bird are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) from killing or injury. In addition, it is an offence to take or damage / destroy their eggs and to damage or destroy a nest whilst it is in use.

Planning policy - national

Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (UK Government, 2019) requires impacts to biodiversity to be minimised. In particular, paragraph 176 extends the same protection to Ramsar sites as afforded to SACs and SPAs. Paragraph 175(b) states that development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted.

Paragraph 175(a) states that when determining planning applications, local authorities should refuse planning permission where significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF requires planning decisions to minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including through establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

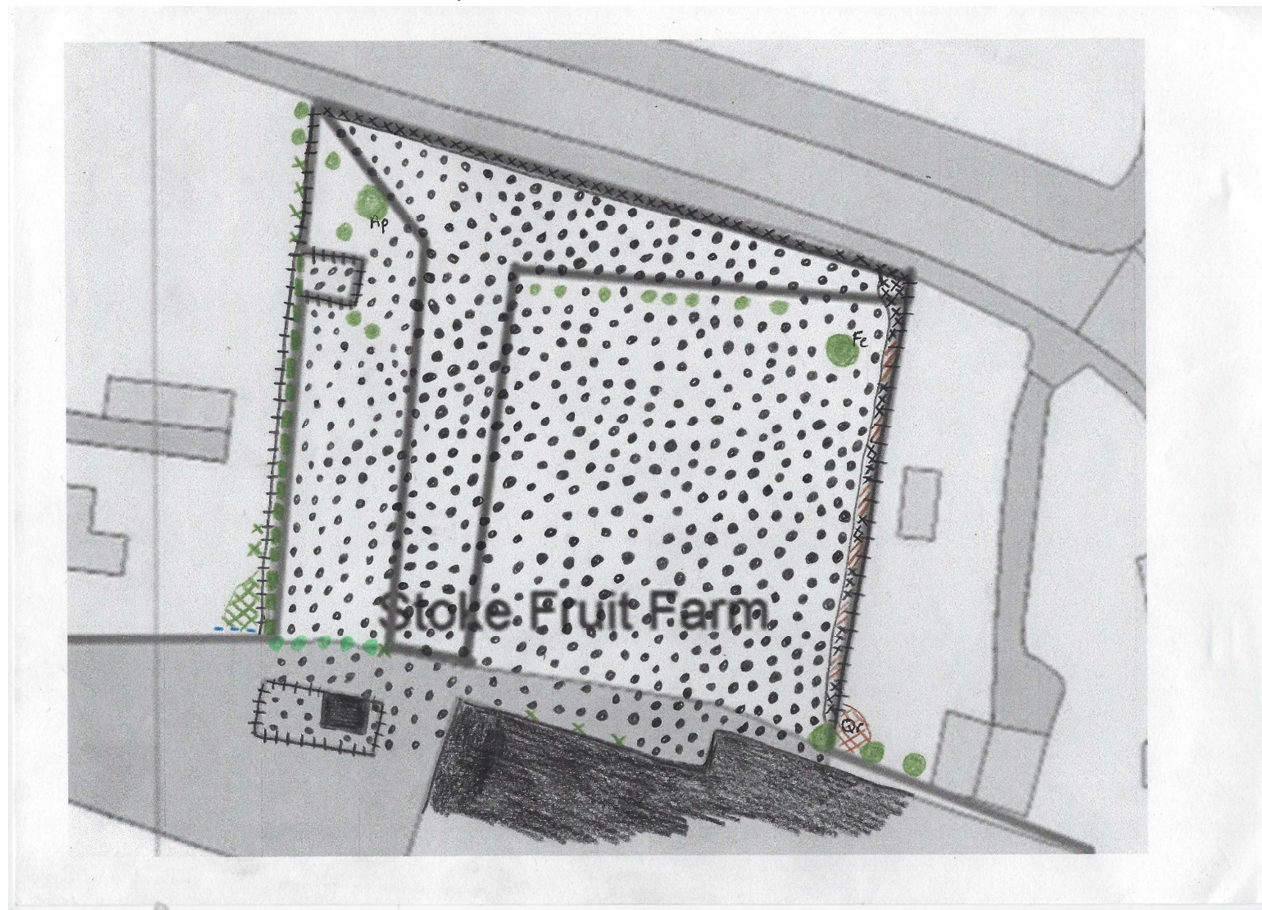
Planning policy – local

Policy DM8 (Conservation, Protection and Enhancement of Existing Natural Features) within the Havant Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted March 2011) states that development will only be

permitted where it protects and enhances local habitats. Development must meet a range of criteria, including:

- Protect natural features of nature conservation and/or amenity importance on the site, for example trees, woodlands, hedgerows, soils, streams, stream corridors, springs, ditches or ponds from damage, destruction and a deterioration in quality.
- Sympathetically incorporates existing features into the overall design of the scheme including measures taken to ensure their continued survival.
- Provides new landscape works that integrate successfully with the local environment and existing natural features, using local materials and plant species and making provision for future maintenance of new landscape works associated with new developments.

Annex II. Phase I habitat map



Phase I Habitat Key

Bare ground	
Building	
Fence	
Scattered scrub	
Dense scrub	
Introduced shrub	
Dry ditch	
Tall ruderal vegetation	
Short perennial/ ephemeral vegetation	
Defunct species-poor hedgerow	
Scattered conifer trees	
Scattered broad-leaved trees	
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> (sycamore)	Ap
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (ash)	Fe
<i>Quercus sp.</i> (oak)	Qr