

Land by 'Benhall'

**Hambledon Road
Waterlooville, Hampshire**

Ecological Assessment

February 2014



**4Woods Ecology Ltd, 243 Woodlands Road, Woodlands, Southampton, SO40 76J
tel. 023 8029 2590**

4Woods Ecology Ltd. Company registration no. 4801465. England.
Registered office: Drove House, 14 Bakers Drove, Rownhams, Southampton SO16

Land by 'Benhall'

Hambledon Road

Waterlooville, Hampshire

Ecological Assessment

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Planning permission is being sought for the development of a plot of land that exists adjacent to a residential property known as 'Benhall', off Hambledon Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire (SU 674 103) (**Map 1**). The current proposals involve development of a 2.5 storey apartment block on the plot, with associated car parking and landscaping.

In order to determine whether the proposals are likely to have any ecological impacts and to ensure compliance with protected species legislation, an ecological survey of the land was required. 4Woods Ecology Ltd was subsequently commissioned by D&K Contracting Services Ltd to complete an extended Phase I habitat survey of the site.

1.2 Legislation & Policy

1.2.1 Protected Species Legislation

In the UK, varying levels of legal protection are afforded to a number of rare, declining or vulnerable species in the UK, principally via The Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Species which are at threat in a European context are afforded additional legal protection in the UK via *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*, which updates and consolidates all amendments to The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c) Regulations 1994 (*'The Habitats Regulations'*), and which implements requirements of the EC Directive 92/43 (*'Habitats Directive'*) into UK law.

Species protected under the former or both legislative instruments (with varying levels of protection) include: Bats, Great Crested Newt, wild birds and their nests/eggs, all native reptile species, Dormice, Water Vole, etc.

Badgers and their setts are also afforded legal protection in the UK via the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992.

Further details of relevant legislative protection afforded to species which occur at the site, or have potential to occur, and may be affected by the proposed development, are provided at **Section 4.3**, where appropriate.

1.2.2 Biodiversity Action Plans

Following UK devolution, the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework was set up in 2012, and succeeds the previous UK BAP. This sets out the aims and activities required to achieve identified targets to halt the decline in biodiversity across the various countries that make up the UK.

Lists of Priority species and habitats were devised for the purposes of the previous UK BAP, which were identified as most threatened in the UK and required action plans to aid their recovery. These lists remain an important reference source and have been used to revise the statutory lists of priorities for England and the other countries of the UK, to allow for a country-level approach rather than UK-wide as before.

The Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act, 2000 requires that Government departments have regard to the purpose of conserving biological diversity in accordance with the Biodiversity Convention 1992 and to promote the action required to further the conservation of species published on Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

Further, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) places a duty upon public bodies in England and Wales (including Local Planning Authorities) to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in exercising their functions.

Priority species listed (as revised in 2012 for England) include Soprano Pipistrelle bat, Brown Long-eared Bat, Dormouse, Hedgehog, House Sparrow, Starling, Song Thrush, Grass snake, Slow-worm and Common Lizard etc.

1.2.3 Planning Policy

NPPF & ODPM Circular 06/2005

The planning policy guidance note dealing with Nature Conservation, PPS9, was made redundant with immediate effect following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012.

Underpinning the entirety of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The guidance states that 'opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged'.

The ODPM Circular 06/2005 remains an active document (although is under review), but it is now to be read in conjunction with the NPPF rather than PPS9 as before. It provides additional guidance to Local Planning Authorities with respect to biodiversity matters. The Circular advises that the '*presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.*'

It is also stated in the Circular that it is '*essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is*

granted'. However, it is also noted that 'developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development'.

The Havant Borough Core Strategy (March 2011)

Relevant policies within the local development plan (Core Strategy), include:

Policy CS11: Protecting and Enhancing the Special Environment and Heritage of Havant Borough

Planning permission will be granted for development that:

- 1. Ensures the key landscape and built form principles set out in the Havant Borough Townscape, Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment are protected and where possible enhanced by partnership working with developers, groups and the wider community.*
- 2. 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. Has particular regard to the following hierarchy of nature conservation designations within the borough (as identified on the Proposals Map):*
 - (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].*
- 4. Protects and where appropriate enhances the borough's statutory and non-statutory heritage designations by appropriately managing development in or adjacent to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, archaeological sites, buildings of local historic or architectural interest.*
- 5. Supports an ongoing programme of survey of habitats and species and designation of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.*
- 6. Incorporates partnership working with conservation organisations to improve public understanding of biodiversity and to manage public access to designated sites, particularly on the coast, to reduce harm to nature conservation interests.*
- 7. Incorporates partnership working with landowners and developers to ensure land management practices restore, enhance and where appropriate create new valued landscapes, habitats and their soil structure, particularly the ancient woodland remnants of the Forest of Bere and coastal salt marsh.*
- 8. Protects wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors to prevent the fragmentation of existing habitats and to allow species, for example Brent Geese, to respond to the impacts of climate change by making provision for habitat adaptation e.g. coastal managed realignment and species migration.*
- 9. Maintains undeveloped gaps between the settlements of Emsworth/Havant; Havant/Waterlooville; Havant/Portsmouth; Emsworth/Westbourne and Leigh*

Park/Rowlands Castle as shown on the Proposals Map.

10. Protects the best and most versatile agricultural land that has the greatest potential for local food security.

11. Responds to the emerging evidence from the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project, the published recommendations, and future related research.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desktop Study

Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre was contacted in January 2014 to obtain any existing records of protected/notable species and details of any nature conservation sites occurring within a 500m search radius of the site.

An OS map and aerial photograph of the local area were also examined to assess potential ecological value of the site in the context of the surrounding landscape.

2.2 Site Survey

A walk-over survey of the site was completed by Su Forster BSc PGDip CEnv MCIEEM, of 4Woods Ecology Ltd, during 13 February 2014.

Habitat types were described and mapped based on Phase I habitat survey techniques (JNCC, 2010), and main/notable plant species recorded. Habitats were assessed for their potential to be utilised by protected or other notable species (e.g. water vole, badger, bats, nesting birds, etc), and a search for evidence of such species was completed as far as possible.

3.0 Results of Survey

3.1 Overall Description of Site & Local Area

The application site is a small undeveloped plot. It exists between a pair of residential properties and Brambles Business Park, on a main road, at the western edge of Waterlooville. To the west the site backs onto open fields, however, large scale development is currently underway in part of this area close to the site. To the north and east of the site is a vast area of moderately dense residential development.

3.2 Results of Desktop Study

HBIC Data Search

The following records have been provided by HBIC:

- **Nature Conservation Designations**

No statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designated sites exist within 500m of the site. .

- **Notable/Protected Species**

Numerous protected/notable species records exist within 500m of the site, with the following being most relevant:

- Slow-worm
- House sparrow, Starling, Song Thrush and numerous other notable bird species.
- Bats - Noctule, Pipistrelle spp, Brown Long-eared bat
- Hedgehog
- Badger

(Records supplied to HBIC by Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS), Hampshire Bat Group (HBG), Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (HARG), Hampshire Mammal Group (HMG))

3.3 Results of Site Survey

3.3.1 Habitats & Flora

At the time of survey the site was found to have been recently stripped of vegetation. Consequently, the site currently comprises bare soils (clay with chalk and some brick rubble), with a very few and sparse ruderal plants remaining/regrowing such as Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* (agg), Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomeratus* etc. Based on the vegetation observed within the spoil heap resulting from site clearance, it appears likely that the site was previously dominated by Nettles and Bramble, with some rough grassland.

A drainage ditch extends along the southern boundary of the site, adjacent to Brambles Business Park. This held shallow water at the time of survey (following a prolonged period of heavy rain), but was fairly stagnant. This ditch had also recently been cleared of vegetation. Based on vegetation within the resultant spoil heap it appears that the ditch supported plant species of damp habitats, most notably Fool's watercress *Apium nodiflorum* and some Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. This ditch continues westwards through fields, beneath dense scrub. This ditch links with field drains, and eventually drains to the Wallington River (based on OS map evidence).

Vegetation remains around the boundaries of the site, but largely beyond the boundary fencing. Along the site frontage (eastern boundary) is a tall (3m high) hedge, dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with occasional or rarely occurring Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* Dog Rose *Rosa canina* and Field Maple *Acer campestre*. There is little ground flora beneath this hedge.

Along the southern site boundary, between the drainage ditch/fence and the business park is a line of trees, including tall Cypress *leylandii* at the eastern end, and mature Alders *Alnus glutinosa* elsewhere.

At the far end of the site (western boundary) there is a semi-mature Ash tree, with some Bramble, Willow *Salix sp.* and Blackthorn. Ground flora beneath includes Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Nettle,

Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Arum *Arum maculatum* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*.

The northern boundary to the residential property 'Benhall', comprises a brick wall with limited Bramble scrub at the far end, and a single young Ash.

These main habitats are illustrated on **Map 2**.

3.3.2 Mammals

There is no evidence of any mammal activity on the site, such as Badger or Water Vole.

While the site clearance would have disturbed any such evidence, it is expected that some signs to indicate use of the site by notable mammal species (such as Badger, Watervole) would have been observed if such species occur. In addition, no evidence of such species was found on the land immediately to the west of the site. The heavily overgrown ditch immediately to the west of the site does not provide suitable habitat for Watervole, and the water appears to be too shallow within the site to have provided suitable habitat for this species..

The tree line/ditch along the southern site boundary could potentially be used by commuting bats to move between roost sites within the residential area and open countryside (foraging habitat) to the west. Otherwise, the site currently supports poor potential foraging habitat for bats due to the lack of vegetation.

3.3.3 Reptiles & Amphibians

Suitable habitat for reptiles does not currently occur at the site.

Use of the ditch by amphibians is considered unlikely as the water levels were found to be low even after prolonged heavy rain, and therefore it is considered unlikely that it would hold sufficient water later in the season to allow use by such species.

3.3.4 Birds

In general the stripped site currently provides poor habitat for birds. However, the boundary vegetation provides some foraging opportunities and nesting sites for common bird species. Old nests were noted within the hedge along the site frontage.

3.3.5 Invertebrates

Devoid of vegetation, the site contains little habitat of value to invertebrates.

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of Findings & Assessment of Value

The site is currently of negligible ecological value being largely devoid of vegetation. Prior to the vegetation strip, it appears likely that the site supported common-place scrub/ruderal tall herb vegetation with probable rough grassland habitat. The drainage ditch along the southern site boundary has also been cleared of vegetation, but appears to have supported common species of damp habitats, indicating that the ditch normally remains wet/damp.

Remaining boundary vegetation also comprises common species, with limited diversity. However, these few trees/shrubs provide habitat for common bird species, including potential nesting sites. There is also a possibility that the tree line along the southern boundary could be used by commuting bats. This boundary vegetation is therefore considered to be some ecological value in the context of the application site only.

The site currently contains very poor habitat for any notable faunal species, and no evidence to indicate presence of any such species has been found within the site or on immediately adjoining land to the west.

4.2 Assessment of Impacts

Based on present findings it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant ecological impacts resulting from the proposed development.

While the majority of boundary vegetation will be retained beyond the boundary fencing, a small section of the hedgerow along the site frontage would be removed to allow access. Removal of this vegetation has potential to result in disturbance of nesting birds and harm to nests/eggs/young. Likewise, if any trees/shrubs are to be removed at the western end of the site, this too could potentially result in harm/disturbance to nesting birds. (see **Section 4.3** and **4.4**, below).

While the drainage ditch is of little ecological value, the water does drain to a network of ditches (of unknown habitat value), and eventually to the River Wallingford. Pollution from the site, either during construction or post-construction, could therefore potentially drain down to these other watercourses.

4.3 Legal Considerations

4.3.1 Nesting Birds

All wild birds, their nests, eggs and young are legally protected in the UK from intentional harm, by provisions contained in The Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). This includes nests which are being built or are in use.

4.4. Mitigation Strategy

4.4.1 Nesting Birds

Given the legal protection afforded to nesting birds it will be necessary to avoid direct impacts to birds and their nests (whether in use or being built). This is most easily achieved by avoiding clearance of bird nesting habitat (i.e. trees and dense shrubs) during the main nesting season (i.e. avoid March – August, inclusive). Alternatively, a thorough search for nesting birds should be completed prior to commencing, and work postponed where any nests are present until they have been vacated.

4.4.2 Watercourse

Measures will need to be put in place to avoid pollution entering the drainage ditch along the southern boundary of the site, both during construction and post-construction. This may include use of bunds and drain filters. During construction, any chemicals and stored building materials (e.g. cement etc) must also be kept away from the ditch.

4.5 Recommendations

In accordance with current UK and local planning policy (**Section 1.2.3**), ecological enhancement measures should be incorporated into the developed site. The following ecological enhancement measures are recommended:

1. Enhance the drainage ditch along the southern site boundary, with the addition of appropriate native bankside planting. Suitable (and attractive) species could include: Brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, Fools Watercress *Apium nodiflorum* (both of which were previously present), Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, Yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*. Such species could be mixed with a suitable native meadow grassland seed mix to extend up to the new roadway within the site.

The ditchline should be retained as an open habitat, and will need to be managed periodically by the management company to prevent domination by dense scrub or other vigorous species. Once established, the vegetation over a half of the length of the ditch should be strimmed each year, in rotation, at the end of summer/autumn. Cut material should be removed from the banks following the cut.

2. Proposed new planting within the developed site, particularly around the site boundaries, should include a variety of native species which would be beneficial to birds and other wildlife.

Native tree species could include: Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Oak *Quercus robur*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Field maple *Acer campestre*.

Hedge/shrub species could include Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Field Rose *Rosa arvensis*, Sweet Briar *Rosa rubiginosa*,

5.0 Conclusions

Based on present survey findings the proposed redevelopment of the site is unlikely to result in any significant ecological impacts,

There is potential for nesting birds to be disturbed if trees/shrubs are removed during the nesting season. To comply with UK legislation, it is recommended that clearance of any trees and shrubs is completed outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. avoid March – August, incl.), or a thorough search for nests completed prior to commencing.

No other protected species are considered likely to be affected by the proposed redevelopment.

Measures will need to be implemented to avoid pollution entering the drainage ditch and consequently the watercourses downstream.

Some ecological enhancement measures are recommended in accordance with current planning policy.

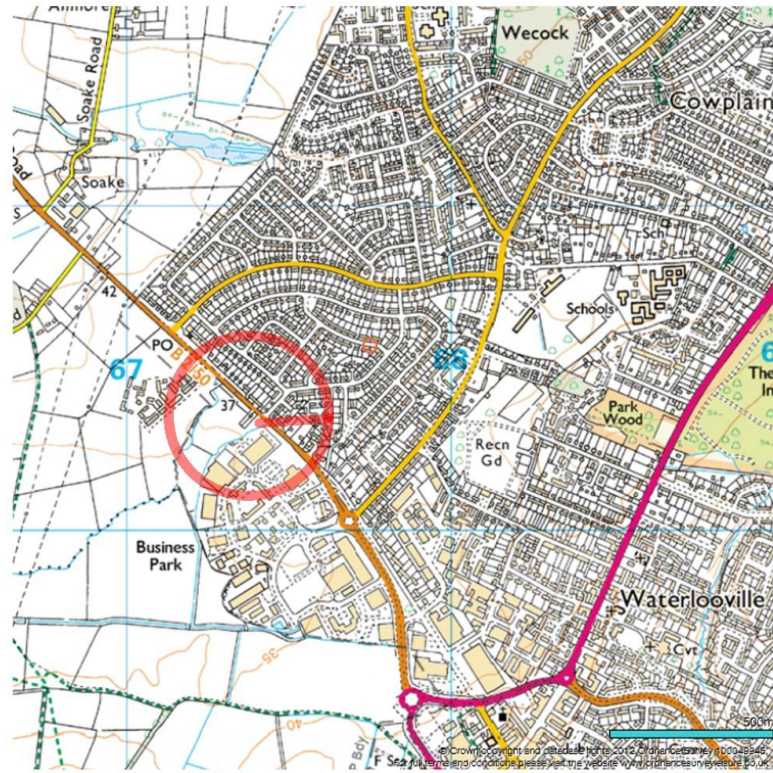
6.0 References

IEEM (2006). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK*. June 2006. www.cieem.net

JNCC (2010). *Handbook for Phase I habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*. JNCC 1990, revised 2010.
ISBN 978-0-86139-636-8

Land by Benhall, Waterloooville

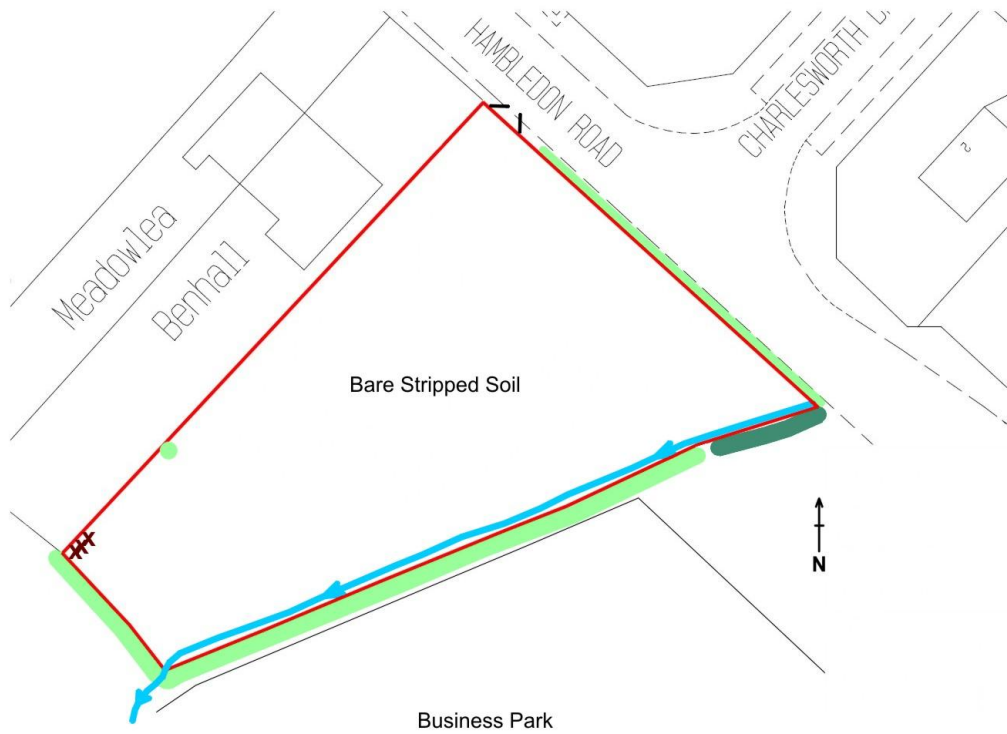
Map 1 - Site Location



Crown copyright, all rights reserved. Licence number AL100038335

Land by Benhall, Waterloooville

Map 2 - Survey Results



Key

- Native trees/Native deciduous hedge
- Conifer trees
- Scrub
- Wet ditch