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Land at horndean Road

Summary Statement

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Introduction

In Spring 2013 Azure Ecology (Now trading as 'The Ecology Co-operation Ltd') was asked by Bidwells (on behalf of Chidden Farms) to undertake a Phase 1 habitat survey and protected species impact assessment at a plot of land lying on the western edge of Horndean Road in Emsworth, Hampshire.

This assessment was completed in support of a proposal to apply for planning permission to develop an area of predominantly arable farmland for up to 140 new residential properties as well as creating a new flood abatement wetland habitat.

Scope of the ecological assessment

Following an initial appraisal by Azure Ecology, it was decided that habitat capable to supporting the following species was present and further assessment would be required:

1. Great crested newts
2. Bats
3. Reptiles
4. Water voles
5. Rare flora
6. Wintering waders/brent geese

Surveys for all of these species were completed over the summer of 2013, whilst surveys for wintering waders and brent geese were completed across autumn and winter 2013/2014.

These surveys were able to come to the following conclusions:

1. There is no evidence that great crested newts, brent geese or water voles are using the site due to a lack of any field signs or historical records.
2. There is a low population of common lizards along some grassland buffer strips that border the arable fields
3. The use of the site by commuting bats is very low, whilst no bat roosts on or adjacent to the site were identified.
4. The site does not support any rare flora, though some of the flowering plants present do have some limited value for pollinating insects.

Implications for development

The ecological value of the site overall was deemed to be quite low, though a pond situated around the site centre should be retained and some of the value of existing grassland should be retained and enhanced where possible. The presence of common lizards means that the development would need to demonstrate not only how this species could be protected, but also how the conservation status of these reptiles could be preserved or even enhanced.

As a result of the findings from the ecological surveys carried out, a Habitat Creation and Management plan was created to demonstrate not only how protected species would be protected through the development, but also show how a number of ecological enhancements have been implemented into the site design, so that there will be an overall gain in biodiversity. Specific enhancements that have been included are:

1. The creation of a new wetland habitat with value for wetland birds and other aquatic wildlife
2. The creation of new wildflower grassland habitats, including dry grassland, wetland grassland and woodland mixture
3. Enhancements to the existing pond including increasing light levels, improving the permanence of the pond and plug planting new pond plants of notable value.
4. Putting up bat boxes and bird boxes so that there are new nesting and roosting opportunities for these species.