

4.0 DESIGNATED SITES, HABITATS & VEGETATION

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The ecological baseline describes the site in the context of the characteristic habitats of the area, and includes descriptions of designated sites and ecological features present within the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.

4.2 Designated Sites

Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.2.1 Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated of regional to national importance are present within 2km of the site; four European and Internationally important sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Ramsar Sites) are present within 5km of the site. The citation for the SSSIs within 2km and European and International Sites within 5km is provided at **Technical Appendix 5**. The sites are summarised in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Statutory Designated Sites

Site	Status	Distance from Site	Summary
Warblington Meadows	SSSI	700m	Unimproved Grazing Marsh
Chichester Harbour	SSSI	1.4km	Estuarine habitats and species
Langstone Harbour	SSSI	1.4km	Estuarine habitats and species
Solent Maritime	SAC	1.4m	Estuarine habitats and species
Solent & IoW Lagoons	SAC	1.4m	Estuarine habitats and species
Chichester & Langstone Harbour	SPA	1.4km	Estuarine habitats and species
Chichester & Langstone Harbour	Ramsar	1.4km	Estuarine habitats and species

Non Statutory Sites

- 4.2.3 There are three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) present within 1km of the site. These are mostly designated for grazing marsh habitats, especially those supporting feeding areas for Dark Bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicula bernicula*. All SINC are south of the railway line. Further details of the SINC are provided in **Technical Appendix 5**.

4.3 Habitats and Vegetation

Introduction

- 4.3.1 The following description is based on a number of site visits between December 2010 and September 2011. The site is made up of a much larger agricultural field with mixed vegetable cultivation bordered by a farm with a single detached dwelling, gardens and farmyard with associated outbuildings and storage areas. To the north are the partially defunct glasshouses and grounds of Manor Farm (Copseys) Nurseries and a dwelling house and private garden. To the north, south and west of the site is housing, and to the east is a large area of agricultural land under arable production with maintained thorn hedges.

- 4.3.2 The broad habitats on site are shown in **Figure 3** and described below. The vegetation description includes land beyond the proposed development area (see **Figure 2**).

Site History

- 4.3.3 Historical Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping has been consulted to understand the development of the habitats on the site over the last c180 years. The earliest studied maps being the first edition one inch to mile and six inch to mile OS from around the 1830's and 1870's. The first edition one inch map shows that the general landscape was open ground probably farmland both on site and all around. The more detailed map from the 1880's shows the extent of former field outlines present at the time and the presence of the Southern Railway.
- 4.3.4 By 1909 the north south road forms the start of the development of the settlement that is Denvilles. On site the first and largest of the barns present are shown. There is a nursery to the north west of the main road and site and the barns may be associated with Manor farm. The large field that forms the eastern part of the site and stretches east beyond the site is present, and a small clay pit is present over the site of the current pond location. The northern part of the farmyard at the end of Fifth avenue is also marked as an old clay pit by 1909, although little evidence of this is present today.
- 4.3.5 By 1938 the Manor Farm dwelling house is present with gardens suggesting two semi-detached dwellings. The farmyard is mostly marked out with some of the associated outbuildings shown. The land to the east is shown as a large single field with the boundaries as present today. The housing to the west is also present to its current extent, with the exception of the north west which is Nursery land. The Manor Farm nurseries were moved onto farmland to the east with the further spread of housing west of the site. To the south the housing here does not appear on mapping until the late 1960's early 1970's.

Arable Land

- 4.3.6 The arable land is under intensive cultivation, but as a small holding this appears to be relatively varied, with also some small scale animal husbandry (chickens & formally possibly pigs). The arable flora is typical of intensive arable production. The data search has shown that two red data declining species Corn Spurrey *Spergula arvensis* and Weasel's Snout *Misopates orontium* are present in the wider landscape, as well as the uncommon Blue Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis ssp. foemina*. Survey work during summer months found a small amount of Corn Spurrey in a spoil heap around the Nursery area to the north of the site, with a single plant of a coastal species, Musk Storksbill *Erodium moschatum*.
- 4.3.7 The Arable weed flora is typical of agriculturally improved farmland and includes Redshank *Persicaria maculosa*, Red Deadnettle *Lamium purpureum*, Broad Leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Annual Meadow Grass *Poa annua*, Common Chickweed *Stellaria media*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*, Fat Hen *Chenopodium album*, Sentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and rarely Henbit Deadnettle *Lamium amplexicaule*.

- 4.3.7 The eastern boundary of the arable land is marked by a managed species poor planted Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* dominated hedge on a bank with a ditch to the east, and a strip of improved grassland to the west. A pond has been dug at the southern edge of this hedgerow and has species poor aquatic vegetation. This natural clay lined pond is dominated by Reedmace *Typha latifolia*, Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima*, and Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. It was created by the current owners a number of years ago for water storage and irrigation, but is likely to have developed from a former clay pit that is shown on turn of the century mapping. The pond is shown on **Photo 9** below. The railway boundary is dominated by Brambles *Rubus fruticosus* agg. over a fence line and occasional Hawthorn. A typical view of the arable ground with an Onion crop is shown at **Photo 1** below.



Photo 1: Arable Farmland on Site, looking west

Farmyard

- 4.3.8 At the south west corner of the site is a working farmhouse, outbuildings, farmyard and gardens to the farmhouse. The trees on site are mix of planted native and non-native species, and probably some self-sown species, the latter including a patch of maturing Willow *Salix* sp. with Oak *Quercus robur* on a ditch at the north eastern end of the farmyard. This 'ditch' does not lead anywhere and may be a relic of the clay pit constructed in the early 1900's. Other species in the farmyard include Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, as well as, Poplar *Populus* sp, Birch *Betula* sp, Pine *Prunus* sp, Laurel *Laurus* sp, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Buddleia *Buddleja davidii*, Apple *Malus domestica* and Walnut *Juglans* sp. The garden in particular has become overgrown with young understorey woody vegetation and Bramble over an Ivy *Hedera helix* agg. dominated ground flora.

- 4.3.9 The remainder of the farmyard consists of a mosaic of bare to ruderal vegetation such as Willowherb and Mugwort, with areas of Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Bramble scrub that is kept in check by mowing/flailing, and some rank grassland mostly dominated by Cocks Foot *Dactylis glomerata*. The farmyard habitats are shown on **Photos 2-7** below



Photo 2: Ruderal, Tipped Material, Bramble and Nettles within Farmyard



Photo 3: Invading low Bramble in Farmyard with Willows along 'ditch' in background. The ditch dried out early Spring 2011.



Photo 4: Boundary between Manor Farmyard and the Nursery with Brambles and scattered thorn bushes with mature trees including Oak. There is also a bank and ditch, which acts to drain rainfall from Nursery to the north. This drain retained water into spring but was dry by summer 2011.



Photo 5: Southern Boundary with housing - Fenced



Photo 6: Garden of Manor Farmhouse



Photo 7: Outgrown woody nature of Farmhouse Garden

Northern Dwelling & Garden

- 4.3.10 At the north end of the site is a large detached house with garage and outbuilding set in a large mature private garden. The garden is well planted with formal flower and shrub borders and a regularly maintained lawn. The lawn is species poor and dominated by grasses such as Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Rye Grass *Lolium perenne*, Meadow Grasses *Poa sp.* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*. A few herbs are present including abundant White Clover and patches of Sweet Violet *Viola odorata* and Self Heal *Prunella vulgaris*. The boundary of the garden is mature shrubs and young trees with some native species including Oak, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Elder. A ditch, which is dry during summer months, runs along the eastern boundary of the garden. The Dwelling house Gardens are shown at **Photo 8** below.



Photo 8: Northern Dwelling House Garden

Manor Farm Nursery

- 4.3.11 The Nursery buildings take up the majority of the northern central part of the site (see **Photos 9-10**). They mostly comprise glass growing houses, only semi-operational. There are yard areas within the centre of the site that are in low use and common ruderal species and non-native species such as Fleabanes *Conyza sumatrensis* & *C. canadensis* are taking advantage of the low use.
- 4.3.12 Around the boundaries of the Nursery is an area of rank grassland and ruderal vegetation and on the outside edge of the land an engineered ditch network to drain the glass houses; as well as species poor, semi-maintained thorn hedges dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, including developing scrub and Roses *Rosa canina*.

- 4.3.13 The grassland in these small edge strips is species poor, unmanaged and becoming rank and tussocky. It is generally dominated by False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, with Cocks Foot *Dactylis glomerata* and some Creeping Bent and Timothy *Phleum pratense*. Herb diversity is low with Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Docks *Rumex sp*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius* and Stone Parsley *Sison amomum* all locally distributed. A small amount of Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* is present along the eastern boundary.
- 4.3.14 The ditches which are winter wet and dry during the summer are also fairly species poor but with some aquatic vegetation including Reedmace, Common Reed, Grey Willow, Willowherbs, Nettle, and Fleabane. Bramble is also locally dominant. Along the southern and northern edge of the Nursery area the ditch has a couple of mature Oaks.

Flora

- 4.3.15 Corn Spurrey has been recently Red Data listed as a locally scarce declining plant species of arable land. It is widespread in southern Hampshire but declining as a result of changing agricultural practices and intensification. The population on site was noted only within a small spoil pile to the north of the Nursery rather than within the arable flora. Two species sometimes considered indicative of unimproved grasslands, Stone Parsley and Hoary Ragwort are present in the species poor grassland around the Nursery edges, but their presence is not considered of significant conservation value here.

Evaluation of Vegetation and Habitats

- 4.3.16 The habitats on site are generally either improved, disturbed or outgrown formal garden plantings. The habitats are considered to be of **Value within the Zone of Influence** on account of the fact they provide some semi natural vegetation, but the intrinsic value of these habitats is considered low. The highlighting of the garden of Manor Farmhouse as a BAP Priority habitat of Mixed Woodland is likely to have been undertaken from inspecting aerial photographs, and the categorisation is considered not suitable for the outgrown garden habitats present on site.



Photo 9: Open areas of the Nursery are in low use and Ruderal vegetation is developing opportunistically



Photo 10 Rough Grassland around Nursery boundaries