



Barncroft School, Havant, Hampshire

**Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
Report**



September 2013

Our Ref: JSL1786 Rev2

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Date:	September 2013
Project Number/Document Reference:	JSL1786 Rev2

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- RPS Ecology was commissioned by Hampshire County Council to carry out a Phase 1 Habitat Survey at Barncroft Infants School, Havant, near Portsmouth.
- The aim of the survey was to update previous work completed in 2010.
- The scattered scrub and trees on site are considered to offer low botanical value but do provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season.
- The southern boundary of the site provides suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats. It is recommended that any artificial lighting on site should be designed to avoid any light spill onto the southern boundary of the site.
- It is considered that badgers are absent from the site, although there is evidence that fox may utilise the site.
- Given the low ecological value of the majority of the site, assuming the recommendations made in this report are followed, the development of the site should have negligible ecological impact.

1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

- 1.1 RPS Ecology was commissioned by Hampshire County Council in summer 2013 to carry out a Phase 1 Habitat Survey at Barncroft Infants School, in Havant, near Portsmouth, Hampshire.
- 1.2 A previous Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out at the site in 2010 (RPS 2011). This covered the wider school site; however the current survey only assessed a small parcel of land in the south-west corner of the site.

Site Description

- 1.3 The site is a fenced-off parcel of land in the south-west corner of the wider Infants School site. It is bordered to the south by a footpath, beyond which are residential properties with associated gardens. Park Lane runs parallel to the western boundary of the site with a medical centre immediately to the north. The wider school site, comprising buildings and a playing field, lies to the north-east of the site.

Aims and objectives

- 1.4 The purpose of the Phase 1 Habitat survey was to identify the habitats present within and around the site. The survey also assessed the potential for the site and adjoining habitats to be used by species that receive legal protection (at a UK and/or European level) and species that are otherwise notable including Species of Principal Importance, UK BAP priority species, and Birds of Conservation Concern.
- 1.5 This report presents the Phase 1 Habitat survey information and provides an ecological baseline of the site.

2 METHODS

Field Survey

- 2.1 The survey was conducted in accordance with The Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC 2003), and included searches for signs of protected species, as described in the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment (IEEM, 2012).
- 2.2 A walkover of the site was undertaken on 19th July 2013, during which habitats within the site were classified, mapped and described, with respect to their structure and floristic composition.
- 2.3 The habitats within the site were assessed for their potential to support legally protected or otherwise notable flora and fauna. Where suitable habitat was identified on site, a search was conducted for signs indicating the presence of protected species such as droppings, burrows, tracks and evidence of feeding. Where species are not specifically mentioned, this indicates that no habitat of potential value for these species was identified during the survey.
- 2.4 Consideration was also given to habitats outside the site, in order to understand the ecological context of the site within the wider landscape. Adjacent habitats were also considered with respect to their own ecological value and their potential to enhance the ecological value of habitats within the site.
- 2.5 Searches were made for invasive non-native plant species focussing on those species currently listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), including those species included in the revised Schedule 9.
- 2.6 Botanical nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

3 RESULTS

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 3.1 The habitats present on the site are described below broadly in order of extent.

Tall ruderal

- 3.2 The centre of the site was dominated by tall ruderal vegetation. Species present included Common nettle *Urtica dioica*, Willowherb *Epilobium* sp., and Hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*.

Trees

- 3.3 Trees of mixed age were present around the edges of the site. These comprised Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Gelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, English Elm *Ulmus procera*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Aspen *Populus tremula*.

- 3.4 Two standing dead English Elm trees were present adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. Most of the bark had fallen off these.

- 3.5 The understorey consisted of Common nettle, Broad leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and Dogrose *Rosa canina*.

- 3.6 Two burrows were present, around the entrances to which several long hairs with ginger tips were identified. Two mammal tracks led under the southern and western boundary fencing.

Scattered scrub

- 3.7 Some patches of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* were present around the site.

4 EVALUATION

Habitats

- 4.1 The tall ruderal vegetation, trees and scattered scrub comprised common species and were not considered to be of particular ecological value themselves, however they provide suitable habitat for other species.

Species

Bats

- 4.2 All species of bat present in the UK receive full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). A number of bat species are also listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. These include the widespread species Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, and the rarer woodland species such as Bechstein *Myotis bechsteinii* and Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*.
- 4.3 The majority of the trees were in good condition, with no visible features such as rot holes or spilt branches present. The standing dead English Elm trees had lost all of their bark. The branches were relatively small and no features such as split branches were present. None of the trees on site were considered to have potential to support roosting bats.
- 4.4 An area of public open space was present outside but adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, which a footpath ran through. A number of mature Oak trees were present in this area, particularly to the south-east of the site. This southern boundary is potentially used by foraging and commuting bats.

Mammals

- 4.5 Due to the hairs present, the two burrows and the tracks going under the boundary fencing were considered to be used by foxes. No evidence of badger was identified on site.

Nesting Birds

- 4.6 Nesting birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take the birds or their eggs, or to intentionally destroy or disturb a nest, when it is in use or being built.
- 4.7 The scattered scrub and trees on site provide suitable nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species. Most of the trees and scrub are anticipated to be removed. This has the potential to disturb and injure nesting birds and as such recommendations for site clearance are provided below.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The site was considered to be of low ecological value, comprising mainly tall ruderal habitats with a range of trees surrounding it.
- 5.2 The southern boundary of the site is potentially used by foraging and commuting bats. It is recommended that any artificial lighting on site should be designed to avoid any light spill onto the southern boundary of the site.
- 5.3 In order to enhance the site for roosting bats, one bat box should be attached to any retained mature trees on site, or incorporated into the brickwork of any new building.
- 5.4 In order to protect bird nests and comply with the law protecting them, any tree or scrub removal should take place outside of the breeding bird season, which is generally considered to be from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, prior to removal, such vegetation should first be checked for the presence of nesting birds by an experienced ecologist. If any nests are found, they would have to be left undisturbed until the chicks had fledged (usually around six weeks).
- 5.5 In order to enhance the site for nesting birds, it is recommended that a few different types of nest box are installed in appropriate locations across the site. These could be incorporated into the brickwork of any new buildings on site, or attached to any retained mature trees to provide additional nesting habitat. These should be in locations where they cannot be tampered with (under the eaves, for example).

6 REFERENCES

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