



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Oak Park, Havant
for:

Ashley House plc

CRM.1112.005.EC.001



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Land at Oak Park, Havant.

Project:	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
For:	Ashley House plc
Status:	Final
Date:	November 2014
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Executive Summary

- i. Enzygo was commissioned to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to include taking into account and addressing the findings of an Ecological Assessment conducted by RPS in 2012.
- ii. A walkover survey was conducted within the suitable surveying window and was unconstrained. There was free access to the site and all the immediate boundaries were clearly visible.
- iii. The survey revealed a matrix of unmanaged habitats, all of low ecological value across the site. RPS's habitat descriptions offered in the 2012 report are still considered to provide an adequate description of the habitats still present.
- iv. Some areas of the site had succumbed to ecological succession, which is to be expected on an unmanaged site.
- v. The protected species assessment was concluded with a similar view as RPS's original report and recommendations regarding the same can be found at **Section 5** of this report.

1.0 Introduction

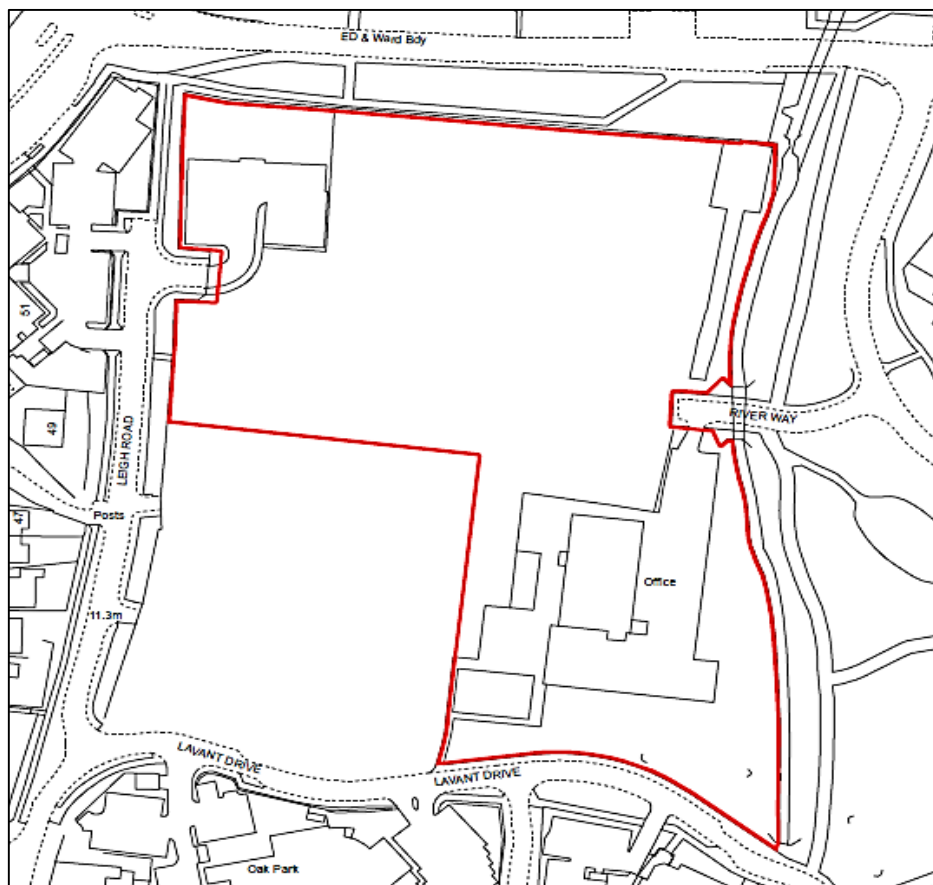
1.1. Commission

- 1.1.1. Enzygo Ltd was commissioned by Ashley House plc to conduct a preliminary ecological appraisal of a proposed development site upon the land at Oak Park, Havant, Hampshire. The survey was undertaken in the optimum survey window in 2014, and was conducted as a “re-fresher” or follow up to previous Phase 1 Habitat Surveys conducted by RPS and published in 2012 (RPS reference *JSL2001*).
- 1.1.2. The purpose of the survey was to identify the habitats present in and around the proposed development site, and to assess their potential to support protected species including reviewing ecological records from MAGIC and to provide recommendations for further work in relation to protected species.
- 1.1.3. The standard shelf-life of an ecological evaluation of this nature is usually taken to be two years, the further walkover survey conducted by Enzygo in October 2014 “refreshes” the RPS evaluation and considers whether there has been any significant change in the site condition.

1.2. Site Details

- 1.2.1. The site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 72014 07139, within Hampshire County Council, postal code PO9 2EL. The site is approximately 2.0ha in size; the site’s red-line boundary is shown in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1: View of the sites red-line boundary and surrounding area.



- 1.2.2. Upon initial inspection the land appears similar to that described in RPS 2012 Assessment. The land comprises of scattered trees, successional scrub, improved grassland, tall ruderal vegetation, species poor hedgerows and hard standing. A building previously listed on site has since been demolished and cleared leaving a second area of hard standing.
- 1.2.3. The land is bordered on all sides with roads and a mixture of commercial and residential properties.
- 1.2.4. A detailed habitat description is given in Section 3.
- 1.2.5. The site was assessed within the normal timing window (mid-March to mid-October) that would be considered optimal for the conduct of this type of evaluation.

Photograph 1: Aerial photograph of the site.



(Taken from www.bing.com/maps dated July 2013-Sept 2013.)

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Survey Details

- 2.1.1 The site was surveyed on 2nd October 2014. A full Phase 1 Habitat Assessment was made in accordance with The Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat survey (JNCC, 2003) with a search for evidence of protected species on site. A Phase 1 map was not produced as a part of this assessment as the drawings produced by RPS continue to provide an adequate description of the habitats present on site and can still be relied upon.
- 2.1.2 Target notes were made for particular areas of interest and annotated.
- 2.1.3 An ecological walkover survey of the site was also conducted. The survey looks for direct and indirect evidence (through sightings or field signs) of protected species and speculates on likely presence based upon habitat type and quality.

2.2 Enzygo Ltd Ecology Experience

- 2.2.1 This study and the site survey was conducted by Chris Formaggia BSc (joint Hons) CBiol CEnv MBS MCIEEM – Director of Ecology. The Director has been a professional ecologist for 25 years both as an environmental regulator and consultant. He has been surveying herptiles for 24 years and is regularly called upon to survey and mitigate for schemes affecting reptiles.
- 2.2.2 Kirsty Rogers MZoo, GradCIEEM – Ecological Consultant.

2.3 Survey Objectives

- 2.3.1 On the basis of the brief provided by the client Enzygo Ltd has conducted an ecological study:
 - To determine the baseline ecological value of the site.
 - To determine the baseline ecological constraints that might require further evaluation with respect to any site development.
 - Advice on further ecological evaluation that might be necessary.

2.4 Survey Area

- 2.4.1 The appraisal has considered the whole of the site and its immediate peripheries where visible/accessible.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Phase 1 Habitat Mapping

3.1.1 The completed Phase 1 Habitat map (as produced by RPS in 2012) is presented in **Appendix 1**. Target notes are shown as numbered black circles and are described in further detail in section **3.3**.

3.1.2 The overall area of the site is approximately 2.0 hectares, and contains 8 habitats inside the site boundary.

3.1.3 Semi-Improved Grassland

The primary habitat within the site is semi-improved neutral grassland (**B2.2**), which is currently unmanaged and wild. The dominant species on site included (but not limited to); cock's foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*).

3.1.4 Bare Ground

There are two areas of bare ground on the site, an area to the south of the site which had previously supported an Education Centre which had been demolished and cleared is now left as hard standing. A second area of bare ground is located to the north-western corner of the site and appeared to have previously been used as a car park.

The car park held evidence of some successional scrub species scattered across it in the form of buddleja (*Buddleja davidii*), broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and occasional grass species.

3.1.5 Scrub

There are areas of successional scrub over most of the site, towards the southern areas of the site the scrub was more dense/continuous (**A2.1**) whilst over the rest of the site it became less so (**A2.2**). The dominant species present were hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*).

3.1.6 Scattered trees

The site has a number of deciduous scattered trees (**A3.1**) throughout, particularly in the centre of the site. The dominant species on site included an English oak (*Quercus robur*) and horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).

3.1.7 Tall ruderal

Areas of tall ruderal vegetation (**C3.1**) were present over the site, this was dominated by common nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

RPS's 2012 survey highlighted the presence of amenity grassland (**J1.2**) on site, during Enzygo's site assessment there was no obvious areas of grassland which could be described as such. In the areas mapped by RPS as amenity grassland much of the vegetation was in a successional state and is now similar in composition to tall ruderal vegetation.

3.1.8 Intact species-poor hedge

Two lengths of hedgerow were present forming borders to the site, these were almost mono-species, dominant with hawthorn.

3.1.9 Buildings

There is one building left on site which appears to be an electricity substation still in use. Some adjacent structure appears to have been demolished. The building was constructed of redbrick and had a flat roof.

3.2 Target Notes

3.2.1 Target Note 1: building demolished.

3.2.2 Target Note 2: Tall ruderal.

3.2.3 Target Note 3: An urban stream.

3.3 Desk Study

3.3.1 A 2km interrogation of the DEFRA Magic database reveals the following statutory nature designations (the complete map can be found in **Appendix 3**):

- Chichester and Langston Harbours is a RAMSAR site located approximate 1.8km from the site boundary.

3.3.2 A further search of statutory nature reservations was made as part of RPS's 2012 survey from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. A search has not commissioned as part of this report. The data search information sourced in 2012 has been summarised below.

There are four statutory designated sites for nature conservation within the 2km search boundary, two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) one Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and one Special Protection Area (SPA), the closest of which is approximately 1.8km from the site boundary.

3.3.3 A 2km data search was commissioned from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, by RPS in 2012 to include existing biological records in the area. The full report is not suitable for entering on a public register and was not provided as part of the 2012 survey report. However the following de-sensitised summary of the findings are as follows:

i. Amphibians

There were no records regarding amphibian species within the designated search area.

ii. Reptiles

*Two species of reptile were recorded with in the last 10 years, these were slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and adder (*Vipera berus*).*

iii. Birds

There were 108 birds of conservation concern listed within the designated search area, however most were focused within the SPA.

iv. Invertebrates

There were 58 species of invertebrate recorded within the search area within the last 10 years.

v. Mammals

There were 7 records of bat species recorded within the last 10 years, these are:

- *Serotine (Eptesicus serotinus)*
- *Myotis sp.*
- *Daubenton's bat (Myotis daubentonii)*
- *Noctule (Nactalus noctula)*
- *Common pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus)*
- *Soprano pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pygmaeus)*
- *Brown long-eared bat (Plecotus auritus)*

There are also records within the last 10 years for badgers (Meles meles) and European water vole (Arvicola amphibious) within the designated search area.

3.4 Protected Species Audit

3.5.1. The site was also assessed for its potential to contain protected species. The results are detailed below.

3.5.2. Bats

3.5.3. RPS discussed the sites likely value to bats. RPS describes the site as *"relatively isolated within an urban setting, due to the presence of a matrix of long grassland, scattered trees/scrub and hedge, the site is considered to offer medium quality foraging habitat for bats"*.

3.5.4. Following Enzygo's recent inspection, Enzygo agrees that the site is likely to support some bat foraging, but it is assessed that this would be low quality habitat – on the basis of urban isolation of the site and its modest scale. It is not envisaged that the loss of the foraging habitat would exert a population level impact on bats and that is contribution can be regarded as negligible.

3.5.5. To elaborate there are no suitable trees or buildings on the site that could support a bat roost. There are some mature trees beyond the site boundaries on the eastern and western edges of the site that have suitable habitat features which could be utilised by bats for roosting. However, these trees are unaffected by the proposals and are not within the control of the developer. There is not a risk that bat roosts will be destroyed as a result of the proposals.

3.5.6. The remaining building left on site had no features present that could support a bat roost, or offer access to the same.

3.5.7. Badgers

3.5.8. Both RPS' 2012 survey and Enzygo's recent walkover survey confirm there is no evidence of badgers, badger setts or badger activity on the site or along the immediate peripheries.

3.5.9. Breeding Birds

3.5.10. RPS's 2012 assessment stated that *"the scattered trees, scrub and hedges on site provide good foraging and nesting habitat for common species of birds"*. To elaborate on this, Enzygo's view is that RPS's statement continues to apply, but the majority of suitable habitat is actually on the peripheries beyond the site boundaries. The actual suitable habitat on site is limited to some patches of tall ruderal plants and minor scrub patches. The urban context and the lack of habitat makes it highly unlikely that birds enjoying extra protection (Schedule 1 birds) are

present and those that are, are likely to be common field and garden species. These are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act whilst breeding. It is considered that this matter can be adequately dealt with using standard planning conditions so that vegetation clearance is performed outside the breeding season (March to August inclusive) or under the supervision and control of a suitably qualified ecologist.

3.5.11. **Amphibians**

3.5.12. RPS stated that *"the grassland on site was un-managed and therefore had a tall sward height. This offered good foraging habitat for amphibians. No ponds were present on site, but a stream ran just outside the eastern site boundary. Due to the shallow water depth, present of running water and lack of aquatic vegetation, the stream was not considered suitable to support amphibians. No ponds were noted in the surrounding area. The site is therefore considered unlikely to support amphibians"*.

3.5.13. This statement was supported by the evaluation conducted by Enzygo, and because of the lack of suitable habitat on site and in the vicinity of the site, it is unlikely that there is an amphibian presence on site.

3.5.14. **Reptiles**

3.5.15. RPS's 2012 report states that *"due to the long sward height, matrix of habitats and presence of a stream adjacent to the site boundary, the site offers good habitat for reptiles. A rubble pile adjacent to the old sub-station (noted as an area of spoil on the habitat map) also had potential to be used as a hibernacula by reptile species"*. RPS's report goes further to say *"An old piece of roofing felt was noted during the site survey, under which two juvenile slow worms were seen"*.

3.5.16. Enzygo's assessment of the site agrees that the site does have a matrix of habitat features that are suitable for common reptile species. It will be necessary to conduct a full presence/likely-absence survey of the site to better determine the abundance and distribution of the reptile species on site. This survey consists of a sequence of 7 survey visits during a favourable survey window (either April to May or September) to check a network of artificial refugia.

3.5.17. It is evaluated that only the common reptile species are to be present and most-likely that this may only be slow worm. This population is likely to be a remnant population that has become surrounded by development. The common reptile species only enjoy limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to kill or injure the animals. A development proposal must develop adequate measures to prevent this. In this case it is evaluated that the developed site will not be capable of sustaining a remnant reptile population (or populations) after development. To this end it is considered that the best solution will be to conduct a controlled removal of reptiles from the site and to translocate them to a (to be determined) receptor site elsewhere.

3.5.18. A suitable site should be local, lacking in an existing population but offering connectivity so that the translocated population can expand naturally and reach new populations in the longer term. The site would be sealed with a suitable herptile fence and trapped out for an agreed period prior to construction (30-60 days is expected to be adequate). As these species are not European Protected Species it is considered that this matter can be satisfactorily dealt

with by a planning condition that calls for a detailed scheme to be submitted in advance of works.

3.5.19. **Invertebrates**

3.5.20. The RPS report stated that *“Although the grassland on site was relatively species poor, the diversity of habitats present, particularly in the ephemeral habitat in the north west of the site, means the site is likely to support a good abundance of invertebrate species”*.

3.5.21. RPS’s report suggested that the site might support notable invertebrate species. The LPA has queried the possibility of the stag beetle (*Lucanidae sp.*) being present on the basis of the local records sought in 2012. Further to the Enzygo visit it is concluded that this is unlikely as the site lacks any quantity of decomposing woody materials, upon which stag beetles are entirely reliant for their habitat.

3.5.22. **Riparian Species**

The RPS report made no assessment on the potential for riparian species within the nearby waterway to the east of the site beyond the site boundary. RPS did describe the stream as *“It was culverted to the north but open adjacent to the site. It had steep banks which were well vegetated but no aquatic vegetation was present”*. Following its recent site survey, Enzygo agrees with the RPS assessment and confirms this is still the case – it is unlikely that the stream is able to support any notable riparian species.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. General

- 4.1.1. The habitats on site are mainly of low ecological value. Surveys needed to assess the presence of protected species and habitats are outlined as follows.

4.2. Breeding Birds

- 4.2.1. There is potential for some species of birds to use areas of scrub habitat currently found on site for breeding.
- 4.2.2. **An ecological clerk of works should be present at the commencement of any scrub vegetation clearance if this area is to be cleared within the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive), otherwise it is recommended that clearance works should be conducted outside of the breeding window.**

4.3. Reptiles

- 4.3.1 In support of RPS's survey (which located two juvenile slow worms on site), Enzygo's assessment recognises areas of suitable habitat for some common reptile species.
- 4.3.2 **The site should be subjected to a full reptile survey, by a suitably qualified ecologist, from April to May or September, to determine which species are present on site and in what densities they occur. The survey will require 7 site visits in suitable weather conditions, and if reptiles are found, a period of trapping (30-60 days) to relocate the reptiles to a suitable receptor area beyond the site boundary (yet to be determined).**

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- i. Many of the habitat descriptions and conclusions reached by RPS in their 2012 assessment are still considered to be an adequate description of the habitats currently present on site, and can still be relied upon for a planning decision.
- ii. The only noted significant change is the loss of a large building on the eastern boundary of the site.
- iii. The proposal site is comprised of a matrix of habitats, all of which are un-managed and in some successional state. It is assessed the site overall is of **low** ecological value.
- iv. An assessment of protected species concluded the potential presence of breeding birds and reptiles on site.
- v. It is recommended that:
 1. A full reptile survey is conducted to determine the presence and density of a reptile population on site, conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist.
 2. Any vegetation clearance should be conducted outside of the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive), if works are to be conducted within the breeding bird window it is suggested that the works should be carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.

6.0 APPENDIX 1 –PHASE 1 HABITAT AND KEY



Legend

- Site Boundary
- Survey Boundary
- Target note
- Intact species poor hedge
- S Spoil
- SI Semi-improved grassland
- I Improved grassland
- A Amenity grass
- Fence
- Buildings
- Hard-standing
- Running water
- Tall ruderal
- Scattered scrub
- Ephemeral short perennial
- Scattered trees
- Dense scrub

Rev:	Date:	Amendment:	Name:	Checked:

Data Source: RPS 2012
Status: DRAFT

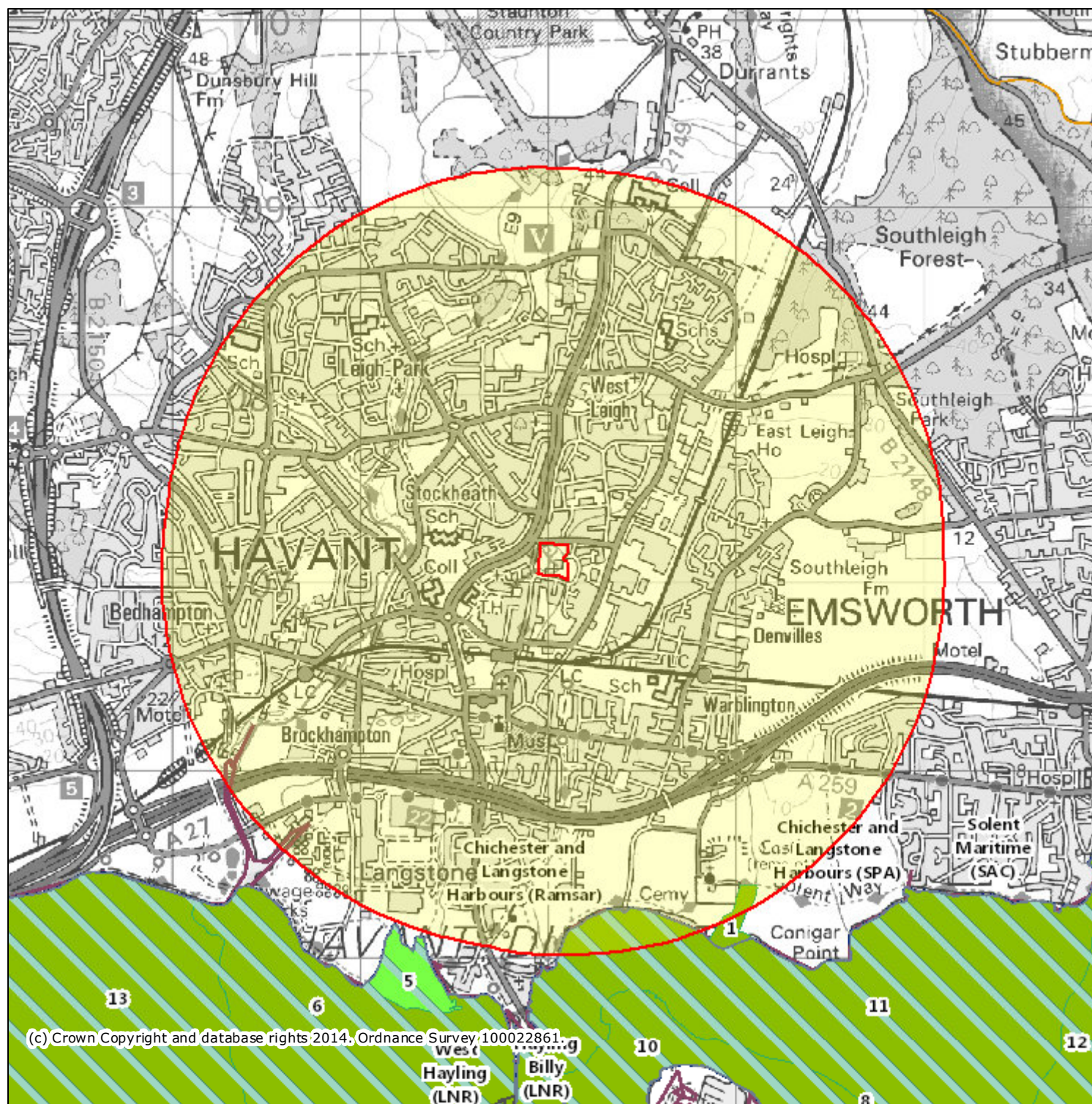
RPS
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Client: Hampshire County Council
Project: River Way Havant

Title: Phase 1 Habitat Survey
Scale @ A3
0 4 8 16 24 32 m
Date: 08 - 2012 Datum: OSGB Paper size: A3
Drawn: SH Checked: NP Job Ref: JSL2001

Figure No: 3.1 Revision: -

7.0 APPENDIX 2- DEFRA MAGIC MAP OF DESIGNATED SITES.



Legend

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| Environmentally Sensitive Areas (England) | Destroyed |
| Local Nature Reserves (England) | Not Assessed |
| National Nature Reserves (England) | |
| Ramsar Sites (England) | |
| Favourable Condition | |
| Unfavourable Recovering | |
| Unfavourable no change | |
| Unfavourable Declining | |
| Part Destroyed | |

Projection = OSGB36

xmin = 466800

ymin = 104600

xmax = 477300

ymax = 109600

Map produced by MAGiC on 24 November, 2014.

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