
Harts Farm Way (Phase 1), Havant, Hampshire

Ecological Assessment

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Executive Summary

- Alex Clayton CEnv MCIEEM was commissioned by Ridge and Partners LLP to carry out an Ecological Assessment of land at Harts Farm Way (Phase 1) in Havant, Hampshire.
- Overall the Site is of low ecological value, comprised of a mix of short ephemeral and tall ruderal vegetation, mature conifer trees and occasional scrub, with limited potential for protected species to use the Site.
- No designated sites are present within or adjacent to the Site. Two sites of European importance and one nationally important site are located within 1km of the Site, as are four sites of local importance.
- Although numerous records for a range of protected and notable species have been confirmed within 1km of the Site, the Site itself provides very limited potential to support such species.
- The proposed development will be managed so as to avoid negative impacts on features of ecological importance, either within or near to the Site. Mitigation and compensation measures will ensure that replacement habitat of nature conservation value is available long-term and that the limited range of species, which may be affected by the proposals, will be fully considered.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 This report presents the findings of an Ecological Assessment of land at Harts Farm Way in Havant, Hampshire, from here on referred to as the 'Site'. Information contained in this report relates to Phase 1 of the proposed re-development, which will be delivered in two phases: Phase 1 and Phase 2.
- 1.02 The purpose of the Ecological Assessment was to determine the presence or potential presence of any important, rare or protected habitats or species within or near to the Site, in order to identify any constraints to development, the need for mitigation and the potential for enhancement.

1.1 Site Context

- 1.1.1 The Site forms part of a remaining plot of previously developed land, surrounded by industrial units and warehouses in the Broadmarsh Industrial Area. It is directly bordered by access roads to the north and east (Hermitage Park), Harts Farm Way to the south, and Phase 2 of the proposed re-development to the west, with the Harts Farm Way Stream located beyond the boundary to the north and west.
- 1.1.2 The Site is located at an approximate central grid reference: 470678, 105859.

1.2 Scheme Proposals

- 1.2.1 The scheme proposes the construction of four industrial units spread over two, double height buildings, with the provision of car and cycle parking. A new vehicular access is proposed on the northern Site boundary off Hermitage Park and the current access from Harts Farm Way will be sealed off. The Site will be landscaped with trees, shrubs and areas of grassland incorporated into the design.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 A request for information was made to the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC), which provided details of internationally and nationally designated sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), and records of protected and notable species located within 1km of the Site.
- 2.1.2 The desk study also included an internet-based search of the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website: www.magic.gov.uk and a review of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and relevant nature conservation policies.
- 2.1.3 A review of ecology information and reports pertaining to adjacent developments was also carried out, which included the following documents:
- Ecological Assessment (Draft), Land at Hermitage Park, Harts Farm Way, Havant. Ecology Solutions, November 2016, on behalf of Travis Perkins (Properties) Ltd / Keyline.
 - Ecological Assessment, Site 4, Harts Farm Way, Havant, Hampshire. ECOSA, August 2013.
 - Ecological Appraisal, Proposed New Plant Hire Depot, Hermitage Park, Hart's Farm, Havant. Encon Associates Ltd, October 2017.
 - Green Frog planning application documents from the Havant Borough Council planning portal relating directly to the Site, planning application reference: APP1700511.

2.2 Site Survey

- 2.2.1 A habitat survey of the Site was carried out using the standard field methodology detailed in the Phase 1 habitat survey handbook¹ to identify the dominant habitats and plant species present.
- 2.2.2 The survey was extended further to assess the Site's potential to support a number of protected species, including nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians (including great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)), dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), otter (*Lutra lutra*) and bats. In addition, the Site was searched for signs of badger (*Meles meles*), such as setts, latrines and well-worn paths.

Survey Limitations

- 2.2.3 The survey was undertaken outside of the recommended survey season for a Phase 1 Habitat survey and as such, the range of species encountered would represent only a proportion of the species present on Site. However, based on the habitats encountered, it is unlikely that surveys carried out later in the season would alter the nature conservation assessment of the Site.

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit. Peterborough.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 Information obtained through desk study sources is detailed below, with a copy of the data provided by HBIC included in Appendix 1.

Designated Sites

Statutorily Designated Sites

- 3.1.2 Langstone and Chichester Harbours receive special protection through both national and international statutory designations. Two sites of international importance: The Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar / Special Protection Area (SPA), and the nationally designated Langstone Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), are located approximately 490m to the south/south-west of the Site, at their closest point. (See Appendix 1 for the sites' locations).
- 3.1.3 The Solent Maritime SAC, protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in the UK, is primarily designated due to the presence of several key habitats. The Solent has a major estuarine system, including important sediment and inter-tidal habitats, as well as extensive areas of *Spartina* (cord-grass) swards, including uncommon species. The Solent also contains the second-largest area of Atlantic salt meadows in south and south-west England.²
- 3.1.4 The Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar / SPA, also protected through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, is of international importance for the large populations of migrant and overwintering waders and wildfowl.
- 3.1.5 Langstone Harbour SSSI is a tidal basin, which has an extensive area of exposed mud flats at low water, much of which is encompassed within the Solent Maritime SAC and the Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar / SPA. The SSSI includes one of the largest areas of mixed saltmarsh on the south coast and some of the largest eelgrass beds in Britain. Farlington Marshes also forms part of the SSSI, which comprises brackish and freshwater marsh, and a lagoon, with associated reed bed and grassland habitats. The site's rich intertidal system attracts the large populations of migrant and overwintering waders and wildfowl, which feed on the abundance of intertidal invertebrates and eelgrass beds³.

Non-statutorily Designated Sites - SINCs

- 3.1.6 Data provided by HBIC revealed that four non-statutory SINCs are located within 1km of the Site, details of which are given in Table 1. No SINCs are located either within or in close proximity to the Site. Details of the SINCs and a map indicating their locations are provided in Appendix 1.

² SAC data accessed on 8th February 2018 at: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCODE=UK0030059>

³ SSSI citation accessed on 8th February 2018 via: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1001182>

Table 1: SINCs located within 1km of the Site

Name of SINC	Location of SINC in relation to the Site (approximate) and Central Grid Reference (CGR)	Size of SINC (ha)	SINC Criteria and Reason for Designation
Manor Farm A	485m to the north-west of the Site, north-west of the A27 CGR: SU70000610	9.23	Regularly supports significant over-wintering populations of Dark-Bellied Brent Geese.
Broadmarsh Playing Field	460m to the west/south-west of the Site CGR: SU70020563	4.71	Regularly supports significant over-wintering populations of Dark-Bellied Brent Geese.
Southmoor - Big Field (south edge)	860m to the south / south-east of the Site CGR: SU70980487	0.49	Coastal habitat.
Southmoor Reserve	790m to the south-east of the Site CGR: SU71200520	2.19	Agriculturally unimproved grassland with coastal influence and the notably rare plant: divided sedge.

3.1.7 In addition to the SINC's detailed in Table 1, a number of other non-statutory designated sites of importance for waders and brent geese (Wader and Brent Goose Strategy Sites) are located within 1km. However, these are not located either within or adjacent to the Site.

BAP Habitats

3.1.8 A review of habitats on MAGIC and data received from HBIC revealed that no UK BAP Priority habitats are present within or adjacent to the Site.

Species

3.1.9 Data provided by HBIC identified the presence of a number of legally protected species within 1km of the Site. These included: slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), water vole, and bat species: brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Myotis bat (*Myotis sp.*), pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus spp.*), including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

3.1.10 In addition, bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), including kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) and red kite

(*Milvus milvus*), have been recorded within 1km of the Site. Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), a UK BAP priority species has also been recorded within 1km of the Site.

- 3.1.11 The data search provided no records of notable or protected flora or fauna species from within or adjacent to the Site. Furthermore, the data search revealed no historic records of invasive plant species on the Site; however, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) was recorded on Harts Farm Way in 2008 (exact location not known).

Relevant Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1.12 Section 11, paragraph 109, of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), issued in March 2012, states that the planning system should contribute to “minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”. It also states that “opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged”.

Havant Borough Council

- 3.1.13 The Core Strategy 2011 and the Allocations Plan 2014 together form the current Havant Borough Local Plan, which sets the planning framework in the Borough until 2026.

Havant Borough Core Strategy March 2011

- 3.1.14 The Havant Borough Core Strategy was adopted by Havant Borough Council on 1 March 2011. Policies of relevance to the Site are detailed below:

- 3.1.15 Policy CS11 ‘Protecting and Enhancing the Special Environment and Heritage of Havant Borough’, states that:

- 3.1.16 Planning permission will be granted for development that:

- 3.1.17 Protects and where possible enhances the borough’s statutory and non-statutory designated landscape, habitats and features of biological, hydrological or geological interest. Protection and enhancement will be achieved by appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures including wardening, education and information and the creation of new habitats, water bodies/courses planting of new trees and woodland;

- 3.1.18 Has particular regard to the following hierarchy of nature conservation designations within the borough: (i) Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar [International]. (ii) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves [National]. (iii) Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), other Ancient Woodland not identified in (ii) above [Local].

Havant Borough Local Plan (Allocations) 2014

- 3.1.19 The Allocations Plan was formally adopted by Havant Borough Council on 23 July 2014. The Site itself forms part of the Havant Borough Employment allocations.

- 3.1.20 Policy AL7 Hermitage Stream, states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that positively contribute to the improvement of the Hermitage Stream, as shown on the Policies Map. Planning applications for development proposals within proximity of the Hermitage Stream that prevent improvements to the Hermitage Stream being delivered, may be refused.
- 3.1.21 Policy AL8 Local Green Spaces, states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that protect or enhance the Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals that would be harmful to these Local Green Spaces will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances.
- 3.1.22 Policy BD9 refers to Site Specific Development Requirements for the Harts Farm Way North site allocation, which include the following:
- Appropriate surveys/report to address potential ground quality/ground water issues;
 - Mitigate any impacts on Brent Geese and/or waders (Policy DM23);
 - Landscaping scheme to consider buffer to A27 and visual impact on views from Langstone Harbour;
 - Harts Farm Way Stream to be kept open and free from obstruction;
 - A Flood Risk Assessment, SUDS and other flood risk management measures may be required on the advice of the Environment Agency;
 - Given proximity to the coast Natural England may require studies to assess the potential impact on the SPAs and SACs.
- 3.1.23 Policy DM23 Sites for Brent Geese and Waders states that: planning permission will be granted for developments that avoid important sites for Brent Geese and/or waders outside of the statutory designated areas, identified on the Policies Map (see Desk Study data in Appendix 1).

3.2 Site Surveys

- 3.2.1 A survey of the Site was undertaken on the 29th January 2018. At the time of survey, weather conditions were dry and overcast, with a maximum temperature of 11°C accompanied by a cold breeze.
- 3.2.2 This section describes the habitats recorded within the Site and the potential for protected species of fauna or other species of nature conservation importance to be present within the Site. A Phase 1 habitat survey plan (Figure 1) and corresponding Target Note descriptions are included in Appendix 2. Photographs of habitats and features recorded are included in Appendix 3.

Habitats and Flora

- 3.2.3 The Site comprised of areas of remnant hardstanding and made-up ground, with a mix of short ephemeral vegetation and tall ruderal species growing amongst rubble and debris. Species included annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), common couch (*Elytrigia repens*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*), crane's-bill (*Geranium* sp.), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.), wavy bitter-cress (*Cardamine flexuosa*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), hoary ragwort (*Senecio erucifolius*), bristly oxtongue (*Picris echioides*), common mallow (*Malva sylvestris*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*). (See Target Note 1 and Photographs 1-5).
- 3.2.4 A row of conifer trees, Leyland Cypress (*Cupressus × leylandii*) was recorded on the southern Site boundary alongside Harts Farm Way, with ground flora including common nettle, campion, willowherb, broad-leaved dock, wild teasel, ivy (*Hedera helix*), sedges (*Carex* sp.), cleavers, hoary ragwort, bristly oxtongue, yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*). (See Target Note 2 and Photographs 3 and 6).
- 3.2.5 Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) scrub was scattered across the Site, notably in the south, forming dense patches in places. Several piles of brash, from previous tree / scrub removal, were also present.
- 3.2.6 There was no evidence of Japanese knotweed or other invasive plant species recorded on the Site during the survey.

Fauna

Badger

- 3.2.7 No evidence of badger activity was recorded within the Site or accessible areas adjacent to the Site.

Water Vole

- 3.2.8 There are no habitats or features suitable for water voles within or immediately adjacent to the Site. Water voles are therefore not considered further in this report.

Otter

- 3.2.9 There are no riparian features or other habitats within or near to the Site considered suitable for otters. Therefore, otters are not considered further in this report.

Dormouse

- 3.2.10 Tree and scrub habitats within the Site are of negligible value to dormice. Furthermore, such habitats are isolated from other areas of wooded habitat within the surrounding area. The Site is consequently considered unsuitable for dormice; hence, they are not considered further in this report.

Bats

- 3.2.11 The conifer trees within the Site are of negligible value to roosting bats. No potential roosting features, such as holes or cracks/cavities were observed from ground level at the time of survey and no signs of possible use by bats, such as staining or droppings were observed.
- 3.2.12 The trees and scrub within the Site provide some bat foraging and commuting habitat, although this is limited in extent. Bat foraging and commuting habitat of greater value is present beyond the Site and its' surroundings, within the wider landscape.

Birds

- 3.2.13 The trees and scrub within the Site provide nesting and foraging habitat for common bird species, albeit of low suitability. Bird activity during the extended Phase 1 Habitat survey was negligible, with wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) and blackbird (*Turdus merula*) observed.

Reptiles

- 3.2.14 The Site has undergone major disturbance in recent years and has limited suitability for reptiles. Furthermore, recent development of land immediately to the north and east of the Site has resulted in minimal links to other areas of potentially suitable reptile habitat. The Site is therefore considered of negligible value to reptiles and as such they are not considered further in this report.

Amphibians

- 3.2.15 There were no potentially suitable breeding sites for amphibians, i.e. waterbodies, identified within or adjacent to the Site. Furthermore, much of the Site is surrounded by hardstanding and has limited connectivity to any potentially suitable great crested newt habitat in the wider landscape. In addition, a review of maps at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> identified only one pond within 500m of the Site, which was formerly located approximately 75m to the north-east of the Site. This pond was surveyed in 2013 which revealed no evidence of use by great crested newts (ECOSA 2013). This pond has since been removed as part of the re-development of surrounding land.

- 3.2.16 In respect of the above, it is thought highly unlikely that great crested newts are present within the Site or surrounding areas, and therefore this species is not considered further in this report.

Invertebrates

- 3.2.17 The trees and scrub habitats provide for common invertebrate species, with a limited range of flowering plants such as bramble, common nettle and ivy providing a source of nectar.

Other protected species or species of nature conservation value

- 3.2.18 There were no signs of other legally protected species or species of conservation concern within the Site and the Site was considered unlikely to support any additional such species.

4. POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 4.0.1 This section assesses the potential impacts of the development proposals on ecological features within and near to the Site, and provides recommendations for any necessary mitigation as a result of such impacts.

Statutorily Designated Sites

- 4.0.2 The Solent Maritime SAC and Chichester and Langstone Harbours Ramsar / SPA, both of European importance, and the nationally designated Langstone Harbour SSSI, are located approximately 490m to the south/south-west of the Site.
- 4.0.3 To ensure that adverse effects on the designated sites are avoided, all construction and operational works will be managed and contained within the Site, including management of Site drainage, run-off and dust deposition.
- 4.0.4 Given the distance of the Site from the SAC, Ramsar / SPA and SSSI and the localised nature of the proposed works, combined with the pollution prevention measures that will be adopted in both the construction and operational phase of the development, it is considered that the potential for any adverse effects on these designated sites, as a result of the proposed development, is negligible.

Non-statutorily Designated Sites

- 4.0.5 The four SINCs identified via the HBIC data search are all located greater than 450m from the Site. Given the small scale of the proposed works and the distance of the SINCs from the Site, combined with the pollution prevention measures mentioned above, no adverse effects on the SINCs are anticipated.
- 4.0.6 Furthermore, the development will avoid adverse impacts on important sites for waders and brent geese, which form part of the Wader and Brent Goose Strategy Sites.

Habitats and Flora

Trees and Scrub

- 4.0.7 The non-native conifer trees on the southern Site boundary and patches of scrub will be removed to facilitate the proposed development. None of the trees are of a significant age and are considered to be of low nature conservation value.
- 4.0.8 Mature, native trees and wooded areas of greater nature conservation value are located beyond the Site. The loss of the trees and scrub as a result of the proposed development is therefore not considered significant.
- 4.0.9 Additionally, new native tree and scrub planting within the proposed development will provide replacement habitat of greater value in the long-term.

Ground Cover Vegetation

- 4.0.10 The areas of tall ruderal and short ephemeral vegetation within the Site will be removed to enable construction of the proposed development. However, these habitats are limited in extent and are comprised of common species of low conservation value.
- 4.0.11 Small areas of replacement grassland habitat will be included as part of the landscaping scheme around the buildings and combined with areas of tree and shrub planting. It is recommended that these new areas of grassland are created using a diverse native species-rich seed mix. Future management, such as rotational cutting to leave areas of grassland uncut each year, will produce a wider range of flowering plants, which will in turn provide sources of food for associated invertebrates.
- 4.0.12 Given the proposals for grassland creation, the replacement habitat provides an opportunity for small-scale biodiversity gain within the proposed development.

Fauna

Badger

- 4.0.13 Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) against damage or destruction of a sett, or disturbance, death or injury of a badger.
- 4.0.14 The survey revealed no evidence of badgers or badger activity within the Site; however, in the unlikely event that evidence of badgers is discovered during construction works, all works should stop, and the advice of an ecologist should be sought as to an appropriate course of action, prior to any works recommencing.

Bats

- 4.0.15 All species of bat, their roost sites and resting places are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended) and at a European level under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
- 4.0.16 The conifer trees within the Site, to be removed as part of the proposed development, provide negligible bat roosting opportunities.
- 4.0.17 As part of the landscape proposals, new areas of trees and shrubs will be planted within the Site and along the Site's boundaries. This will enhance the network of foraging and commuting habitat for bats within the local area and will also provide habitat of greater value to bats within the Site in the medium to long term.
- 4.0.18 To maximise the future value of the Site to bats, it is recommended that any exterior lighting be kept to a minimum and that direct lighting of vegetation or buildings be avoided.

Birds

- 4.0.19 All wild birds, their egg and nests are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended).

4.0.20 The Site offers limited nesting and foraging habitat for birds, and although the desk study revealed an extensive number of bird records within 1km of the Site, the majority of these species are associated with the SPA and SSSI habitats and other wetland, grassland and coastal habitats in the surrounding area. Due to the limited range and type of habitats present, only a low number of common bird species are likely to use the Site. Furthermore, it is not considered to be of value to notable or protected bird species or birds associated with the designated sites.

4.0.21 Areas of scrub and trees, which will be removed to facilitate development, provide limited suitable foraging and nesting habitat for birds of low value. As a result of the proposals there will be a reduction in habitat for birds in the short-term. However, the proposed new tree and scrub/shrub planting will, over time, provide replacement bird nesting and foraging habitat of greater nature conservation value.

4.0.22 The removal of trees and scrub should be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season, which is approximately between March and August, inclusive. Where works during the bird breeding season are unavoidable, all vegetation removal must be supervised by a suitably experienced ecologist. Should nesting birds be present, then clearance will need to be stopped until all chicks have fledged.

Invertebrates

4.0.23 There will be some small-scale loss and disturbance of invertebrate habitat as a result of the proposed development, including removal of trees, scrub and small areas of tall ruderal and short ephemeral vegetation. However, the planting scheme within the Site will include native, nectar-rich species, providing replacement invertebrate habitat of greater biodiversity value in the medium to long-term.

Other protected species or species of nature conservation value

4.0.24 No other legally protected or notable species are likely to be present within the Site. Other common species of fauna may, however, use the Site. Consideration should therefore be given to covering any holes, pits or excavations overnight during construction. Where this is unavoidable, an escape route, such as a secure plank, should be installed within the excavation to ensure that an escape route for animals is available.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.0.1 The Site is currently considered to be of low nature conservation value and the proposed development of the Site seeks to minimise impacts on biodiversity, whilst complying with legislation. By providing replacement habitat, including small areas of species-rich grassland, and native trees and shrubs within the landscape proposals, the scheme will ensure that biodiversity is incorporated into the development, aiming to create features of greater nature conservation value in the longer term.
- 5.0.2 Furthermore, with the appropriate protection measures in place, it is considered that the proposals will not impact on valuable designated sites, or other features of nature conservation value, which are present within the wider countryside. In addition, proposed mitigation measures will also ensure that protected species that may use the Site, such as nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats, are not adversely affected.
- 5.0.3 With the above in mind, the proposed development seeks to reflect the relevant policies set out in the current Havant Borough Local Plan and to align with the aims of the NPPF.

6. REFERENCES

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Appendix 1

HBIC Data

