

# PERMIT

## Warblington School footpath – Biodiversity Statement

### 1.0 - Introduction

It is proposed to construct a new footpath at Warblington School, Havant, between grid reference SU72120648 and SU72730647. This will provide a link between existing footpath and cycleways. The new route will run alongside the railway line for much of its length, along the northern boundary of the school playing field. Construction will affect a strip of land approximately 4m wide along the length of the new path.

Figure 1 (at the end of this document) identifies key areas of potential ecological impacts where identified mitigation measures should be applied.

### 2.0 - Ecological Conditions

#### 2.1 - Habitats

##### *Amenity grassland*

The majority of the path runs through close-mown amenity playing field with limited ecological value. There will therefore be **negligible** ecological impacts in the immediate area of the path.

##### *2.1.1 - Scrub*

There are a number of areas of scrub and young trees that may be affected by the work:

A) - To the immediate east of the path, there is an area of diverse scrub, bisected by the existing network, that the new path will join. This area will have ecological value for its diverse habitats, but work will not directly affect this more diverse area. There will therefore be **negligible** direct ecological impacts on this area.

Construction activity may have some potential to have a **minor** impact if there is any inadvertent access, storage or dumping of material on this area. Provided measures are in place to avoid this (see Section 3.1 below), then impacts to this area would be **negligible**.

B) - There will be some scattered areas of scrub within the railway land immediately adjacent to the path along the northern boundary between the western end of the path and the buildings to the NE of the route. This will be outside the development footprint, but works may necessitate some minor trimming back of any overhanging vegetation. Impacts overall to any scrub along the railway will however be **negligible**.

C) - Where the path runs between the railway and the buildings to the eastern section of the path, the route is more constrained by existing stretches of scrub vegetation or younger screening trees. However, much of this appears to be amenity planting and is of limited ecological value. As more clearance will be needed in this section, there will be an overall **minor** impact on scrub at the site scale.



## 2.2 - Protected and notable species

### *2.2.1 - Brent geese*

The application site is highlighted as a Brent goose strategy area. There are however no confirmed records of this species using the site, and the scale of the development is small and confined largely to the overall site boundary. Therefore, the application site is assessed as having limited ecological value for this species. Given the lack of use of the site by Brent geese and the limited value of the application site, the work would have **negligible** impact on Brent geese.

### *2.2.2 - Nesting birds*

Nesting birds are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The areas of scrub on and around the site are likely to support nesting birds during the breeding season, generally seen to be between March and August inclusive. The network of more extensive scrub to the west of the route is assessed as having the greatest value for nesting birds, but this area will be unaffected by the works.

The scrub along the railway line is likely to have minor value for nesting birds, as is the denser scrub and amenity / screening planting behind the buildings. Accordingly, clearance of these areas, if mitigation techniques are not applied, may have a **minor to moderate** impact on nesting birds.

It is therefore recommended that measures are in place to avoid impacts to nesting birds (see Section 3.2, below). If these measures are followed, this proposal would have **negligible** impact on nesting birds.

### *2.2.3 - Reptiles*

All native species of reptiles are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), while two species, the sand lizard and smooth snake, are given additional protection under European law (the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010). Rough vegetation along railway lines often supports good populations of reptiles the more widespread species such as common lizards and slow worms. It is considered unlikely that either sand lizards or smooth snakes would be present.

Although the vast majority of the work on this proposal will be confined to the close-mown amenity grass of the school field, it is likely that there may be smaller, discrete areas of potential reptile habitat affected along the boundary where rough vegetation encroaches onto the school grounds (for instance around any of the small structures present along the boundary with the railway). Although the work will only affect a very small proportion of the local reptile habitat, it is considered that if present, the work may have a **minor** impact on reptiles, if mitigation measures are not followed.

It is therefore recommended that measures are in place to avoid impacts to reptiles (see Section 3.0, below). If these measures are followed, this proposal would have **negligible** impact on reptiles.

### **3.0 - Recommendations**

#### 3.1 - Scrub to east of route

Contractors should be instructed not to access this area or to store or dump any material in this area. If work is likely to take place close to this area, it may be prudent to erect a temporary visual barrier (e.g. netlon-type hi-vis fencing or hi-vis tape tied to stakes) between the work area and the scrub.

#### 3.2 - Scrub along northern boundary - nesting bird mitigation

Ideally work to clear any scrub should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season. If this is not possible then a check for occupied birds nests should be carried out immediately before clearance starts. If occupied nests are found then an exclusion zone of at least 5m should be set up around the nest until the nest becomes unoccupied of its own accord.

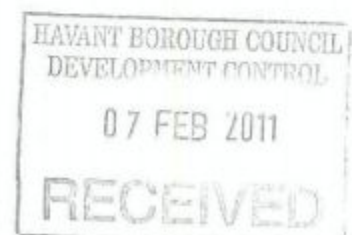
#### 3.3 - Work alongside railway land - reptile mitigation

Progressive cutting of any vegetation that is not close-mown amenity grass should be carried out as follows:

- All work should be carried out during warmer summer weather when reptiles are active (generally April to October inclusive). Work should be suspended during cold or wet periods.
- Vegetation should be given a first cut using portable tools (such as a strimmer) to a height of about 20cm. This will avoid harming reptiles, but will make the strip inhospitable to reptiles. They will then move to the adjacent uncut habitat on the railway land. Cut material should be removed so as not to leave mats of vegetation to form reptile shelter - the ground should be visible over the whole strip.
- After at least 24 hours, the cut strip should be cut as close to the ground as possible (again with a strimmer, or with a mower). In each section, this should be carried out beginning furthest from the railway, moving towards the railway with each pass of the mower or strimmer to enable any reptiles to move towards the more suitable habitat on the railway.

### **Conclusions**

Provided that the identified mitigation measures regarding protection of adjacent scrub and sensitive vegetation clearance to take account of potential impacts to nesting birds and reptiles are followed, it is believed that this work would have a **negligible impact on biodiversity**.



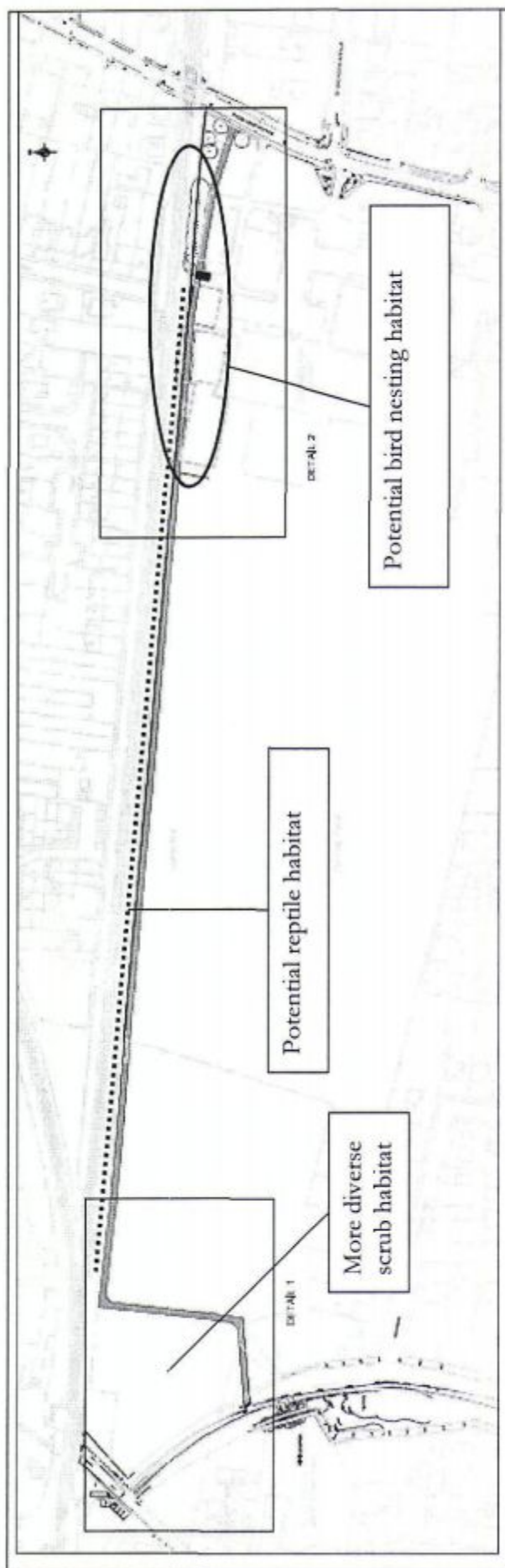


Figure 1 – route of path showing areas of potential ecological impacts