

BEREWOOD TOWN PARK PHASE A: PROTECTED SPECIES MITIGATION ADVICE NOTE



On behalf of Grainger

12 March 2014

FINAL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In 2011 Grainger received outline planning permission from Winchester City Council (WCC) and Havant Borough Council for a mixed-use development consisting of 2,550 housing units at Newlands (now referred to as Berewood) on the western fringe of Waterlooville in Hampshire. The outline planning application was subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and also Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening (N.B. with respect to the HRA the Competent Authority concluded that an Appropriate Assessment was not required).

The present *Protected Species Mitigation Advice Note* has been produced to support the Reserved Matters Application (RMA) for the first component - Phase A - of a four part project to construct Berewood's Town Park. The detailed proposals for Phase A and higher-level/strategic proposals for the entire Park, are set out in the report *Landscape Design Statement Town Park, Phase A, Berewood, Waterlooville* which was produced by the project landscape architects - Fabrik.

The Phase A redline boundary is shown in Figure 1 below. Phase A is hereafter also referred to as the Site. Phase A would consist of a skateboard park, youth shelter, a Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) and informal kick-about space. New habitat would consist mostly of amenity grassland although it would be fringed by wildflower grassland and treelines. The locations of these features are all shown in the aforementioned Fabrik report and the submitted General Arrangement Drawings and so are not reproduced here.

1.2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report specifically seeks to discharge Condition 6 (ii) – other matters which is attached to the outline permission and requires ‘*details of ecological mitigation measures*’ to be submitted with each RMA.

The present document has been produced in advice note format and so does not describe and assess potential ecological impacts to the same level as a detailed Environmental Statement (ES). This format is considered appropriate as the Site has already been assessed in great detail for the EIA undertaken for the wider Berewood scheme; and because the Site is considered to be of very limited ecological interest as is explained below.

Potential impacts and associated mitigation relating to subsequent phases of the Town Park are NOT covered in this document.

Figure 1. Town Park Phase A component



2.0 METHODS

Given that proposals for the wider Berewood site have been developing over a number of years, four separate ecological desk studies have been undertaken, the most recent of which was carried out in October 2012. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey was last undertaken in 2007, although various survey validation walkovers have been subsequently undertaken, the last being on the 6th March 2014.

Details of various protected species surveys undertaken for the EIA, and then subsequently for individual RMAs (most notably the adjacent Phase 2 and Phase 3 infrastructure RMAs), are not reproduced here. In summary, surveys covering the Site or directly adjacent habitat have included:

- Badger survey.
- Dormouse survey - including connecting hedgerows.
- Bat survey – including multiple surveys of Plant Farm and activity surveys of surrounding linear features.
- Great Crested Newt survey - all suitable ponds within the wider Berewood site have been surveyed (N.B. there are no ponds within the Site itself).
- Reptile survey - including field margins within the Site.
- Breeding bird survey.

3.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

3.1 HABITATS

There are no International, European or Nationally designated sites within the Site or sufficiently close to be relevant in terms of being potentially vulnerable to any significant adverse effects relating to the present proposals.

The south-west corner of the Site is ca. 50m from the Local Site - Newlands Row and Plant Row Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). This SINC and others across the Berewood Site are described in detail in the Environmental Statement.

The Site previously consisted almost entirely of arable land. A short section (ca.25m) of species-rich hedgerow extends along a short section of the Site's northern edge and a species-poor recently planted gappy hedgerow (ca. 200m) separates the field from the A3 London Road along the eastern boundary (the latter is actually planted on the landward side of the adjoining road verge and is outside of the Site boundary).

The Site is no longer farmed and is used to store construction spoil and is the location of the Phase 2 infrastructure site compound. The regular passage of machinery has prevented any ruderal vegetation of significance establishing since the cessation of farming.

3.2 FAUNA

The potential for any protected species being present within the Site, which is almost entirely un-vegetated with the exception of the two boundary hedge features, is considered to be low to negligible.

- Badgers. No Badger field signs have been found within or adjacent to the Site.
- Dormice. The two hedgerows are isolated from the surrounding woodland and do not provide sufficient habitat, even when suitable connecting habitat is taken into account, to support a population/sub-population of Dormice. Note that recent detailed Dormouse surveys undertaken in more optimal Dormouse habitat surrounding Plant Farm found no evidence of Dormice.
- Bats. The nearest built structures to the Site which might include bats are within the Plant Farm building complex ca. 220m to the north. Previous surveys identified several summer roosts occupied by very small numbers of lone males and non-breeding female bats (Common Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared and Natterer's Bat). The farm complex has suffered from repeated arson and other attacks of vandalism, and no longer includes the majority of features that were being utilised by the bats (e.g. the three floors (including the loft space) and the hanging tiles are all gone). The short section of hedge along the Site's northern boundary included two mature trees; no emergence/re-entry surveys were undertaken to check for roosting bats as this hedge would be retained under the proposals and would be suitably protected during landscape works by exclusion fencing (see below). No significant bat foraging/commuting features extend across the Phase A Site.

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- Great Crested Newts. While Great Crested Newts (GCN) breed in a pond near Newlands Farm on the western side of Berewood, a GCN exclusion fence has been installed along the eastern side of Newlands Row woodland and extends half way up the eastern side of Plant Row. This fence renders access to the Site by GCNs highly unlikely; note that any GCNs would need to travel ca. 940m from their breeding pond to reach the Site, assuming that any newts would circumnavigate the northern extremity of the fence (N.B. the distance would be ca. 1km were they to circumnavigate the southern extremity). Plant Farm Pond, which is ca. 210m to the north of the Site boundary, has been surveyed for GCNs on five separate occasions. While none were recorded in four of the surveys including the most recent survey, during one visit in 2012 a single GCN was recorded. It has been provisionally agreed with WCC that it can be assumed that no breeding population exists at Plant Farm Pond and that the risk of individual GCNs being present with the Site itself is negligible. It was however agreed that Plant Farm Pond should be monitored for GCN and so a sixth survey will be carried out in spring 2014.
 - Reptiles. Small numbers of common reptiles (mostly Slow-worms and an occasional Grass Snake) have been recorded along nearby field boundaries. It is possible that a few reptiles do make use of the Site's hedgerow-lined eastern boundary, although none were recorded during the EIA survey and habitat quality is generally poor as no adjoining grassy headland of any significance exists.
 - Breeding birds. Skylarks nest over some of the Berewood's arable fields although none have ever been recorded within the present Site. A small number of common bird species may breed within the boundary hedgerows although the habitat is not considered of sufficient quality and size to support any rare/scarce breeding species.

4.0 POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

4.1 HABITATS

Impacts on habitats and any necessary mitigation are described as follows:

- European Sites. As discussed, the creation of the Town Park would not adversely impact on any European Sites. Rather the Town Park is one component in a substantial network of biodiverse greenspaces being created across the wider Berewood development that aim to deter residents from travelling to local coastal European Sites for passive recreational activities such as dog walking.
- Hedgerows. Fencing already exists between the Site and the hedge on the eastern side of the Site. Exclusion fencing would also be installed along the margins of the short section of hedgerow on the Site's northern boundary to protect both their above surface growth and root systems and minimise landscape works disturbance to hedgerow wildlife. Details are to be provided to construction contractors by the project landscape architect and would be in accordance with *British Standard Trees in Relation to Construction*.
- Water features. Potential pollutants from site activities would be mitigated so far as is practical by employing the measures described within the CEMP (relevant sections can be provided if requested). Where rainfall on site discharges overland directly to SuDS features, the inherent design would settle sediments within the basins and ponds.
- New habitat creation. Habitat would consist mostly of amenity grassland fringed in places by wildflower grassland (predominantly MG5 neutral grassland) and treelines. Within the Phase A of the Town Park, wildflower grassland would be established along the south-eastern and eastern margins as shown on the General Arrangement Drawings that have been produced by the project landscape architects (an approximate indication of the proposed wildflower grassland layout is also shown in Figure 1 above). While the layout of wildflower grassland on these drawings is not exactly as is shown in the ES's eco-masterplan, the overall quantum of wildflower grassland being proposed within the Town Park should actually be greater (taking into account Grainger's commitment to under-sow the arboretum and orchard areas with wildflower grassland). Although the quantum of wildflower grassland shown on the eco-masterplan is to be implemented, the precise distribution of this habitat type may be subject to minor adjustment in certain areas for reasons of visual aesthetic and legibility.

The tree planting palette would include English Oak *Quercus Robur*, a species particularly characteristic of the surrounding Forest of Bere. Various other attractive tree and shrub species characteristic of parks and other greenspaces would include Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Paul's Scarlett' Hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Californian Lilac *Ceanothus* Blue Mound and *Choisya ternate*. The layout of planting is provided in the document *Landscape Design Statement Town Park, Phase A, Berewood, Waterlooville*.

4.2 FAUNA

Potential impacts on fauna and proposed mitigation would be as follows:

- Badgers. No Badger setts would be affected and so no mitigation is proposed. As a precaution, and in keeping with best practice, an additional check for new signs of Badger activity would be undertaken shortly before works are due to commence.
- Bats. The short section of hedgerow along the Site's northern boundary, which would be retained under the proposals, would as a precaution be fenced off in accordance with *British Standard Trees in Relation to Construction* minimising any disturbance that might result from local landscape works. The planting of treelines and establishment of wildflower grassland would be expected to enhance conditions for bats. No lighting columns are proposed for the Park but should this change at a later date for whatever reason, due consideration would be given to protecting newly created bat foraging and commuting habitat.
- Great Crested Newts. Although the risk of GCNs colonising the Site from the west is considered to be negligible, this risk would be reduced even further through extending the GCN fencing along the entire eastern side of Plant Row. The extension to the fencing would increase the distance between the GCN breeding pond and the Site to 1.5km, assuming access from the north. As discussed, it is currently assumed that no GCNs are present in Plant Farm Pond although another precautionary survey (the sixth survey of this pond) is scheduled for spring 2014. Should ongoing monitoring at Plant Farm reveal presence of GCN prior to works to the Town Park commencing, then any further mitigation requirements will be discussed and agreed with the LPAs prior to works commencing.
- Reptiles. As discussed almost all of the Site is currently considered unsuitable for reptiles. To deter future colonisation by reptiles, vegetation would be kept low throughout the construction period where required through cutting and herbicide treatment. For developments of this scale and type however vegetation is usually effectively controlled through the regular passage of men and machinery.
- Breeding birds. No woodland, hedgerow or scrub habitat would be cleared and so no mitigation is required to prevent loss of active nests. During construction there might be some disturbance to breeding birds in the adjoining woodlands, although this would be offset through a programme of substantial new woodland creation (including buffer planting between new housing abutting woodlands) that is being undertaken as part of the wider Berewood development.

JOB NAME: Berewood**CLIENT: Grainger****REPORT TITLE: Berewood Town Park Phase A: Protected Species Mitigation Advice Note****STATUS: DRAFT****PREPARED BY:**

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**REVISIONS:**

Rev No.	Comments	Date
00	Draft for Client comment	07-3-14
01	FINAL for RMA	12-3-14

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