

Site:	Blake's Mead, Felpham
Client:	Barratt David Wilson Homes
Survey Type(s):	Site Inspection Report
Date of Survey(s):	02.12.2021

INTRODUCTION

Tetra Tech was commissioned by Barratt David Wilson Homes to undertake a site inspection of the site Blake's Mead, Felpham.

An Ecological Appraisal of the site was completed by Middlemarch¹ in 2007 where the site was a component of a much larger application. Surveys for protected and notable species were then completed by Aluco Ecology for the same application in 2007 and 2008². These surveys concluded that the following species and species groups had the potential to be present within the site;

- Nesting birds (including ground nesting birds)
- Reptiles
- Badger; and
- Commuting and foraging bats

The site is subject to an amended proposal which retains the previously consented use of the site (as playing fields), but includes an updated site plan and arrangement for the pavilion (FP/248/20/PL).

This report has been prepared by Project Ecologist Ben Cooke and the conditions pertinent to it are provided in Appendix A.

SITE LOCATION AND PROPOSALS

The site is located to the west of Felpham Relief Road (A259) and the north of the Stanhorn Grove, Bognor Regis (OS Central Grid Reference – SU 95376 01427).

The land is proposed to be used for the construction of leisure facilities in the form of playing fields.

METHODOLOGY

SITE WALKOVER

A site walkover survey was undertaken on the site on 2nd December 2021 by Tetra Tech Project Ecologist, Ben Cooke. The weather conditions were clear with a slight breeze. The temperature was approximately 4°C.

¹ Middlemarch, (2007). Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Felpham Residential Site. Written behalf of Barratt David Wilson

² Aluco Ecology, (2008). *Ecological Survey Update Report – Felpham Site 6 and Bognor Northern Relief Road*. Written on behalf of Barratt David Wilson

The vegetation and broad habitat types within the site were noted during the survey in accordance with the categories specified for a Phase 1 Vegetation and Habitat Survey³. Dominant plant species were recorded for each habitat present using nomenclature according to Stace⁴. The site was also appraised for its suitability to support notable flora, with regard to the *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*⁵.

The site was inspected for evidence of, and its potential to support, protected or notable species, especially those listed under the Schedule 2 of the Habitat Regulations, Schedule 5 of the W&CA, the CRow Act and those listed in accordance with the requirements of the NERC Act.

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

The site was appraised for its suitability to support great crested newt (GCN). The assessment was based on Guidance outlined in the *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*⁶ and the *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*⁷.

REPTILES

The site was appraised for its suitability to support reptiles. The assessment was based on guidance outlined in the *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*.

BATS

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*⁸ – hereafter referred to as the 'BCT Guidelines' use the criteria in Table 1 below to categorise the potential value of habitats on site for use by foraging and commuting bats and these have been used to characterise the value of this site.

Table 1: Categories of Habitat Suitability (BCT Guidelines)

Suitability	Typical Foraging & Commuting Features
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e., not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens.

³ JNCC, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit*, JNCC: Peterborough.

⁴ Stace, C., (2019), *New Flora of the British Isles*, 4th Edition, C&M Floristics Middlewood Green, Suffolk.

⁵ CIEEM, (2017), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*, 2nd Edition, CIEEM: Winchester.

⁶ Gent, T. & Gibson, S. (2003), *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*, JNCC: Peterborough.

⁷ Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L. and Foster, J.P., (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*, Froglife: Halesworth.

⁸ Collins, J. (ed), (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, 3rd Edition, The Bat Conservation Trust: London.

Suitability	Typical Foraging & Commuting Features
	Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

BADGER

The site and surrounded habitat was surveyed for evidence of badger setts or other badger activity such as paths, latrines or signs of foraging. Methodologies used and any setts recorded were classified according to published criteria⁹.

OTHER SPECIES

The site was also appraised for its suitability to support other protected or notable fauna including birds and invertebrates with regard to the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal¹⁰ and BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development¹¹. Evidence of any current or historical presence of such species was recorded.

RESULTS

HABITATS

The following habitats were identified within the site:

- Poor semi-improved grassland; and
- Bare ground.

The habitats identified within the site are described in greater detail below.

Poor Semi-improved Grassland

The site predominantly comprised poor semi-improved grassland, with a high abundance of ruderal vegetation (there was no evidence of recent management). The vegetation was fairly sparse and the soil quite shallow and stony. Dominant species included curled dock *Rumex crispus*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*. There were frequent examples of common

⁹ Harris, Cresswell & Jefferies, 1989. *Surveying badgers. An occasional publication of the mammal society* – No. 9., Mammal Society: London.

¹⁰ CIEEM, (2017), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*, 2nd Edition, CIEEM: Winchester.

¹¹ BSI Group, (2013), *BS 42020 – a code of practice for biodiversity in planning and development*, [online] Available at <https://www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/en-GB/biodiversity/BS-42020-Smart-Guide.pdf>, Accessed January 2022.

nettle *Urtica dioica* and broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Bristly ox-tongue *Helminthotheca echioides* and annual meadow grass *Poa annua* were recorded occasionally, although there were denser clusters of these species along the eastern site boundary. In addition, there was occasional creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and buddleia *Buddleja davidii* recorded throughout the site.

Photograph 1: Poor semi-improved grassland



Bare Ground (Hardstanding)

Much of the southern extent of the site comprised a tarmac access road, associated pedestrian pavement and former parking area (Photograph 2). This is understood to have been created when the site was used as an office compound for the associated development to the west.

Photograph 2: Access road and pavement



The following habitats were identified off-site but were considered of importance to the assessment:

- Line of trees

- Dense scrub; and
- Standing water.

The habitats identified off-site are described in greater detail below.

Line of Trees

A line of trees extended along the opposite bank of the drainage channel which runs adjacent to the length of the western and northern site boundaries. All of the trees were considered to be mature; species included blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, oak *Quercus robur* and goat willow *Salix caprea*.

Photograph 3: Line of trees adjacent to Western Boundary



Dense Scrub

A strip of dense scrub runs adjacent to the eastern boundary (Photograph 4) along the A259 (approximately 2.5 m tall and 3 m wide). The scrub was dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with frequent examples of dog rose *Rosa canina* and blackthorn. The scrub also contained occasional ash *Fraxinus excelsior* saplings.

Photograph 4: Dense scrub adjacent to Eastern boundary



Standing Water

A drainage channel runs adjacent to the western and northern boundaries of the site. Although the channel was found to contain water at the time of survey these areas were shallow and located intermittently along the length of the feature.

The channel connected to a waterbody situated approximately 0.15 km to the south of the site (Photograph 5). The waterbody forms part of the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) for the associated development to the west of the site.

The pond (OS Central Grid Reference: SU 95512 01221) contained aquatic vegetation, dominated by great reedmace *Typha latifolia*. In addition, much of the waterbody surface was covered by duckweed *Lemna minor*.

Photograph 5: Pond adjacent to the south of the site



PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

No evidence of protected or notable species was noted within the site or in areas of vegetation adjacent to the site which could be inspected.

The terrestrial habitats within the site and immediately adjacent are considered suitable for the following protected and notable species;

Great Crested Newts

Aerial photography and OS maps identified thirteen waterbodies (including agricultural ditches) within 500 m of the site. The majority of these were separated from the site by the A259, which was considered a major barrier to dispersal. Previous work by Aluco Ecology did not identify great crested newts on site.

The off-site pond and ditch contained water at the time of survey and were considered suitable for GCN, however the absence of an on-site population suggests it is unlikely this SuDS pond would have been colonised since its construction. The terrestrial habitats surrounding the ponds off site were considered suitable for foraging and commuting GCN. Habitats on site were considered suboptimal for great crested newts offering negligible suitability for hibernation and little suitability for foraging.

Reptiles

Previous work by Aluco Ecology did not identify reptiles on site, although grass snake *Natrix helvetica* were recorded to the south.

The terrestrial habitats recorded on site and poor semi-improved grassland were considered to have poor suitability for foraging and commuting reptiles. The long sward height and abundance of ruderal vegetation resulted in few opportunities for basking, whilst the shallow soil and absence of thatch provided little shelter and negligible potential for hibernation. The off-site habitats had more suitability, in particular for grass snakes along the ditch and scrub edges. suitable to provide reptiles with foraging and commuting opportunities.

Bats

The poor semi-improved grassland vegetation is considered the only suitable foraging habitat on site. The line of trees adjacent to the western boundary provides a linear corridor to areas of greater foraging opportunity within the wider landscape such as the golf course to the west of the site. The relatively small size of the site is however considered to reduce its suitability.

Badger

No evidence of badger activity was noted on the site or where accessible within 50 m of the site, however the habitats within the site were considered to have suitability for foraging and commuting badgers. No evidence of badgers was recorded on site by Aluco Ecology.

Other Species

The habitats on-site and the adjacent habitat could support a range of common and widespread breeding birds typical of these habitats such as European robin *Erithacus rubecula* and blackbird *Turdus merula*.

The habitats with the site were considered to be floristically non-diverse and composed of common species. Overall, the site is not considered suitable for notable invertebrates.

The vegetation within the site and the adjacent area are considered to provide suitable habitat for foraging and commuting West European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.

Otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were considered as part of the previous assessment, associated with Lidsey Rife. This is approximately 0.44km from the site and as such there is negligible potential for these species to occur on site.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HABITATS

The habitats present within the site and immediately adjacent are considered to be both of low ecological value and are common and widespread within the surrounding area. It is therefore considered that significant impacts as a result of any works are unlikely.

No specific habitat mitigation is required, and the proposals do not represent a significant departure from the permitted development.

PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

No evidence of protected or notable species were recorded during the survey. Furthermore, and based on the suitability of the habitat within the site and immediately adjacent, it is assessed that the risk of these species and species groups being present are low.

However, to mitigate the risk of breaches in wildlife protection legislation afforded to these species, it is recommended that the following proposals and working methods are implemented.

Great Crested Newts

Great crested newts were previously considered absent from the site and the site was considered to have negligible value for amphibians. Although an additional suitable waterbody has now been constructed, the site contains suboptimal terrestrial habitat for great crested newts, and there has been no improvement in habitat connectivity for great crested newts.

The approved Ecological Mitigation Strategy by Aluco Ecology proposed a precautionary approach to vegetation clearance comprising:

- Targeted displacement conducted on areas to be impacted by construction works to be undertaken between March and October (inclusive). An Ecological Clerk of Works to supervise the strimming of areas of suitable vegetation to 150 mm, followed by a fingertip search;
- All arisings from the strimming and clearance works to be immediately removed from the works area; and
- Materials to be kept off the ground through the use of skips or pallets if stored on the grassland. This will prevent the risk of materials being used for shelter.

Adherence to these measures will avoid any residual (non-significant) risk to amphibians.

Reptiles

Reptiles were previously considered likely absent from the site, although present in small numbers elsewhere. The site is considered to be suboptimal for reptiles and does not have higher value than at the time of the previous assessment.

The approved Ecological Mitigation Strategy by Aluco Ecology proposed a precautionary approach to vegetation clearance detailed above.

Adherence to these measures will avoid any residual (non-significant) risk to amphibians.

Bats

The site does not support significant foraging habitat for bats. The site boundaries have potential for foraging and commuting, although this does not represent a change from the conditions at the time of the previous assessment. There is no potential for any additional effects upon bats as a result of the amended proposals or site conditions.

The approved Ecological Mitigation Strategy by Aluco Ecology proposed the use of low-emission directional lighting away from tree canopies and hedgerows to avoid significant lighting effects on bats. These measures should also be applied to the amended application.

Badger

Evidence of badger activity was not observed within the site and no setts were recorded; therefore this species is considered likely absent from the survey area and unlikely to be affected by the proposals. If evidence of badgers are found, then an ecologist should be contacted for advice.

Other Species

The boundary habitats are suitable for nesting birds, however these will be unaffected by the proposed development. The site has negligible suitability for ground-nesting birds therefore no mitigation is required.

It is recommended that if any excavations are left open overnight during construction, an earth ramp will be created or a wooden ramp installed to allow any animals, such as hedgehogs, that fall in to escape.

SUMMARY

Although there has been a change in the habitat conditions on site (the grass sward is longer and dominated by ruderal species) there is not a significant increase in the suitability of the site for protected or notable fauna.

No additional mitigation measures to those proposed within the approved Mitigation Strategy are required to maintain compliance with policy or legislation.

Document Control			
Revision:	V1	Status:	Final
Date:	February 2022		
Prepared by: Ben Cooke Project Ecologist		Checked by: David West CEnv MCIEEM Associate Director	Approved by: David West CEnv MCIEEM Associate Director

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

Figure 2 – Phase 1 Habitat Map



Site Location Plan

Land North of Felpham

Halebourne Care Home Ltd



Legend

Site boundary

Notes:

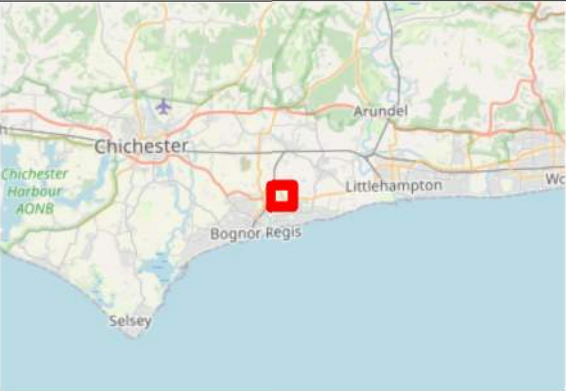
Drawn by: SB
Checked by: BC
Office: Southampton

Figure No. 1
Revision No. A

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Scale 1:5,000 @A3

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL FP/248/20/PL

Phase 1 Habitat Plan

Land North of Felpham

Halebourne Care Home Ltd



Legend

- Site boundary
- SI Poor semi-improved grassland
- Hardstanding

Notes:

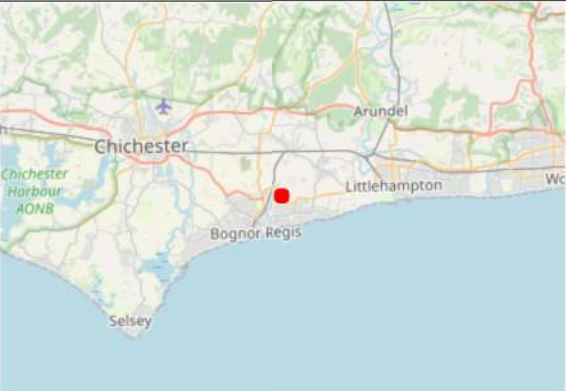
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Checked by: BC
Office: Southampton

Figure No. 2
Revision No. A

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Scale 1:1,000 @A3

31 January 2022
NGR: 495378E 101422N

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