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Ecological Walkover Assessment

**No 12 Wittering Road,
Hayling Island**

Paul Whitby

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Report Summary:

- 1. A survey was undertaken on 30/04/13 by Paul Whitby to assess the ecological value of the No 12 Wittering Road property and gardens.**
- 2. The owner of the property wishes to replace the existing home with a new more modernised dwelling.**
- 3. The No 12 property is assumed to be less than 50 years old and is used as a holiday residence. There were no features observed that would be suitable for roosting bats, with the flat roof felt lining being tightly sealed.**
- 4. There is potential for birds to nest in vegetation at the front and rear gardens of the property, as well as some ivy growing up the southern side of the building. Mitigation to reduce the noise and visual impacts of the development upon the nearby intertidal coastline has also been outlined.**
- 5. No further surveys for protected species has been recommended and no specific protected species mitigation is required.**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This report gives details of a walk over assessment for protected species carried out at No 12 Wittering road on Hayling Island. The grid reference for the site is SZ 748 987.

This survey comprised an ecological walkover survey for all protected wildlife and was carried out by Paul Whitby, a full member of Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM). This report has been written incorporating the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' by the IEEM.

This survey and report was carried out and produced at the request of Yeates Design.

1.2 Background

This report is intended to assess the present ecological value of the No 12 Wittering Road property on Hayling Island. The property is used as a summer house/holiday home and the owner wishes to replace the existing home a new property. Where necessary further surveys or mitigation has been prescribed to ensure that protected species would be protected from disturbance or harm during the construction process.

1.3 Site Description/Ecological Context

The No 12 property is situated in a residential area in the south eastern part of Hayling Island. The property is bordered to the north and south by neighbouring properties, whilst Wittering road lies along the western boundary and beyond the rear garden to the east is an intertidal inlet (see picture 1 below). The property is a brick-built flat roved summerhouse, which is used by the owners as a weekend/holiday residence. A tarmac parking area borders the front of the building, with an ornamental flower bed including primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), roses (*Rosa spp*) and Spanish bluebells (*Hyacinthoides nonscripta*). A semi-mature yew (*Taxus bacatta*) and Cypress spp form screening along the western boundary, along with a laurel and privet hedge.

The rear garden comprises of a long mown lawn, with some reasonable grassland plant diversity. Birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), *Luzula spp*, daisy (*Bellis perennis*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), common cats-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), grape hyacinth (*Muscari latifolium*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

Some ornamental shrubs form a border along the garden, which is bounded to the north and south by the gardens of neighboring properties. To the east the garden is bunded by a concrete wall, protecting it from high tide and any coastal erosion. A total of eight small orchard trees are dotted across the garden and along the boundaries.

A search on the Magic website showed that the coastal area extending from the back garden is part of a 5810 hectare combined Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. This site covers the entirety of the Chichester and Langstone harbours, which encompass the northern, eastern and western sides of Hayling Island. The protection of this large area is owing to the value of the intertidal mudflats for wintering and breeding birds, as well as some important plant communities. The overwintering assemblage of wading birds, including ringed plover, grey plover, redshank, black-tailed godwit, dunlin and sanderling.



Picture 1 – An aerial picture of the site as shown on Google earth with an arrow indicating the No 12 property.



Picture 2 –The Brick-built property, with a flat roof and simple features.



Picture 3 – The front of the property is partially screened from the road by semi-mature trees and hedging.



Picture 4 – The long narrow lawn of the property backs onto the coast, where there is an area of intertidal shingle and mud.



Picture 5 – The view of the property from the intertidal area beyond the back garden, with a boat launch and retaining wall.

1.3.1 Constraints/Limitations

An initial site assessment such as this is only able to act like a ‘snapshot’ to record any flora or fauna that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been present during the survey, but may be evident at other times of the year. For this reason, habitats are assessed for their potential to support some species, even where no direct evidence (such as droppings) has been found.

2 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of the survey

A protected species walkover assessment was carried out on 01/05/13 to evaluate the site for its potential to support protected species. Taking into consideration the geographical region and habitat type, species that could be encountered are:

- Badger;
- Bats;
- Nesting birds;
- Great crested newt and;
- Reptiles;

In addition, observations of any important plant communities or other valuable ecological features will have been recorded and detailed. Details of initial survey method for each species are given below.

2.1.1 Badger

An initial assessment was carried out to identify areas that might be used by Badgers (*Meles meles*). Signs of Badgers including setts, incidental foraging signs, runs and latrines, are recorded if encountered during the survey.

2.1.2 Bats

Trees, buildings, and other structures were assessed for the potential to support roosting bats. Bats can use a variety of roost areas including trees with holes, splits, cracks, cavities, Ivy and loose bark as well as a variety of roosting areas within buildings.

A detailed survey was carried out looking for any evidence indicating the presence of bats using buildings or trees, such as rub marks, staining or droppings inside or outside any potential roost sites.

If any definite signs of bats or other evidence had been found (such as actual sightings, droppings, urine stains, odour, scratch marks, grease stains and feeding remains), they would have been recorded.

2.1.3 Breeding Bird Habitat

Habitats were assessed for their suitability for nesting birds. This could include ground nesting species, such as Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) or birds that favour urban environments. Where buildings were present, possible use by Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), or Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*)

2.1.4 Great Crested Newt

Initial surveys centre on identifying suitable habitat. If there are ponds or wet ditches that are considered to be suitable breeding habitats for Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) within 500 m that are not isolated from the site by unsuitable habitat or physical barriers, then this species could be using terrestrial habitat on the site.

2.1.5 Reptiles

The site was assessed for reptiles, with particular attention paid to those features that provide suitable basking areas (e.g. south-facing slopes), hibernation sites (e.g. banks, walls, piles of rotting vegetation) and opportunities for foraging (rough grassland and scrub).

2.2 Legal Protection

Legal protection applying to relevant bird, mammal and herpetofauna species is briefly detailed in *Appendix 1* of this report.

3 RESULTS

3.1 *Badgers*

The site was walked to look for signs of badger activity or any badger setts, but none was seen. The surrounding area has very limited opportunities for badger, with the coastal mudflats bordering to the east and residential dwellings forming a significant residential to the north, south and west.

The site was walked to look for any signs of badger activity, but none was seen.

3.2 *Bats*

There are no trees on or near to the site that are likely to be suitable for roosting bats, with only some semi-mature ornamental varieties on the western side that lack suitable features, such as rot holes and flaking bark.

The No 12 property itself does not have any internal loft space or roof void that might be used by bats. Both the property and adjoining garage have flat felt lined roofs, which are tightly sealed with a bitumen layer. No gaps or tears were seen in the bitumen sheeting that might offer roosting potential for bats (see picture 6 below).

No potential roosting opportunities for crevice dwelling bats were seen on the flat roof or any part of the building exterior.



Picture 6 – The bitumen lined flat roof of the No 12 property.

3.3 *Breeding Birds*

There are features present that could support some common nesting birds, including the ornamental trees and hedges at the front of the property, along the boundaries of the rear garden and within some thick ivy growing up the southern side of the building.

It is possible that some wading birds may nest along the coastal area beyond the rear garden, on the shingle area, although this potential is somewhat limited due to likely regular human disturbance and the 'tidal squeeze' between the walls protecting residential gardens and the high tide mark.

3.4 *Reptiles*

The site does not support any ground cover that could be considered suitable habitat for foraging reptiles. The lawns across the garden are short and there is little available cover. No compost heaps or other potential hibernacula were identified during the survey and habitat connectivity with other areas is poor, with well kept garden bordering the site on either side.

A search on the National Biodiversity Network website showed that no reptile records were found in the south-eastern part of Hayling Island.

3.5 *Great Crested Newts*

The value of the site for foraging amphibians is poor, with a lack of suitable cover, such as tall ground vegetation. No water bodies suitable for breeding amphibians was identified during the survey and at such a coastal location, it would be likely that any natural ponds would become slightly brackish (salty). No ponds were identified within 500 metres of the site on background mapping or aerial imagery.

No amphibian records exist for the 10km grid square on which the site is found on the National Biodiversity Network database.

4 CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

4.1 Badger

No evidence of any badger activity was identified during the survey assessment, and the landscape surrounding the site is not suitable for badgers, with a large residential area extending to the north, south and west from the property. The coastal habitat bordering the site to the east is not suitable for badgers.

No further surveys or mitigation is recommended for badgers.

4.2 Bats

The site does not support any trees with features of value for roosting bats, and the value of the gardens for foraging bats is low.

The No 12 property does not have any external features (such as hanging tiles or lead flashing) that would support roosting bats and there is no sealed roof voids in the property that could support a bat roost.

No further surveys or specific mitigation for bats is required during the demolition of the No 12 property, however it is advised that any external lighting is downward facing and shielded by light baffles to minimise light pollution and the effect that external lights can have on foraging bats.

4.3 Breeding Birds

Suitable nesting bird habitat was identified in vegetation around the site entrance, along the boundaries of the rear garden and some ivy growing up the eastern side of the property. It is important that the ivy on the side of the building is removed outside of the nesting bird season (1st March to 31st August) or following a hand search by a suitably qualified ecologist.

The tidal area at the end of the rear garden should also be protected from disturbance where possible, so that any overwintering or breeding birds are not disturbed. It is recommended that a heras fence with a screening board or netting attached to it is erected half way at least 20 metres from the eastern end of the garden to screen the development during demolition/construction works and discourage construction staff from accessing the shore or storing materials near to the shore. This mitigation is particularly advisable given the statutory protection afforded to the nearby Chichester Harbour.

4.4 *Reptiles*

The site does not include any habitats of value for reptiles and a search on the NBN website showed that there are no reptile records within the 10km grid square upon which the site is found for Hayling Island. Given that there is also no suitable habitat identified near to the construction zone, it is highly unlikely that reptiles would be found present at any time during the construction process.

No specific mitigation is recommended for reptiles.

4.5 *Great Crested Newts*

The value of the site for foraging or hibernating amphibians is poor, given the lack of adequate ground cover. Additionally no potential breeding ponds for this species have been identified during the survey or upon background mapping and aerial imagery. The lack of any records for great crested newts upon Hayling Island shows that this species is very unlikely to be found within this geographic area.

No further surveys or mitigation is recommended for great crested newts.

5 APPENDIX 1 – LEGAL PROTECTION

General

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to protected species. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation, but summarises the salient points.

Badger

Badger is protected in Britain under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

The legislation affords protection to Badger and Badger setts, and makes it a criminal offence to:

- wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or to attempt to do so;
- interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it;
- to obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a Badger sett; or
- to disturb a Badger when it is occupying a sett.

Bats, Dormouse and Great Crested Newt

Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), and all species of British bat (*Vespertilionidae* and *Rhinolophidae*) are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), and receive full protection under *Section 9*. These species are also all listed as European Protected Species on *Schedule 2* of the *Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994* which gives them full protection under *Regulation 39*. Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* (the CROW Act). Under the above legislation it is an offence to:

- kill, injure or take an individual;
- possess any part of an individual either alive or dead;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place or structure used by these species for shelter, rest, protection or breeding;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb these species whilst using any place of shelter or protection; or
- sell or attempt to sell any individual.

It is also an offence to set and use articles capable of catching, injuring or killing bats (for example a trap or poison), or knowingly cause or permit such an action. In the case of Dormouse and all species of British bat there is also protection under *Schedule 6* of *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) relating specifically to trapping and direct pursuit of these species.

Dormouse, Great Crested Newt and all species of British bat are included as priority species in the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* and as species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in England under *Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*.

Reptiles

Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*), Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and Adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under *Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), in respect of *Section 9(5)* and part of *Section 9(1)*. This protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. Under the legislation it is an offence to:

- intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or
- sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.

Nesting Birds

All species of bird are protected under *Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. Under the above legislation it is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Certain species are listed on *Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and receive protection under *Sections 1(4) and 1(5)*. The protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000*. There are special penalties where the offences listed above are committed for any *Schedule 1* species and it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird when it is building its nest or while it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of any such bird.