

Site Inspection Report



Site:	Hook Lane, Aldingbourne
Client:	Metis Homes
Job Number:	A110822
Survey Type(s):	Site Inspection Report
Date of Survey(s):	12 th December 2018
File Location:	N:\Projects\Projects A110000 on\A110822 Hook Lane Aldingbourne\REPORTS

Introduction

WYG were appointed by Metis Homes in November 2018 to carry out an ecological survey of a site at Hook Lane, Aldingbourne, West Sussex (SU 93355 04653) (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'), which has been granted outline planning permission via appeal (APP/C3810/W/16/3155330).

The purpose of the survey was to identify whether there has been any significant change to the Site since previous surveys were conducted by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. (2016)ⁱ in 2013 and 2015.

The previous surveys identified that the Site supporting the following habitats:

- * short sward amenity grassland;
- * scrub;
- * a line of mature leylandii *Cupressus x leylandii* along the southern boundary;
- * an unmanaged species poor hedgerow along the eastern boundary consisting predominantly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*;
- * a pond;
- * Buildings; and
- * hard standing.

Great crested newt (GCN) surveys were undertaken on the pond within the site boundary and the pond to the south of the Site in 2013. A low population of GCN was found with a peak count of one GCN recorded in the pond within the Site boundary. A low population of GCN was also found in the pond to the south of the Site, where there was a peak count of two. However, these population estimates were not determined using best practise guidance, as only four and not six survey visits were completed.

Methodology

The survey was undertaken on the Site (Figure 1) on 12th December 2018 by WYG Senior Ecologist Kevin Wood GradCIEEM. The weather conditions were mild and clear with little wind.

Habitats

The vegetation and broad habitat types within the Site were noted during the survey (Figure 2) in accordance with the categories specified for a Phase 1 Vegetation and Habitat Survey (Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), 2010)ⁱⁱ. Dominant plant species were recorded for each habitat present using nomenclature according to Stace (2010)ⁱⁱⁱ. The site was also appraised for its suitability

Site Inspection Report



to support notable flora, with regard to the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017) ^{iv}.

Protected and Notable Species

The Site was inspected for evidence of, and its potential to support, protected or notable species, including those listed under the Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017).

The previous survey report (FPCR Environment and Design Ltd., 2016) was also reviewed to help assess the current potential for the Site to support protected and notable habitats and species.

Great Crested Newts

The Site was appraised for its suitability to support GCN. The assessment was based on Guidance outlined in the *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual* ^{vi} and the *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook* ^v.

Roosting Bats – Buildings

Any suitable buildings, structures or trees on Site were assessed from the ground for their suitability to support breeding, resting and hibernating bats using survey methods based on the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* ^{vi} – hereafter referred to as the 'BCT Guidelines'.

The categories shown in Table 1, were therefore used to describe the suitability of any buildings with features with the potential to support roosting bats.

Table 1 Categories of Bat Roost Suitability (BCT Guidelines)

Suitability	Typical Roosting Features
Negligible	Negligible habitat feature on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis & potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

Site Inspection Report



Reptiles

The Site was appraised for its suitability to support reptiles. The assessment was based on guidance outlined by Gent and Gibson^{vii}.

Hazel Dormice

The Site was surveyed for its suitability to support hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*. The assessment was based on guidance outlined in Bright, Morris and Mitchell-Jones^{viii}.

Results

Habitats

The habitats present on Site and the extent of those habitats have not changed significantly since the previous surveys were undertaken by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. (2016).

Protected and Notable Species

Great Crested Newts

The scrub present within the Site provides suitable habitat for GCN during their terrestrial phase and is therefore unchanged from the 2016 surveys. The pond within the boundary of the site was found to still have the potential to support breeding GCN. The ponds outside of the southern boundary of the Site could not be accessed.

Bats

Previous surveys of the buildings present within the Site boundary recorded a small number of access points which could be used by bats. However, the 2018 survey found that these access points were filled with wire mesh, densely vegetated or were heavily cobwebbed. These are therefore not considered to provide a suitable roosting features for roosting bats.

The previous survey identified low quality commuting and foraging habitat for bats. These were mostly located along the Site boundaries. The 2018 survey found that these habitats have not changed significantly.

Reptiles

The Site was previously assessed as providing sub-optimal habitat for reptiles, as it mostly supported short grassland. This was unchanged during the visit in December 2018. Furthermore, there are no records of reptiles from within the Site boundary, and the Site is isolated from any areas of suitable habitat by residential development, arable land and roads. This would limit the potential for reptiles to colonise the Site, and they are still considered to be absent.

Hazel Dormice

The 2016 survey found that the eastern boundary of the Site consisted of an unmanaged species poor hedgerow. This was unchanged in 2018. This could provide suitable habitat for hazel dormice. However, previous surveys in 2016 did not record hazel dormice and the hedge is not connected to other areas of suitable habitat in the wider landscape. It is therefore highly unlikely that hazel dormice have colonised the hedgerow on Site, and they are still considered to be absent.



Summary and Recommendations

The habitats on Site are unchanged from the 2016 surveys. Therefore no further surveys relating to habitats are required.

The conclusions reached in 2016 relating to reptiles and hazel dormice being absent from the Site are unchanged and no further actions or mitigation are required.

In relation to bats, there are no potential roosting features for the species group that require further survey or mitigation. However, the Site retains potential to support committing and foraging bats. Measures should therefore be in place to retain the value of the site for bats. These could include:

- ✧ the retention of boundary vegetation where possible;
- ✧ the inclusion of native species planting within the landscape scheme, and;
- ✧ the installation of bat boxes within suitable retained trees and proposed Buildings.

The Site retains the potential to support GCN in their terrestrial phase. There are also records of GCN in two ponds within 500m of the habitats on Site that could be affected by the development proposals. Due to the age of the survey data from the two ponds, it would not be possible to obtain a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) to allow works to develop the site. This is because Natural England, who grant the licences, require information that is less than two years old.

It is therefore recommended that surveys of the two ponds are updated. Initially the survey method could use environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling. This method involves taking water from ponds between mid-April and the end of June. The samples are then tested for the presence GCN eDNA.

If no eDNA is found then the species is considered to be absent. For this project it would therefore be assumed that the populations of GCN had either died out or moved to alternative breeding ponds. In this scenario, no further mitigation would be required, and an EPSL would not need to be obtained. However, there is still a possibility that there are GCN in the area, and if one was found on site during site clearance, then works would need to stop and an ecologist would need to be consulted. This may result in consultation with Natural England being required and a delay to the work continuing.

If GCN eDNA is found, then an EPSL will need to be obtained. This will require six additional visits to ponds where GCN are confirmed to establish a population estimate. This is needed to inform the impact assessment section of the licence application. A suitable mitigation strategy will then need to be prepared for submission with the application to obtain the EPSL. This would include measures to protect GCN themselves and create compensatory habitats for those lost to development. Most commonly these comprise:

- ✧ A trapping and translocation exercise to move GCN from out of the Site;
- ✧ Creation of a 'receptor' area for GCN to be released into;
- ✧ A management plan for the receptor area; and
- ✧ Monitoring of breeding ponds.

Site Inspection Report



Quality Control		
Version:	1	FINAL
Prepared by:		Kevin Wood GradCIEEM Senior Ecologist
Verified By:		Jonathan Jackson CEnv MCIEEM Principal Ecologist
Version:	Date:	Description of changes:

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- ⁱ FPCR Environment and Design Ltd, (2016), *Ecological Appraisal: Land at Hook Lane, Westergate*.
- ⁱⁱ JNCC, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit*, JNCC: Peterborough.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Stace, C., (2010), *New Flora of the British Isles*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- ^{iv} CIEEM, (2017), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*, 2nd Edition, CIEEM: Winchester.
- ^v Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L. and Foster, J.P., (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*, Froglife: Halesworth.
- ^{vi} Collins, J. (ed.), (2016), *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, 3rd Edition, The Bat Conservation Trust: London.
- ^{vii} Gent, T. and Gibson, S., (2003), *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*, JNCC: Peterborough.
- ^{viii} Bright, P.W., Morris, P.A. and Mitchell-Jones, A., (2006), *Dormouse Conservation Handbook*, 2nd Edition, English Nature: Peterborough.



Rev	Date	Notes
A	15/02/19	Initial map production

Legend

- Site boundary
- Scrub - dense/continuous
- Standing water
- A
- Amenity grassland
- Buildings
- Hardstanding
- Intact hedge - native species-poor
- Scattered broadleaved tree
- Scattered coniferous tree

0 5 10 20 Metres



Phase 1 Habitat Plan

**Hook Lane, Aldingbourne
Metis Homes**

Scale at A3:	Project No:	Drawing No:	Revision:
1:600	A110822	Figure 2	A

Drawn by:	Drawn date:	Approved by:
Ben Blowers	15/02/2019	Kevin Wood

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