
Land at Redlands Lane, Westbourne, Hampshire

ECOLOGICAL SCOPING APPRAISAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MINIMISING ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

Client: Gary Miller
Fairacres Farm, Froxfield, Hampshire GU32 1DQ
Site: Land at Redlands Lane, Westbourne, Hampshire
Project: Ecological scoping appraisal and initial recommendations
Site visit: 28 May 2012
Report date: 28 August 2012
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The landowner and applicant, has asked me to visit the site and make an appraisal of matters relating to ecological matters that might impact upon the development and to make a set of recommendations by which any potential ecological impacts could be avoided.

This report provides an appraisal of the site together with a set of recommendations that will reduce the ecological impact of the proposals.

The development area of the site comprises three connected horse paddocks, none of which are of any significant interest. The boundaries of the site are of moderate interest although it is understood that these areas will not be affected by the current development plans.

This report seeks to identify potential risk areas and measures that will help to mitigate any potential impact of the build phase and ensure that landscaping of the site is undertaken in an ecologically friendly manner.



Fig 1. Oak trees on southern boundary

2.0 TREES AND BATS

2.1 THE TREES

The eastern and southern boundaries to the site support rows of mature trees set in rough scrub and hedgerow relic vegetation.

Although most of these trees are not within the site ownership boundary they are in close proximity and have branches that overhang the boundary.

The trees, in their own right are being addressed fully as part of a separate Arboricultural Report.

2.2 TREES ON THE WESTERN BOUNDARY

The western boundary has a row of two mature poplar trees and five pedunculate oak trees between a grazed on-site paddock and an adjacent public right of way.

Some of these trees have ivy cover and dead and split branches making them of high potential to support bat roosts. Other trees are healthier and have a low potential to support bats.

2.3 TREES ON THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY

This southern boundary comprises a row of fifteen trees including one small multi-stem field maple, two mature ash trees, and twelve mature oak trees.

Many of these trees have damaged branches with dead sections, splits and holes that are highly suited to use by roosting bats.

2.4 TREES ON THE EASTERN BOUNDARY

There are no trees along this boundary, however three large Monterey pine trees occur within the adjacent garden. These trees have only low potential to support roosting bats.

2.5 TREES ON THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY

There are no trees along this boundary; however, there are 21 Monterey cypresses close to the boundary but within the garden to the north. These trees are not well suited to bats.

2.6 TREES WITHIN THE SITE

The eastern part of the site contains two ornamental plum trees, an apple tree, and a dead Monterey cypress tree. The plums and apple are of no significance for bats. The dead Monterey cypress has some cracked bark and has a low potential to support bats.

3.0 OTHER SPECIES AND HABITATS

3.1 REPTILES

The site contains heavily grazed grassland and which for the most part is not suited to reptiles. While there was some long grass present in one of the paddocks being rested, this area is part of the rotational grazing management of the site.

There are some long grass areas around the site internal margins and while these areas are not affected by the current proposals, it should be noted that are of some ecological interest with regard to their potential grass snakes and slow-worms.

If reptiles are found in areas affected by the development, they will have to be collected up and moved (translocated) to a suitable grassy area where they will be safe.

3.2 NESTING BIRDS

Birds will be nesting in the trees and scrub on and around the site and during which time (March to August inclusive) they are protected by law. Any works that directly affect trees and shrubs (such as felling, surgery, excessive noise and vibration) should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season.

3.3 PADDOCKS AND STABLES

The central paddock is a bare earth area almost free of vegetation apart from docks around the edges.

The western paddock has short horse grazed open grassland with a small range of common herbs typical of poached grassland of poor ecological quality. The eastern paddock has been grazed and shows signs of poaching and bare ground but is being allowed to recover into a tall grass sward until grazed again. This grassland contains a small range of common herbs typical of overgrazed horse paddocks. Typical species within the paddocks include curled and broad leaved docks, common daisy, dandelion, plantains, creeping and meadow buttercup, clovers, occasional ragwort, and with nettles around the edges.

A group of stables are constructed of concrete and shiplap timbers with a corrugated metal covered timber roof with transparent corrugated panels inset. These structures are not well suited to bats but could support occasional nesting birds such as wrens and robins.

3.4 BOUNDARIES

The southern and western boundaries are the most significant ecologically with their lines of mature trees and remnant hedges between.

The southern boundary which is outside the development site, contains the mature oak and ash trees which with their varied stem forms and the presence of broken branches provide a significant ecological resource for bats, nesting birds and a wide range of invertebrates.

Many of the trees have been trimmed back on the paddock side although with a few large overhanging branches. Most of the canopies however, fall away from the site to

the south. There is an irregular and unmaintained dry ditch on the south side of the tree line. Between the trees is a small range of unmaintained shrubs and small trees including frequent to abundant holly, frequent blackthorn, hawthorn, small field maple and ash, and occasional yew. Ivy, bramble and rose species are common.

The western boundary is a belt of trees and shrubs between the paddock and the adjacent public right of way. Here the mature oak trees and two poplar trees are within a strip of rough ground supporting frequent to abundant hawthorn, field maple and ash and with occasional elder. Ivy and bramble are common.

The eastern boundary is a chain link fence with abundant bramble, frequent hawthorn and occasional small ash. The northern boundary is primarily a row of brambles and nettles with abundant small ash trees and occasional elder.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MITIGATION

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BATS

Bats and their roosts are protected by law as European Protected Species.

To reduce the potential for bats to be affected, I understand that the buildings have been positioned as far away from the southern and western boundaries as possible to minimise the potential impact on any bats that may be using the larger trees.

Works to trees should be avoided or minimised to avoid affecting bats. If any trees are to be directly affected by the proposals they should have a further more detailed examination prior to any works.

Artificial lighting towards trees should be avoided and which could affect the behaviour of emerging, foraging or returning bats. Bollard road lighting is preferable to standard lighting. Should security lighting be necessary, this should be directed downwards to avoid illuminating potential bat roost areas and any such lighting should operate only when triggered and not be permanently on.

In a garden context, some tree surgery may be needed for safety purposes. Any such surgery should be undertaken during September-October, the period when any new born bats will be able to fly independently and before bats have gone into hibernation and any birds will no longer be nesting. Any such surgery should be undertaken very carefully and under the supervision and guidance of a Natural England licensed bat ecologist who will ensure that no bats are harmed.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPTILES

The long grass site margins have potential to support reptiles, especially the slow-worm, a species of legless lizard and possibly grass snake. Slow-worms and all other reptiles are protected by UK law meaning that any works that could injure or kill them could be considered an offence.

It is understood however that these site margins are not to be affected by the current proposals.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NESTING BIRDS

All works to trees and shrubs that could support nesting birds should be undertaken after the end of August and before the end of February so as to avoid the March to August nesting season.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TREES

The development should avoid impact on the present and future rooting zone of the trees and should access from the public highway have to pass over the root protection area of trees, this should be according to a scheme that will protect the roots. I understand that this aspect is being addressed separately by the arboricultural specialist report.

5.0 COMMENTS UPON THE PROPOSED LAYOUT PLAN

Since undertaking the field appraisal, a development has been prepared that takes into account the need to place the buildings at a distance from the boundary tree line and I understand that the above mentioned arboricultural report has been commissioned to consider how best to reduce impact upon the rooting zone of trees at the access location.

The proposal plan is provided in **Figure 2**.

Comments on the plan are provided in **Figure 3**.



Fig 3. Comments on proposal plan

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