
Harts Farm Way (Phase 1), Havant, Hampshire

Ecological Mitigation Strategy

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1. Introduction

- 1.01 This Ecological Mitigation Strategy (EMS) relates to Harts Farm Way (Phase 1), Havant, Hampshire, from here on referred to as the 'Site'. The Site is located at an approximate central grid reference: 470678, 105859.
- 1.02 A planning application for development of the Site was submitted in March 2018, reference number: APP/18/00287. An Ecological Assessment was submitted as part of the application, report reference: R01/AC/HFW/2018. Since submission, comments have been received from the Council's Ecologist, which recommend that a brief mitigation strategy be produced, relating to vegetation removal and protected species, and to include proposals for landscape planting.
- 1.03 This EMS seeks to meet the Ecologist's recommendations and fulfil the requirements of any pre-commencement planning conditions in relation to Phase 1 of the proposed Harts Farm Way development.

2. Background

- 2.0.1 An Ecological Assessment was carried out to inform the planning application for Harts Farm Way (Phase 1), which determined that the Site is considered to be of low nature conservation value. There is, however, some low potential for protected species to be present, notably reptiles and nesting birds; consequently, some small-scale mitigation measures will be required in advance of the development commencing. Further details relating to the species concerned are provided below:

2.1 Reptiles

- 2.1.1 Common species of reptiles, such as the common lizard, slow-worm, grass snake and adder, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA), which makes it illegal to intentionally kill or injure these species.
- 2.1.2 Based on the findings of the Ecological Assessment, which confirmed that the Site had undergone major disturbance in recent years with limited suitability for reptiles, it was considered unlikely that reptiles would be encountered within the Site. However, as reptiles have been confirmed within suitable habitat beyond the Site in the surrounding area, there remains a residual risk of reptiles being encountered on Site, albeit low.
- 2.1.3 Consequently, an ecological watching brief is recommended prior to works commencing on Site, to ensure that animal welfare and compliance with legislation are fully considered. The watching brief will ensure that the risk of killing or injury of reptiles is negligible, and that reptiles are removed into areas of retained habitat.
- 2.1.4 Further details of pre-works checks and ecological supervision required in relation to reptiles is provided in Section 3.

2.2 Breeding Birds

- 2.2.1 All wild birds, their egg and nests are protected under the WCA.
- 2.2.2 Due to the presence of suitable bird nesting habitat within the Site, such as areas of scrub, trees, and brash, which will be removed to accommodate the proposed development, consideration will need to be given to breeding birds prior to the removal of these habitats from the Site.
- 2.2.3 Section 3 provides details of the recommended approach to vegetation removal in relation to nesting birds.

3. Ecological Watching Brief

- 3.0.1 This section details the measures to be taken to ensure that the protection of reptiles and nesting birds is fully addressed prior to any construction works commencing on Site. This will ensure that reasonable effort is taken to avoid harm to such species, in line with the requirements of the WCA, and to enable any planning condition to be discharged. Works will be supervised by an experienced ecologist, where necessary.

3.1 Reptiles

- 3.1.1 Prior to the removal of vegetation and brash within the Site, such areas will be carefully checked for evidence of reptiles. Works to clear rubble/bricks etc, will initially be undertaken by hand, as advised by the ecologist, and will also be checked for signs of reptiles.
- 3.1.2 Vegetation removal within the Site will be undertaken using hand tools, reducing the vegetation height gradually. Any features suitable for sheltering reptiles beneath the vegetation will be dismantled and searches will be made for signs of reptiles.
- 3.1.3 In the unlikely event that reptiles are found, they will be captured using a combination of hand-searching and, if considered necessary, artificial reptile refugia (such as roofing felt), which will be placed across the site to accelerate their capture. The most suitable approach to reptile capture will be determined by the ecologist. Any reptiles found will be relocated from the works footprint into areas of suitable, retained habitat beyond the Site, near suitable refuges and hibernacula. The chosen off-site area will be confirmed prior to any mitigation works commencing. If considered necessary, the reptile receptor area will be secured and protected from any adjacent works with reptile-proof fencing.
- 3.1.4 Should reptiles be present, habitat enhancements will be carried out at the off-site reptile receptor area, such as the creation of artificial refuges and hibernacula, using existing rubble, bricks and logs, for example, from within the Site. These works will be guided by the ecologist and will be carried out in advance of any further Site clearance or construction activities.
- 3.1.5 A final destructive search will then be undertaken, supervised by the ecologist, which will also form the first stage of Site clearance. This is likely to be carried out using a suitable excavator and would involve the careful removal of the topsoil within the works footprint. The ecologist will carry out a fingertip search ahead of works and maintain a watching brief for reptiles (and other fauna) throughout the topsoil strip. Any reptiles encountered at this stage will be re-located into the reptile receptor area.
- 3.1.6 All the above activities will be carried out during the period when reptiles are active, which is approximately between April and October, and in advance of any construction works commencing.

3.2 Birds

- 3.2.1 The removal of any remaining trees or scrub and brash should ideally be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season, which is generally considered to be between March and August (inclusive). However, when vegetation removal is necessary during the bird

breeding season, checks of suitable nesting bird habitat will need to be made by an ecologist, prior to their removal and in advance of works commencing on Site.

- 3.2.2 During the bird breeding season, the following protocol will be adhered to on Site, prior to works commencing:
- 3.2.3 Prior to the commencement of vegetation removal on Site, an initial nesting bird check will be undertaken to identify and locate any active nests and/or other signs of nesting birds. Checks will be carried out a maximum of 48hrs prior to the scheduled removal of vegetation.
- 3.2.4 Where active nests are identified, an appropriate buffer zone will be set out around the vegetation, which will be marked out with high visibility barrier tape to identify the area as a No-Go Zone.
- 3.2.5 All active nests will remain protected and the No-Go Zones retained in place until all young have fledged and dispersed, the nest is disused, or judged to have been abandoned. Regular checks will continue to be made by the ecologist during this period to identify any additional active nests, and/or to confirm when the area(s) no longer require protection.
- 3.2.6 Once nests are considered inactive, the ecologist will give the go-ahead to remove vegetation, which will then be made unsuitable for nesting birds. This will be carried out within 24 hours to reduce the likelihood of further nesting birds in the area.

4. Planting Proposals

- 4.0.1 As part of the proposed development, a planting scheme will be implemented, which will include areas of new trees and shrubs. The species will comprise a mix of ornamental and native planting, with blocks of native shrubs forming much of the planting scheme.
- 4.0.2 Ornamental tree and shrub planting will be concentrated around the entrance and along the northern and eastern Site boundaries, with native trees and shrubs planted within the southern perimeter of the Site.
- 4.0.2 The planting scheme is currently being developed and is anticipated to include native trees such as alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*). The native shrub mix will include field maple, hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), dog-rose (*Rosa canina*) and guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*).
- 4.0.3 The proposed scheme will increase the area of native tree and shrub planting on Site, and in turn, will provide a future source of food and nesting sites for birds and mammals, additional habitat for invertebrates, as well as new foraging and commuting corridors for bats present within the local area.