

Concrete-built single-storey storage outbuilding (B2)

- 4.29 A concrete-built storage outbuilding area was present to the east of the stable block (**Figure 2**). The outbuilding consisted of a single-storey structure with a sloped corrugated metal roof with no ridge. The structure was open to the rafters and un-lined. The building is depicted as B2 on the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Map in **Appendix C**.



Figure 2: concrete-built single-storey storage outbuilding (B2)

Hard-standing

- 4.30 A gravel driveway / access track ran from the Croft Lane at the south-eastern corner of the site, through to the horse paddock at the north of the site. The areas were starting to become encroached by grasses and ruderal species.

Protected or notable species

Badgers

- 4.31 No evidence found at time of survey.

Bats

- 4.32 *Stable block (B1):*

No bat droppings or feeding remains were found during the internal inspection of the stable block compartments. A number of potential access points were evident, including broken windows, gaps between wooden stable doors and door frames, gaps in the soffit

areas. The roof was un-lined and open to the rafters (**Figure 3**), and constructed of corrugated metal (**Figure 4**) set on wooden batons. No areas of hanging tiles or weatherboarding were present.



Figure 3: Stable block structure open to the rafters and unlined (B1)



Figure 4: Pitched corrugated metal roof and metal ridge on stable block (B1)

4.33 *Storage outbuilding (B2):*

No bat droppings or feeding remains were found during the internal inspection of the outbuilding. The interior was heavily cobwebbed (**Figure 5**) and the roof was un-lined and constructed of corrugated metal set on wooden batons.



Figure 5: Heavily cobwebbed interior within outbuilding B2.

4.34 Three mature trees were present within the site boundaries, an ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), a walnut (*Juglans regia*) to the east of the stable block and a Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) at the north-east corner of the horse paddock. Two of the trees had ivy covered trunks. However, no crevices, fractured limbs or peeling bark was evident with the potential to support roosting bats.

4.35 The native trees, species-poor hedgerows and scrub bordering the site offer foraging potential for bats. The site is linked to more optimal bat foraging habitat within the wider landscape through a network of hedgerows and areas of woodland.

Birds

4.36 A disused wood pigeon nest (*Columba palumbus*) (**Figure 6**) was found in the second compartment of the stable block (compartment 2, building B1, **Appendix C**). No evidence of barn owl (*Tyto alba*) or swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) was found in any of the compartments of the stable block (B1) or in the storage outbuilding (B2).



Figure 6: Wood pigeon nest in compartment 2 of stable block B1.

- 4.37 The following bird species were noted during the field survey; blackbird (*Turdus merula*) magpie (*Pica pica*), crow (*Corvus corone*), wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) and blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*).

Dormice

- 4.38 No evidence found at time of survey.

Great crested newts

- 4.39 No evidence found at time of survey.

Otters and water voles

- 4.40 No evidence found at time of survey.

Plants

- 4.41 No protected or notable plant species found to be present at time of survey.

Reptiles

- 4.42 No evidence found at time of survey.

Other species (including amphibians, invertebrates and mammals)

4.43 No evidence found at time of survey.

5.0 Analysis and Impact Assessment

Nature Conservation Sites

UK Statutory Sites of Conservation Interest

- 5.1 A search of the DEFRA run Magic website revealed five statutory sites of conservation interest within 50m of the boundaries of the site, the closest of which are the Chichester and Langston Harbours Ramsar site and SPA, the Solent Maritime SAC and the Langston Harbour SSI, approximately 400m from the boundary of the site. The site is separated from nearby sites of conservation interest by the existing Havant Road, the village of Stoke and a network of agricultural fields beyond. The proposed development works are contained entirely within the curtilage of the existing dwelling, 'The Retreat', and will involve no loss of, damage to or removal of surrounding habitats. The proposed works may involve a short-term temporary increase in vehicular activity on the Havant Road and Croft Lane during the demolition and construction phase of the development. However, providing Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PPG6) (Environment Agency, 2010) are followed during the demolition and construction phases of the proposed works, the impact upon the nearby statutory sites of conservation interest will be 'negligible'.

Habitats

- 5.2 The data search revealed the presence of five BAP Priority habitats present within 2km of the site. However, no BAP habitats were found to be present on-site or within 50m of the site boundaries. The site is separated from sensitive BAP habitats by the existing Havant Road and by a network of agricultural fields and residential areas. The proposed works will involve a temporary increase in vehicular activity on the Havant Road during the construction phase of the development. However, providing Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PPG6) (Environment Agency, 2010) are followed during the demolition and construction phases of the proposed works, the impact upon the nearby BAP Priority habitats will be 'negligible'.
- 5.3 The ecological importance of each of the habitats identified on-site and immediately off-site during the Extended Phase 1 Survey has been assessed according to its relevance to the UK BAP, Local BAPs, Section 41 of the NERC Act, its ability to support protected or notable species and the likelihood of negative impact upon it as a result of the current proposal. The assessment is summarised further below.

Semi-improved grassland

- 5.4 The areas of semi-improved grassland are considered to be of limited ecological value due to the lack of species diversity. However, the cessation of a regular mowing and grazing regime has resulted in these areas starting to develop a tussocky structure more conducive to supporting invertebrates and widespread reptiles. The proposals do not involve the loss of the more structurally diverse habitat of the horse paddock to the north of the stable block. However, the proposals will involve the loss of approximately 500m² of semi-improved grassland previously managed as amenity grassland within the garden of 'The Retreat'. These areas have only recently been left unmanaged and are not likely to have been colonised by reptiles. These areas are currently sub-optimal for reptiles but will become more suitable over time if left unmanaged. The predicted negative

ecological impact resulting from the proposed works considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Scrub and tall ruderal vegetation

- 5.5 The areas of scrub immediately bordering the north and west sides of the stable block will be disturbed and/or removed during the demolition of the stable block. These areas have the potential to support nesting birds and link in to habitat within the horse paddock to the north which may contain widespread reptiles. The scrub areas that will be affected by the works should be strimmed down to ground level during the winter period of November to end of February to avoid reptile active season and bird nesting season. If the removal of these areas of scrub during the period of 01st March to 01st November is unavoidable, an inspection by an ecologist for nesting birds will be required prior to the removal of any scrub and the strimming must be undertaken in a two-stage cut (the first reducing the scrub to a height of 100mm and cuttings removed, and the second cut, 24 hours apart from the first, reducing the scrub to a height of <20mm and cuttings removed) to allow any reptiles, if present, to move in to areas of adjacent suitable habitat. The scrub removal should be overseen by a suitably trained ecologist. The areas of scrub and tall ruderals in the horse paddock to the north of the stable block are not included within the footprint of the construction works. Providing these measures are followed, the ecological impact of the proposed works is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Species-poor hedgerows

- 5.6 The hedgerows bordering the site consisted predominantly of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg), holly (*Hedera helix*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and had poor structural diversity and species composition. However, the hedgerows do provide opportunity for nesting birds and some foraging potential for bats. Hedgerows bordering the east of the horse paddock to the north had the potential to support widespread reptiles. The proposed works to not involve the removal of or damage to the hedgerows bordering the site. The impact of the proposed works upon this habitat type is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Scattered native and non-native trees and shrubs

- 5.7 The mature trees on site were assessed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (2007) guidance as having 'low' potential to support roosting bats. All native trees on site have the potential to support nesting birds and contribute to bat foraging potential. The proposed works may involve the removal of a maximum of four trees within the site boundaries. Tree removal will avoid bird nesting season of 01st March to 01st August inclusive unless prior inspection by an ecologist concludes no nesting birds are present. Providing these measures are followed, the ecological impact of the proposed works upon this habitat type is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Brick-built single-storey stable block (B1)

- 5.8 The external inspection of the stable block revealed many potential access points for bats, including broken windows and gaps above stable doors. However, internal

inspection of all the compartments within the stable block revealed no evidence to suggest bat presence or bat use. The roof was constructed of materials known to be sub-optimal for bat roosting (BCT, 2007) and un-lined and open to the rafters with no separate attic area or roof void. The building was constructed of single-skin layer of bricks with no wall cavities. It is therefore considered that the demolition of this building will be of 'low' ecological impact both at the site and landscape scale perspectives. The building has a bird nest inside and is suitable for nesting birds. It should be removed outside of the nesting bird season unless an ecologist shows that there are no nesting birds present when demolition is proposed.

Concrete-built single-storey storage outbuilding (B2)

- 5.9 The external inspection of the outbuilding revealed several potential access points for bats, including gaps above the wooden door and holes in the soffit area. However, internal inspection revealed no evidence to suggest bat presence or bat use. The roof was constructed of materials known to be sub-optimal for bat roosting (BCT, 2007), was un-lined and open to the rafters with no separate attic area or roof void. The building was constructed of concrete bricks with no wall cavities. It is therefore considered that the demolition of this building will be of 'low' ecological impact both at the site and landscape scale perspectives. The building is suitable for nesting birds. It should be removed outside of the nesting bird season unless an ecologist shows that there are no nesting birds present when demolition is proposed.

Gravel / hard standing

- 5.10 The impacts of the proposed works are largely confined to the existing gravel areas with grass and ruderal encroachment. These areas are of 'low' ecological value. The impact of the proposed works on these areas is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Protected and Notable Species

Badgers

- 5.11 No records for badger were returned from within 1km of the development site. No evidence of badger foraging, latrines or badger setts were found in the vicinity of the site. The potential impact of the proposed works upon badgers is considered to be 'negligible' at both the site and landscape scales.

Bats

- 5.12 The desk study revealed records of at least three bat species within 1km of the proposed development site. External inspection of the stable block (B1) and the storage outbuilding (B2) revealed several potential access points for bats. However, the internal inspection revealed no evidence of bat droppings or feeding remains and a sub-optimal environment for bat roosting. The impact of the proposed demolition of these buildings upon bat species is therefore considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

- 5.13 The proposed development works involve a net loss of approximately 500m² of semi-improved grassland, approximately 50m² of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation and the removal of a maximum of four trees. These habitats contribute to bat foraging potential at the site scale. However, the site is directly linked to areas of more optimal bat foraging habitat within the wider landscape through existing hedgerows and areas of broad-leaved woodland. It is therefore considered that the loss of these habitats will have a 'low' impact at the site scale and 'low' impact at the landscape scale.

Birds

- 5.14 Records were returned for a large number of protected and/or notable bird species within 1km of the site. However, no evidence of protected bird species was found at the time of survey. No evidence of barn owl (*Tyto alba*), swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) or dark-bellied brent geese (*Branta bernicla*) was observed on-site at the time of the survey. A single wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) nest was found within the roof of compartment 2 in stable block B1 (**Appendix C**). The proposals will involve the demolition of the stable block. In order to minimise the risk of disturbance to nesting birds, demolition will avoid the bird nesting season of 01st March to 01st August inclusive unless an inspection by an ecologist concludes there are no active nests present prior to the demolition. Providing these measures are followed, the proposed works are considered to have a 'low' ecological impact upon birds at both the site and landscape scales.
- 5.15 Trees, scrub and hedgerows present on-site offer potential nesting habitat for birds. Any area of vegetation is required to be disturbed as a result of the proposed works will be scheduled outside of the bird nesting season which runs from 01st March to 01st August unless prior inspection by an ecologist can show that there are no nesting birds present. Providing these measures are followed, the impact upon birds as a result of the proposed works is considered to be 'negligible' at both the site and landscape scales.

Dormice

- 5.16 No records for dormouse were returned within 1km of the development site. The hedgerows which form the site boundaries do not contain sufficient species or structural diversity to support dormouse populations. Furthermore, the proposed works do not encroach upon hedgerows or boundary vegetation. The potential impact of the proposed works upon dormice is considered to be 'negligible' at both the site and landscape scales.

Great crested newts

- 5.17 The data search returned no records of great crested newt within 1km of the proposed development site. There are no water bodies present within or immediately adjacent to the site boundaries. Although the areas of scrub and hedgerow on site could be considered as potential areas of terrestrial habitat for this species, it is considered highly unlikely that this species is present within the site boundaries. The potential impact of the proposed works upon great crested newts is therefore considered to be 'negligible' at both the site and landscape scales.

Otters and water voles

- 5.18 There are no records of otter or water vole within 1km of the site. The proposed development site does not contain any water courses and is therefore unsuitable for otter and water vole. The site is not directly linked to aquatic habitats suitable for these species within the wider landscape. The potential impact of the proposed works upon otters and water voles is considered to be 'negligible' at both the site and landscape scales.

Plants

- 5.19 No records of Schedule 8 or 9 plant species were returned from within 1km of the site. No protected or notable flora specimens were found during the survey. The semi-improved grassland areas contain a relatively low diversity of flora and have little potential to support protected fauna. The proposals involve the loss of approximately 500m² of semi-improved grassland and approximately 50m² of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation. Given the low species diversity of these habitats, the impact of the proposed works upon floral diversity is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Reptiles

- 5.20 Records of two reptile species were returned from within 1km of the site, common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*). Hedgerow bases and scrub at the borders of the site have the potential to provide some foraging and shelter for widespread reptile species. The rest of the site was previously managed as amenity grassland and, as a result of the recent cessation in management, has become overgrown and has started to develop a tussocky structure in places. It is considered that these areas are unlikely to have been colonised by reptiles within the short period of time that the grassland has been left unmanaged. However, these areas are likely to become more suitable for reptile colonisation the longer they are left undisturbed. It is therefore advisable that the grass areas are maintained at a sward height of <10mm to reduce the likelihood of reptile colonisation prior to the construction works, therefore reducing the risk of harming reptile species which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Providing these measures are followed, the impact of the proposed works upon reptile species is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.
- 5.21 The demolition of the stable block will involve the removal of approximately 50m² of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation with the potential to support reptiles. The scrub must be removed prior to the demolition of the stable block and will be scheduled within the reptile hibernation period of November to February. If it is not possible to schedule the scrub removal within this period, the scrub must be strimmed in a two-stage cut (the first reducing the scrub to a height of 100mm and cuttings removed, and the second cut, 24 hours apart from the first, reducing the scrub to a height of <20mm and cuttings removed). The areas of scrub and tall ruderals in the horse paddock to the north of the stable block are not included within the footprint of the construction works. Providing these measures are followed, the ecological impact of the proposed works upon reptiles is considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Other species (including amphibians, invertebrates and mammals)

- 5.22 No protected or notable species of invertebrate, amphibian or mammal were observed to be present during the survey. It is considered unlikely that the site contains protected or notable invertebrates, amphibians or mammals due to low diversity of plant species present on-site. The proposed works will involve the loss of approximately 500m² or semi-improved grassland and approximately 50m² of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation of relatively 'low' ecological importance. The impact of the proposed works on amphibians, invertebrates and mammals is therefore considered to be 'low' at the site and landscape scales.

Summary Relevant of Potential Impacts

- 5.23 Assuming the worst case scenarios in the absence of appropriate mitigation, the potential negative ecological impacts of the proposed development have been assessed in relation to the proximity of nature conservation sites, proximity of BAP Priority Habitats and the likelihood to affect protected or notable species. Measures that can be taken to reduce or eliminate the potential negative ecological impacts are detailed in **Section 6.0**.

6.0 Requirements and Recommendations

Essential Pre-Application Further Survey Work

Bats

- 6.1 No further survey work will be required to determine the potential impacts of the proposed works upon bats.

Further Measures Required to Mitigate Against the Effects of the Proposed Development

Birds

- 6.2 It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb nesting birds (further details relating to current legislation are described in **Appendix J**). If the timing of the demolition works or vegetation removal coincides with bird nesting season (01st March to 01st August), an inspection by an ecologist will be required to determine the presence / likely absence of nesting birds prior to commencement of the works. If the presence of nesting birds is confirmed, any works which may disturb them will be delayed until the young birds have fledged the nest. Scheduling the demolition and vegetation removal works outside of this period will reduce the need for further surveys.
- 6.3 Natural England has been consulted by the client and considers the risk potential ecological impact of the proposed development upon protected bird species (e.g. dark bellied-brent geese *Branta bernicla*) to be minimal. The client must adhere to the recommendations made by Natural England as detailed within the correspondence included in **Appendix G**.

Reptiles

- 6.4 Reptiles are protected from killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (further details relating to current legislation are described in **Appendix J**). The timing of scrub removal will avoid the reptile active season on March to October inclusive to avoid harm to reptile species, if present. If the removal of scrub is during the reptile active period is unavoidable, vegetation removal will be conducted in a two-stage cut (the first reducing the scrub to a height of 100mm and cuttings removed, and the second cut, 24 hours apart from the first, reducing the scrub to a height of <20mm and cuttings removed) to allow reptiles, if present, to move to areas of adjacent suitable habitat. This work should be overseen by a suitably trained ecologist.

Follow-Up Surveys

- 6.5 The results set out within this report are valid for one year from the issue date of this report. If development does not commence within 12 months of the issue date, the need