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Ecological Walkover Assessment

**No 40 Queens Road,
Waterlooville**

Paul Whitby

3rd May 2013

Report Summary:

- 1. A survey was undertaken on 30/04/13 by Paul Whitby to assess the ecological value of the No 40 Queens Road property and gardens.**
- 2. The intention is to demolish the existing property and build two new houses.**
- 3. The No 40 property is known to be approximately 50 years old and is a wooden and brick built bungalow. A phase 1 internal inspection of the property for roosting bats has not been conducted and is recommended in order to determine the use of the building by this group of species.**
- 4. There is potential for birds to nest in a variety of trees, hedges and shrubs across the site gardens and this vegetation should only be cut back/cleared outside of the nesting birds season (1st March to 30th August) unless a hand search by a suitably qualified ecologist is conducted first.**
- 5. A large concrete lined pond in the property garden has some limited potential to support breeding great crested newts and should therefore have a presence/absence survey for this species to determine this.**

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This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report gives details of a walk over assessment for protected species carried out at No 40 Queens Road in WaterlooVille. The grid reference for the site is SU 684 105.

This survey comprised an ecological walkover survey for all protected wildlife and was carried out by Paul Whitby, a full member of Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM). This report has been written incorporating the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' by the IEEM.

This survey and report was carried out and produced at the request of Vivid Design.

1.2 Background

This report is intended to assess the present ecological value of the No 40 Queens Road property in WaterlooVille. The intention is to demolish the existing dwelling and build two new houses on the same plot. Where necessary further surveys or mitigation has been prescribed to ensure that protected species would be protected from disturbance or harm during the construction process.

1.3 Site Description/Ecological Context

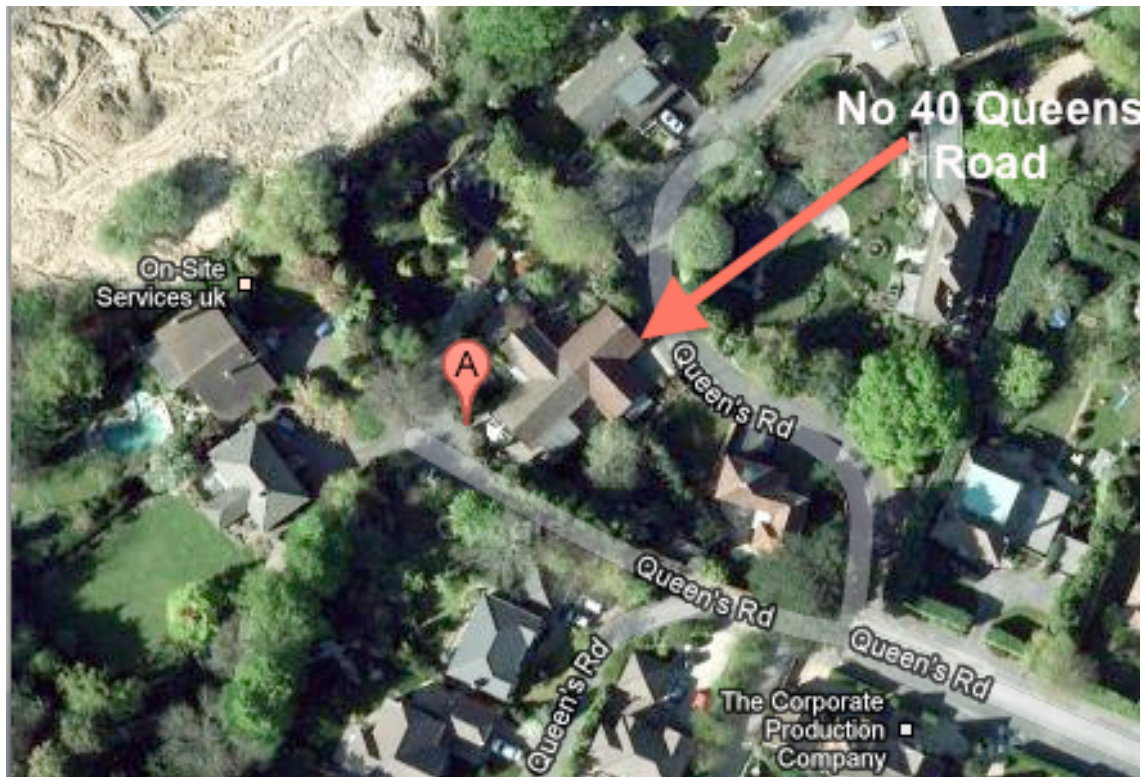
The No 40 property is a bungalow set within large well maintained ornamental gardens at the western end of Queens Road. The site is bounded by small residential roads to part of the north, east and south, with the site boundary forming a finger shape. The property is set within a residential area, but to the west is bounded by land owned by a school.

The gardens surrounding the No 40 property includes a wide variety of ornamental trees and shrubs, including *Magnolia stellata*, cypress trees (*Chaemacyparis spp*) and a variety of orchard trees. Some native mature trees included two large mature beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*), weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*).

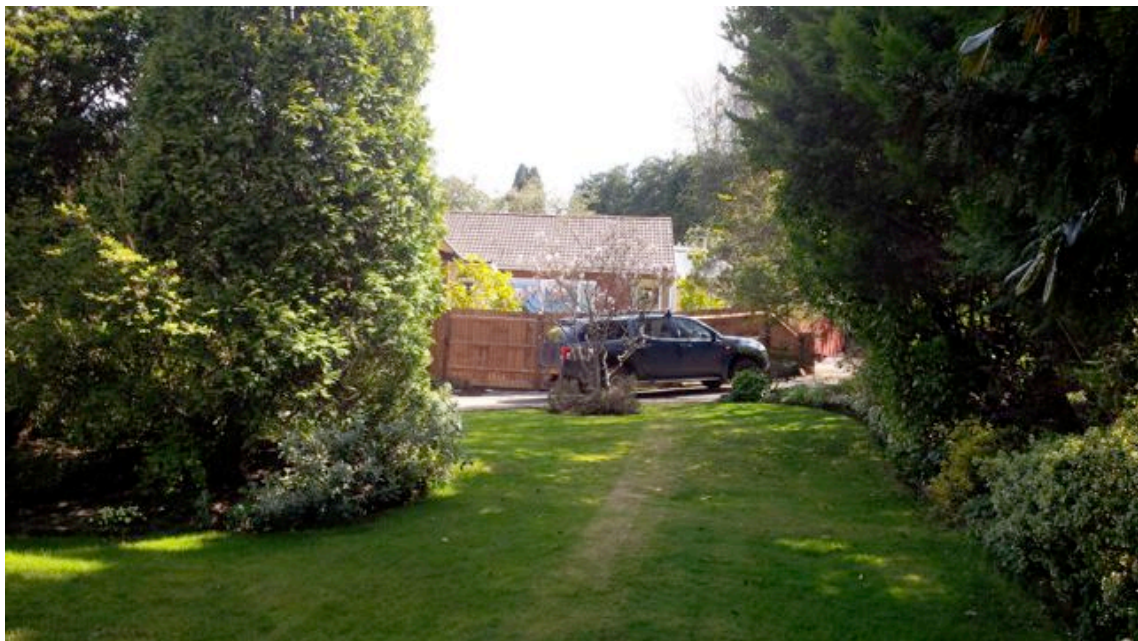
The lawns across the gardens are tightly mown and are weed free, with no notable grassland plants.

At the northern corner of the site is a large ornamental concrete formed pond approximately 100 square metres in area, with two smaller ponds created from a water pump. The main pond includes a number of ornamental fish, including Golden Orfe. The main water body has good water clarity and includes a number of aquatic plants including Canadian pondweed (*Elodea Canadensis*), water hawthorn (*Aponogeton*

distachyos), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and *Juncus*. One of the smaller side ponds, estimated to be 8 square metres in area supports a large population of frog and/or toad tadpoles.



Picture 1 – An aerial picture of the site as shown on Google earth with an arrow indicating the No 40 property.



Picture 2 –The wider gardens are very well kept, with short lawns and pruned/shaped trees and shrubs.



Picture 3 – The gardens include a variety of non-native ornamental trees and shrubs.



Picture 4 – One of two smaller side ponds, which supports abundant frog/toad tadpoles.



Picture 5 – The large concrete lined pond, with aquatic vegetation.



Picture 5 – The existing bungalow, with concrete 'clay style' tiles.

1.3.1 Constraints/Limitations

An initial site assessment such as this is only able to act like a 'snapshot' to record any flora or fauna that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been present during the survey, but may be evident at other times of the year. For this reason, habitats are assessed for their potential to support some species, even where no direct evidence (such as droppings) has been found.

2 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of the survey

A protected species walkover assessment was carried out on 30/04/13 to evaluate the site for its potential to support protected species. Taking into consideration the geographical region and habitat type, species that could be encountered are:

- Badger;
- Bats;
- Nesting birds;
- Great crested newt and;
- Reptiles.

In addition, observations of any important plant communities or other valuable ecological features will have been recorded and detailed. Details of initial survey method for each species are given below.

2.1.1 Badger

An initial assessment was carried out to identify areas that might be used by Badgers (*Meles meles*). Signs of Badgers including setts, incidental foraging signs, runs and latrines, are recorded if encountered during the survey.

2.1.2 Bats

Trees, buildings, and other structures were assessed for the potential to support roosting bats. Bats can use a variety of roost areas including trees with holes, splits, cracks, cavities, Ivy and loose bark as well as a variety of roosting areas within buildings.

A detailed survey was carried out looking for any evidence indicating the presence of bats using buildings or trees, such as rub marks, staining or droppings inside or outside any potential roost sites.

If any definite signs of bats or other evidence had been found (such as actual sightings, droppings, urine stains, odour, scratch marks, grease stains and feeding remains), they would have been recorded.

2.1.3 Breeding Bird Habitat

Habitats were assessed for their suitability for nesting birds. This could include ground nesting species, such as Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) or birds that favour urban environments. Where buildings were present, possible use by Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), or Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*)

2.1.4 Great Crested Newt

Initial surveys centre on identifying suitable habitat. If there are ponds or wet ditches that are considered to be suitable breeding habitats for Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) within 500 m that are not isolated from the site by unsuitable habitat or physical barriers, then this species could be using terrestrial habitat on the site.

2.1.5 Reptiles

The site was assessed for reptiles, with particular attention paid to those features that provide suitable basking areas (e.g. south-facing slopes), hibernation sites (e.g. banks, walls, piles of rotting vegetation) and opportunities for foraging (rough grassland and scrub).

2.2 Legal Protection

Legal protection applying to relevant bird, mammal and herpetofauna species is briefly detailed in *Appendix 1* of this report.

3 RESULTS

3.1 *Badgers*

The site was walked to look for signs of badger activity or any badger setts, but none was seen. The surrounding area has some limited opportunities for badger, with the expanse of residential plots extending to the north, east and south making potential for badger movement very restricted. Some more open green space extends to the west, however overall connectivity for this species is very poor.

The site was walked to look for any signs of badger activity, but none was seen.

3.2 *Bats*

The mature beech, weeping willow and silver birch trees were inspected for their potential to support roosting bats, but no features such as rot holes, broken branches or flaking bark were observed.

The No 40 property bungalow appears to have a large roof void extending across the whole of the property and an adjacent garage. The tiles on the roof are a factory formed red concrete ridged style, that are very tight fitting. There was however some potential for access into the loft space via gaps around the eaves and some cracks in a small number of the tiles. No direct evidence such as droppings or rub marks were seen around the exterior of the building.

The large pond is likely to be of some value for foraging bats, whilst the remaining garden space is likely to be frequented by bats, whilst not being a high value habitat.

3.3 *Breeding Birds*

The gardens surrounding the property include abundant potential nesting bird habitat within boundary trees and ornamental shrubs and hedges. A number of common bird species are likely to nest within these features, whilst the value of the site for ground nesting birds is very limited.

It is very unlikely that any wildfowl nest upon the ornamental pond at any time.

3.4 *Reptiles*

The site does not support any ground cover that could be considered suitable habitat for foraging reptiles. The lawns across the garden are short and there is little available cover. The site is also heavily shaded by the tall boundary trees, making basking opportunities restricted. The roads bordering the site around the majority of its boundary are a significant barrier to reptile movement (reptiles being very particular about travelling in areas of cover).

A search on the National Biodiversity Network website showed that there are some old

records for slow worms, grass snakes and common lizard for the 10km grid square on which the site is situated.

3.5 *Great Crested Newts*

The value of the large pond for breeding great crested newts is moderate to poor. Whilst a full Habitat Suitability Index assessment has not been conducted, the pond includes suitable aquatic vegetation and a healthy water body to support this species, but conversely does support a significant population of predatory ornamental fish. The small pond with abundant tadpoles in it demonstrates that this feature supports breeding amphibians and therefore must have some potential to support breeding newts.

The value of the terrestrial habitat for foraging amphibians is moderate, with a lack of suitable ground cover in some areas, but a vegetable patch in the western corner that could prove suitable.

A single record from 1985 exists for the grid square upon which the site is situated on the National Biodiversity Network Gateway, suggesting that this species is either poorly recorded or poorly distributed within the area.

4 CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

4.1 Badger

No evidence of any badger activity was identified during the survey assessment, and the landscape surrounding the site is not very suitable for badgers, with a large residential area extending to the north, south and east from the property. It is very unlikely that any badger setts would become established at any time at the No 40 property, however if any mammal digging is seen prior to the commencement of construction, then an ecologist should be contacted for advice.

No further surveys or mitigation is recommended for badgers.

4.2 Bats

The site does not support any trees with features of value for roosting bats, however the value of the No 40 property remains relatively unknown. It is possible that bats could gain access to the roof void within the No 40 property, via potential access points around the eaves and in cracks around ridge tiles.

In order to establish if the roof void is used by roosting bats, a Phase 1 bat assessment of the roof void should be undertaken. This survey will identify if there is any evidence of bat activity in the void and will pay particular attention to any potential roosting features. If evidence of any bat activity is identified, then bat emergence surveys may be necessary to suitably identify the species and population of bats using the building.

4.3 Breeding Birds

Suitable nesting bird habitat was identified in vegetation around the majority of the site, particularly in dense boundary, trees, hedges and shrubs. The site does not include any habitats suitable for ground nesting birds or wildfowl.

It is important that the cutting back or clearance of any vegetation is undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (1st March to 31st August) or following a hand search by a suitably qualified ecologist.

4.4 Reptiles

The site does not include any habitats of value for reptiles, with very tightly mown lawns and poor connectivity to other areas with the majority of the site boundaries enclosed by a residential road. It is therefore highly unlikely that any reptiles are present upon the site and no specific mitigation or further surveys are recommended in this instance.

In the unlikely event that any reptiles are identified on the site at any time, then an

ecologist should be contacted immediately for advice.

4.5 *Great Crested Newts*

The large pond and two smaller ponds have some poor to moderate suitability to support breeding great crested newts. It is important that presence/absence surveys for this species is undertaken according to best practice guidelines outlined by Natural England to better determine their likely presence or absence. Under this guidance four surveys should be undertaken between mid March and mid June, with at least two surveys undertaken during the 'optimal' mid April to mid May period.

As the pond is concrete lined and the water quality in the pond is very good, this would involve torching the pond after sunset and hand searching aquatic vegetation for newt eggs. If great crested newt presence is identified, then a population assessment would need to be undertaken by completing an additional surveys and any development at the No 40 property would need to be completed under a European Protected Species license.

5 APPENDIX 1 – LEGAL PROTECTION

General

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to protected species. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation, but summarises the salient points.

Badger

Badger is protected in Britain under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

The legislation affords protection to Badger and Badger setts, and makes it a criminal offence to:

- wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or to attempt to do so;
- interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it;
- to obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a Badger sett; or
- to disturb a Badger when it is occupying a sett.

Bats, Dormouse and Great Crested Newt

Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), and all species of British bat (*Vespertilionidae* and *Rhinolophidae*) are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), and receive full protection under *Section 9*. These species are also all listed as European Protected Species on *Schedule 2* of the *Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994* which gives them full protection under *Regulation 39*. Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (the CROW Act). Under the above legislation it is an offence to:

- kill, injure or take an individual;
- possess any part of an individual either alive or dead;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by these species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- sell or attempt to sell any individual.

It is also an offence to set and use articles capable of catching, injuring or killing bats (for example a trap or poison), or knowingly cause or permit such an action. In the case of Dormouse and all species of British bat there is also protection under *Schedule 6* of *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) relating specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of these species.

Dormouse, Great Crested Newt and all species of British bat are included as priority species in the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* and as species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England under *Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*.

Reptiles

Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*), Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and Adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under *Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), in respect of *Section 9(5)* and part of *Section 9(1)*. This protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. Under the legislation it is an offence to:

- intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or
- sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.

Nesting Birds

All species of bird are protected under *Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. Under the above legislation it is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Certain species are listed on *Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and receive protection under *Sections 1(4) and 1(5)*. The protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. There are special penalties where the offences listed above are committed for any *Schedule 1* species and it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird when it is building its nest or while it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of any such bird.