

Job Name: Land at Water Lane North, Angmering
Date: 7th June 2023
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Subject: Ecological Technical Note – Bellway Site Walkover

The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Bellway Homes, to conduct an ecological site walkover and nesting bird check prior to development works within the Water Lane site in Angmering. The approximate red line boundary is shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Approximate red line boundary

The red line boundary is approximate, and it must be noted that significant infrastructural works along Oval Racecourse Lane (to the west of the red line) and the access to the site, has already been undertaken. This work has been conducted by CALA Homes under a dormouse license.

Previous Surveys

The Ecology Partnership has undertaken a range of surveys within the site boundary of Bellway and the wider Water Lane site.

An initial preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) of the site was carried out in 2015, with update surveys conducted in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

These identified suitable dormouse habitat on site in the form of hedgerows, scrub and woodland edge with direct connectivity to other suitable habitats in the wider area. Due to the suitable dormouse habitat on site, a dormouse survey was recommended and undertaken between August and November 2015. The 2015 surveys found dormice to be present within Groom's Copse to the east of the site, along the central hedgerow to the south of the race track, and along the central road leading into the site. A total of 2 live dormice and six nests were found on site and within Groom's Copse.

Additional tubes were installed for the 2017 surveys and five adult dormice were found within tubes on site. Two were found in areas previously surveyed in 2015 but one individual was also found in the northwest corner of the site. A total of seven different nests were also found throughout the site.

The 2021 surveys have identified dormice further dispersed across the site; using Grooms Copse, hedgerows and treelines in the northern most field, the western boundary of scrub to the west of the racetrack, and the eastern hedgerow which backs straight onto Grooms Copse. Numbers of dormice on and adjacent to site appear to have increased from the previous surveys, from 5 to a peak of 11.

In terms of bat surveys, initial surveys were conducted in 2015, with two surveys conducted and three transects across the site. In 2017, update surveys were undertaken across the year in June, August and September 2017. Finally update transects were conducted in June, September and October 2020. Common pipistrelles were by far the dominant species using the site across all of the surveys and all of the transects, with the exception of the access track where soprano pipistrelle passes were also recorded in high numbers. Myotis species, big bats (noctules, serotines and Leisler's), brown long-eared bats, and barbastelles were recorded at much lower levels.

A GCN eDNA survey was conducted on the south of the site, immediately adjacent to the road, but outside the redline. No DNA was present and the pond was not considered to support GCNs. It must be noted that evidence of water vole was identified within this waterbody in 2016.

Badgers were previously identified along the wooded bank outside the red line boundary of the Bellway plot. The locations of the badger holes are shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Location of the active and inactive badger holes

The Bellway land lies to the south of the wooded block and outside the Bellway land. As such no impacts are predicted on badgers. However, sensitive working practices are recommended.

Reptiles surveys were conducted in 2015 and no reptiles were identified within the boundaries of the site. The site did not support ground nesting birds, such as skylark, during the survey period. This was largely due to the grazing regime.

The site itself supported a mixture of arable land and horse and sheep grazed pasture. The arable and pasture were on rotation during the survey period (between 2015 and 2021).

Walkover 2023

The Bellway red line boundary encompasses predominantly species poor grassland which supported a long sward. Species included Yorkshire fog, cocksfoot, false oat grass, with other species such as occasional scentless mayweed and curled dock.

The hedgerows along the Oval Racecourse track to the west of the red line, are located outside the red line boundary. The woodland to the east is suitably buffered with a minimum of 15m, as required for ancient woodland. The northern woodland / tree line is located outside the Bellway red line boundary.

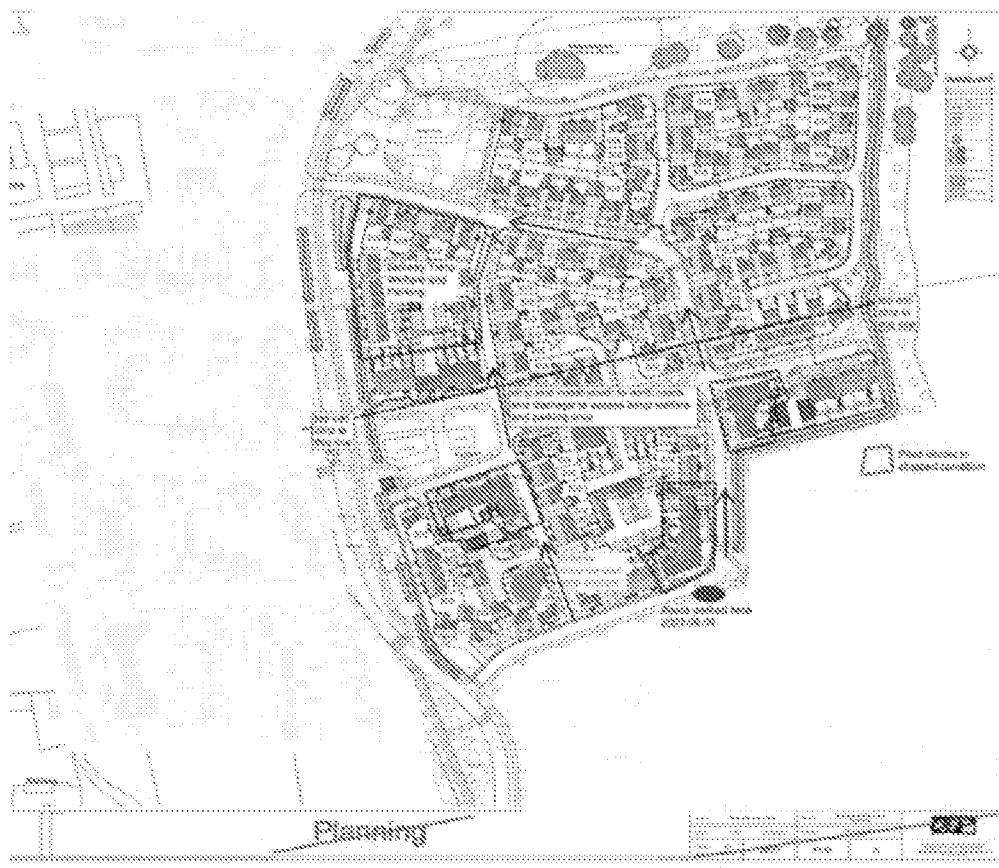


Figure 3: Bellway Layout

The walkover survey therefore was undertaken across the grassland only. The woodland, hedgerows and scrub, located outside the red line boundary, were not assessed during the walkover.

The grassland supported largely a long dense sward, and was considered largely unsuitable for species such as skylark. However, there were areas where growth was limited, which could provide some potential for ground nesting birds. No skylark were recorded during the walkover, no calling across the site was recorded. Birds were located largely on the edges of the site, aside from crows and pheasant located in the field. These were not nesting within.

The walkover did not identify any ground nesting birds. Activity was restricted to edge habitats outside the Bellway boundary.

No evidence of badgers using the grassland were identified within the red line boundary. No pathways, foraging signs, holes were identified. It is considered that the grassland habitat is not in active use by badgers, albeit badgers may well commute across the site.

The development will not result in the loss of trees or hedgerows, and therefore concerns with regards to dormice, bats and nesting birds, are not considered relevant within this red line.

Recommendations

No evidence of badgers, such as setts or latrines, were found on site on the day of survey within the Bellway red line. However, as badgers are located to the north, given the open nature of the site, there is potential for badgers to use the site and immediate surrounds for foraging and commuting.

It is advised that certain safety measures be taken to ensure that no badgers or other mammals are harmed during construction. Best practice guidelines recommended that:

- Any excavations and trenches associated with construction are either covered at night or supplemented with a means of escape for any badgers that may fall into the excavation whilst foraging;
- Any open pipes or conduits laid should be blocked off each night to prevent badgers from entering them;
- If possible, construction work should only take place between dawn and dusk with no late evening work to reduce possible disturbance.

Only approximately 1/3 of the grassland is to be removed within the first phase of works, leaving an extensive area of grassland along the northern edge of the site. This will be cleared in September onwards and will therefore provide some potential foraging habitat for birds within the edge habitat. This will then be cleared outside nesting season.

No potential for any other protected species, such as water voles or otters was identified within the site.

Conclusion

The Bellway red line is dominated by species poor long sward grassland. This habitat does not support dormice or reptiles and there are no trees to be lost or hedgerows impacted by the development. Impacts will occur with the loss of grassland within the site. Initially only 1/3 of the site will be cut to allow for development.

The walkover survey did not identify any ground nesting birds, and none were recorded on previous surveys. The site did not support any badgers, albeit badgers are known to be present to the north of the site.

Sensitive working practices are recommended for badgers. Clearance of the grassland is not constrained by ground nesting birds, however, some grassland will be left to provide some interest prior to clearance in September.

It is considered that as such, no further surveys are recommended and works can continue as planned. However, if there are any concerns when working on site, or nesting birds or badgers have been found on site, then works must cease and an ecologist consulted.

Appendix 1: Photographs

Photo 1: The habitats within the site boundary



Photo 2: Another view of the habitats. Some clearance has occurred from the edge of CALA site to allow access.

