



Land at Forty Acre Farm, Havant Road, Havant

Winter Bird Mitigation Strategy



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April 2018

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Document Control

Project: Land at Forty Acre Farm, Havant Road, Havant
Client: Barratt David Wilson
Job Number: A095024
File Origin: I:\Projects\Projects A095000 on\A095024 Westways Havant\REPORTS

Issue 2	April 2018	FINAL
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Rev:	Date:	Updated by:	Verified by:	Description of changes:

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Figure 1 – Mitigation Area



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

WYG was commissioned by Barratt David Wilson Homes to prepare a Winter Bird Mitigation Strategy for Land at Forty Acre Farm, Havant Road, Havant (the Site).

The Site encompasses H04B and H04C which have been monitored for the presence of brent geese as part of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy. H04B is also listed as a SINC - Forty Acres Farm B – designated due to the historic presence of large numbers of brent geese. Using the latest data from winter bird surveys across the Solent (which incorporates spatial considerations such as movements rather than just numbers), H04B has been listed as 'low use' and H04C as a 'secondary support site'.

It is proposed that the majority of H04C is enhanced and managed in perpetuity for brent geese over the winter period. Dark-bellied brent geese are a qualifying feature of the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA, along with a broader assemblage of wading birds.

The impact of any future proposals on wintering birds using the site and the nearby Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA) has been identified as a potential constraint. The potential impacts are likely to consist of disturbance due to increased recreational pressure and loss of foraging habitat over the winter months.

This report identifies a strategy to mitigate for potential adverse effects upon brent geese and to make sure that there is no negative impact upon the integrity of the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar.

1.2 Site Location

The site covers approximately 22.9 hectares, located to the south west of Havant in Hampshire, centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SU692057. Directly south of the site is a railway line and beyond this is the A27 and Chichester and Langstone Harbour, a designated RAMSAR Site, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A component of the Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies 280m south of the site and the Solent Maritime SAC lies 180m south of the site. South west of the site lies Farlington Marshes, a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Directly west of the site lies the residential area of Farlington along with East Lodge Farm and East Lodge Playing Field. To the north of the site lies the A2030 Havant Road beyond which lie further residential areas along with arable fields. North east of the site is a major junction of the A3 with the A3 slip road extending south along the eastern boundary of the site. The western extent of the site has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), known as Forty Acre Farm B, due to the historic presence of dark-bellied brent geese (*Branta bernicla bernicla*).

1.3 Development Proposals

The proposed development is for 320 dwellings (including a 30% provision of affordable homes), 66 bed care home, provision of public open space, habitat mitigation zone, allotments, community building and associated infrastructure.



2.0 Baseline

2.1 Existing Data

The site has been monitored as part of the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy and is identified as Fields H04B and H04C for the purposes of the study.

Using the latest data from winter bird surveys across the Solent (which incorporates spatial considerations such as movements rather than just numbers), H04B has been listed as 'low use' and H04C as a 'secondary support site'.

Wintering bird surveys were undertaken at the site by Havant Borough Council between the years 2012-2015. The survey time was three hours around high tide for three days every month from November to March and consisted of 11 visits to Forty Acre Farm.

No brent geese were recorded utilising the survey area during this period. Two lapwing were observed in the western extent of Forty Acre Farm. These were observed in January so this does not confirm breeding at the site.

A total of 35 species were recorded within the survey area during the WYG wintering bird surveys undertaken between October 2015 and March 2016. Brent geese were noted feeding on the southern extent of the site, west of the industrial area. Red listed curlew were noted along the south eastern extent of the site in the clover ley field, as well as two noted west of the industrial area in the clover ley. Red listed herring gulls were noted flying low over the site. Amber listed oystercatcher were noted on two occasions feeding along the southern boundary of the site, west of the industrial area, as well as seen feeding east of the industrial area in the clover ley field. Amber listed black-headed gull were noted feeding along the southern boundary west of the industrial area.

During bird counts, records were made of the frequency of potential disturbance events to birds within the survey areas. The industrial area within Forty Acre Farm has regular commercial visitors with associated vehicles. One walker with a dog was observed on two occasions, once on 26th October 2015 and again on 4th February 2016 walking the boundaries of the site. No wintering birds were noted utilising the site at the time of these disturbance events.

2.2 Current Management

Current management of the site is poor for wintering birds, with cereal crops not present during the winter which would provide potential foraging habitat. Previous use of the site for car boot sales also led to frequent disturbance events.

Small areas of the site comprise improved grassland which is where birds were recorded during the WYG surveys (north west of the industrial area).



3.0 Potential Impacts of development on Brent Geese

3.1 Habitat Loss

The proposed development will result in a loss of foraging habitat in the form of H04B (approximately 12.6ha) and the loss of a small part of H04C (approximately 2.4ha). However, it should be noted that only minimal use by brent geese or other waders has been recorded in H04B (by WYG in 2015), hence its classification as 'low use'. Those surveys did not record any use of H04C although it is understood that brent geese have been recorded using this area during recent surveys.

3.2 Disturbance

3.2.1 Occupation

In the absence of mitigation there is potential for recreational disturbance to birds using H04C as a result of the increased number of local residents. In particular increased use by dog walkers is likely to present significant disturbance to foraging brent geese.

There is also a high likelihood of additional disturbance to sites within the wider Solent area from new residents.

Walkers and dog walkers were noted on several of the surveys conducted by WYG during 2015/16.

3.2.2 Construction

The development may also result in disturbance impacts during the construction phase. This will primarily be through noise but visual disturbance may also cause birds in H04C to flush. It is not considered that any disturbance of birds within the SPA or Farlington Marshes is likely due to the intervening M27 and railway line.



4.0 Proposed Mitigation

H04C is currently listed as a Primary Support Area for brent geese under Policy E17 of the Draft Havant Local Plan. This has long been identified as the proposed mitigation for this development, including in discussions with the Hampshire County Council Ecology team. It is considered that enhancement of this area, followed by appropriate management in perpetuity, will increase the value to that of a Primary Support Site (as a minimum) and adequately mitigate any adverse effects as a result of the proposed development.

4.1 Habitat Creation and Management

In order to maintain and improve the quality of foraging habitat within the mitigation area it is proposed that a suitable improved grassland is established to provide an optimal food source for brent geese. This will comprise a mix of predominately perennial rye grass and clover and will be sown as part of the preparation of the site. This has been chosen to provide suitable habitat every year.

In order to further improve the suitability of the site for brent geese, the existing tree line within the site will be removed to improve visibility (brent geese prefer larger field compartments).

In order to improve the habitat suitability for other wading birds (either qualifying species for the SPA or part of the qualifying assemblage) it is proposed that wader scrapes are created within the open space area south of the development site. These will be of irregular shape and depth (up to 0.5m) in order to create a range of conditions and support different species. The primary objective is to hold water during the winter, but it is anticipated that deeper areas will also hold water for part of the summer and provide an enhancement for breeding birds.

The scrapes will be located to the south of the development site, adjacent to the proposed SuDS for the Site. This location provides a number of advantages, primarily the possibility of allowing treated surface water from the SuDS basin to top up the water level in the scrapes. Secondly, it is recommended that the scrapes are irregular in shape to maximise the length of edge habitat (more valuable than the central area). They will also collect coastal flood water in this area of the site.

It is proposed that access to the mitigation area is provided via a new farm gate at the north west corner of the site.

4.2 Avoidance of Disturbance

4.2.1 Occupation

The following measures are proposed to reduce disturbance within the mitigation area, and avoid any additional disturbance as a result of the proposed development.

The boundary of the development and mitigation area will comprise a native species-rich hedgerow which will prevent direct access from plots. A footpath will be provided around the periphery of the mitigation area. This will be fenced with a post and wire fence (with stock fencing to prevent dogs from accessing the field). This will allow observation of the area but prevent access into the interior and disturbance of waders.



Interpretation boards will be installed to educate new and existing residents about the conservation status of the SPA and wintering birds and the proposed use of the mitigation area. These will also explain the impacts of disturbance (particularly dogs) and recommend suitable walking routes to avoid disturbing wintering birds. These will be located within the open space south of the development (proposed wildlife area and walking route).

4.2.2 Construction

It is recommended that the Construction Environmental Management Plan for the site include measures to prevent disturbance during construction.

This should include restricting works to the summer months (April – September) wherever possible. Any works during the winter months (October – March) should include control measures to prevent noise above 69dB within the mitigation area. Suitable measures may include the use of acoustic enclosures or acoustic fencing along the northern boundary of the site.



5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Capital works such as the installation of fencing and interpretation boards, scrape creation and landscaping will be completed by the developer during the construction phase.

Upon completion it is proposed that the mitigation area is managed by the management company responsible for maintaining the development site and the open space.

Post development monitoring (see Section 6 below) will be the responsibility of the managing body.



6.0 Management Activities

Management of the main mitigation area will predominately comprise grass cutting. The key objective is to provide forage for brent geese and other waders during the winter, therefore the following timings are recommended:

- Summer cut – July/August leaving arisings to allow nutrients to re-enter soil
- Autumn cut – Late September removing arisings to leave a short sward for foraging geese

Any additional sowing if required should take place in August – September (Spring if including clovers).

Other management activities to be completed will include:

- Hedgerows – to be cut in early October (to avoid nesting birds) on three year rotation (each year to be one side or the top)
- Fences and footpaths – management anticipated to be minimal however fence integrity should be monitored annually and repaired as necessary.
- Interpretation boards – no management anticipated however boards should be replaced if necessary
- Scrapes – management to prevent dense vegetation from establishing in margins to comprise of strimming to ground level every two years in late September – early October.

Monitoring will be required to make sure that the management activities are proceeding and to identify any necessary changes to management to continue achieving the management objective (maintain the mitigation area as a 'Primary Support Area' for brent geese). It is anticipated that three years of winter bird monitoring will take place followed by annual site visits to monitor management actions.



FIGURES

Figure 1 – Mitigation Area



Penk Ridge

Auriol Dr

A2020

Auriol Dr

Westways

A27

A3(M)

Havant Bypass

A27

