Land at Southern Allotments, Toddington Lane

Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Persimmon Homes to develop Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for land at Southern Allotments, Toddington Lane, Littlehampton BN17 7PP. The development consists of the construction of 36 allotment plots, with the provision for additional wheelchair accessible ground level planting beds. An access track is proposed for the centre of the site which will extend from the west off the new Lyminster Bypass and connect to Holly Drive to the east. A metered water supply is proposed to be installed. New grassland, tree and hedgerow planting is proposed for the site boundaries.

1.2 ECOSA undertook an initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site in 22nd March 2022.

1.3 The site is located to the north of the town of Littlehampton, West Sussex, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 0312 0370 (Figure 1 below). The site is approximately 1.2 hectares in size and is dominated by bare ground with vegetated boundaries in the north, east and south. The newly constructed Lyminster Bypass road / Nightingale Way runs parallel with the western boundary, and a national railway line is located adjacent to the northern boundary. The wider landscape is dominated by residential development to the south, east and west, whilst agricultural fields are present to the north. The Black Ditch stream flows approximately 775 metres north of the site, whilst at its closest point the River Arun is located approximately 1.8 kilometres west.

Figure 1: Approximate location of the red line boundary of the proposed development
Image captured from Google Earth Pro

1.4 Planning permission has been granted, with a condition pertinent to ecology;

Prior to any works above ground level a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for protected and Priority species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

a) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;

b) detailed designs to achieve stated objectives;

c) locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans;

d) persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures;

e) details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the allotment be first brought into use and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.

Reason: To enhance protected and Priority species& habitats and allow the Local Planning Authority to discharge its duties under the Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

Purpose and Objectives

1.5 This document is designed to discharge the biodiveristy enhancement strategy to ensure that enhancement measures for protected species and habitats is incorporated into the construction methodology.

1.6 Therefore, the documents main objectives are:

- Review previous reports to identify key considerations of the site;
- Identify species for which enhancements would be appropriate within the design of the site;
- Recommend locations for enhancements within the design.

Responsible Persons

1.7 Littlehampton Town Council are responsible for the implementation of the enhancements. If there is uncertainty with regards to this document, then Littlehampton Town Council can contact The Ecology Partnership / or another ecological consultant, to ensure this document is interpreted correctly.

2.0 Baseline Ecological Review

2.1 Both desk based and a site survey assessment was conducted. The desk based study did not identify any designated or non statutory sites within 1km of the red line boundary. No priority habitats were identified on the boundary edges or the immediate area of the site.

2.2 The habitats present on site included;

- Dense/Continuous Scrub associated with boundary vegetation and located within the north-eastern corner and along the southern site boundary Bramble species dominates the northern patch of scrub, with common nettle, the southern scrub is dominated by blackthorn stands, with buddleia and bramble interspersed.

- Semi improved grassland present throughout the site, and associated with the boundaries.
- Patches of ruderal/ephemeral vegetation are present alongside the newly built bypass infrastructure along the western site boundary in addition to surrounding the acoustic barrier which has been built within the south-western corner of the site.
- The site is dominated by bare ground which has been subject to recent clearance prior to the 2022 survey.
- Tree lines: The eastern site boundary lies adjacent to residential development and contains non- native ornamental species such as Leyland cypress and staghorn sumac in addition to a number of young ash trees within the south-eastern corner.

2.3 In terms of bats, the trees present within the site are young in age or have just been recently planted, and do not contain Potential Roosting Features (PRFs). Furthermore, the site provides limited foraging opportunities for the species group given that the vegetation is restricted to the site boundaries and generally species poor.

2.4 The boundary vegetation around the edges of the site supported a range of bird species, including house sparrow, wood pigeon and magpie. The majority of the site is bare earth and does not provide any suitable habitat for nesting bird species.

2.5 Extensive reptile surveys have been undertaken across the wider North Littlehampton development, with the most recent surveys undertaken by ECOSA in 2017 recording low populations of slow-worm and common lizard from within suitable reptile habitat to the north of the site (ECOSA, 2018). A reptile destructive search undertaken of the Southern Allotments in mid-2019 by ECOSA recorded a single common lizard, which was subsequently relocated to vegetation on the opposite side of the reptile exclusion fencing in the north-eastern corner of the site. The previously established reptile fence line had been partially buried and ripped, and some of the grassland habitats, which were located beyond the reptile fence line had grown over the fence. As such, potentially reptiles could be present on the very edges of the site.

2.6 The site support foxes and hedgehogs, confirmed by local residents, albeit the extent of suitable habitat is limited to the very edges of the site where vegetation remains in situ.

2.7 The site did not support any suitable habitats for species such as dormice, water vole, GCNs and no evidence of badgers was present on site.

2.8 Enhancement opportunities for the site are considered to be limited due to the nature of the development. However, it was considered that the creation of log piles would be suitable for a range of wildlife that may be present on site. As the dominant habitat was bare earth, the creation of allotments would be considered an enhancement to the current conditions.

3.0 Ecological Enhancements

3.1 Due to the nature and extent of the development, ecological enhancements are restricted to the use of log piles around the edges of the site to support common reptile species which are known to be present in the landscape and hedgehogs, which are known to be present within the residential adjacent to the site and potentially utilising the habitat edges. In addition, bird and bat boxes and hedgehogs houses are also proposed.

3.2 Log piles are created using any woody material removed during works or bring in locally sourced wood / brash for use as refugia by reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates such as stag beetles.

3.3 These can be located within the retained and enhanced shrub edge habitat. They can be placed, around the very edges of the site and positioned under mature trees. These should be stacked and leaf litter added. Examples of log piles are shown in Figure 2 below. It is recommended that two formalised log piles (which logs dug in) are utilised, with the remaining 4 piles a mixture of larger stacked logs and smaller brash. Leaf litter and the use of turf can also add value.

3.4 A total of 6 log piles are to be created on the edges of the site, with 3 on the northern aspect of the allotments associated with the railway line edge. The railway line sidings provides a number of opportunities for species to move across the landscape and therefore any enhancements such as log piles, would be considered effective along this landscape feature. The remaining 3 log piles are to be located on the eastern edge of the site, providing some refuge along the road side whilst the vegetation establishes. The location of the log piles are shown in figure 6.

Figure 2: Examples of log pile creation

3.5 As there are no mature trees located wihtin the site boundary, a rocket box, established in the corner of the site, is to be established to provide enahncements for bats. The Eco Rocket Bat Boxes sold by NHBS (Figure 3), is recommended

Figure 3: Eco Rocket Bat Box (NHBS- https://www.nhbs.com/eco-rocket-bat-box)

3.6 Additional nesting opportunity can be installed within exsiting trees on site, or on the fence lines of the site. Hardwearing woodcrete boxes, or similar, are recommended. Figure 4 below gives examples of suitable bird boxes, of which these or similar, could be installed. These would cater for species such as house sparrows and wagtails.

Figure 4: Examples of suitable bird boxes which could be installed on site – Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box (left), Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box (centre) and Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box (right)

3.6 There is also suitable habitat on site for hedgehogs within the site boundaries and in the wider landscape. As such, ecological enhancements for hedgehogs are recommended. Hedgehog homes could also be placed wihtin the allotments, with boxes as per Figure 5. These provide areas of shelter for hedgehogs within the site, helping support the local population. A total of two of these boxes should be utlised.

Figure 5: Example of a hedgehog house that can be utilised on site

3.7 The location of all of the ecological enhancements are shown in figure 6 below. If the locations of the enhancements have to be altered, than the locations should be agreed with an ecologist.

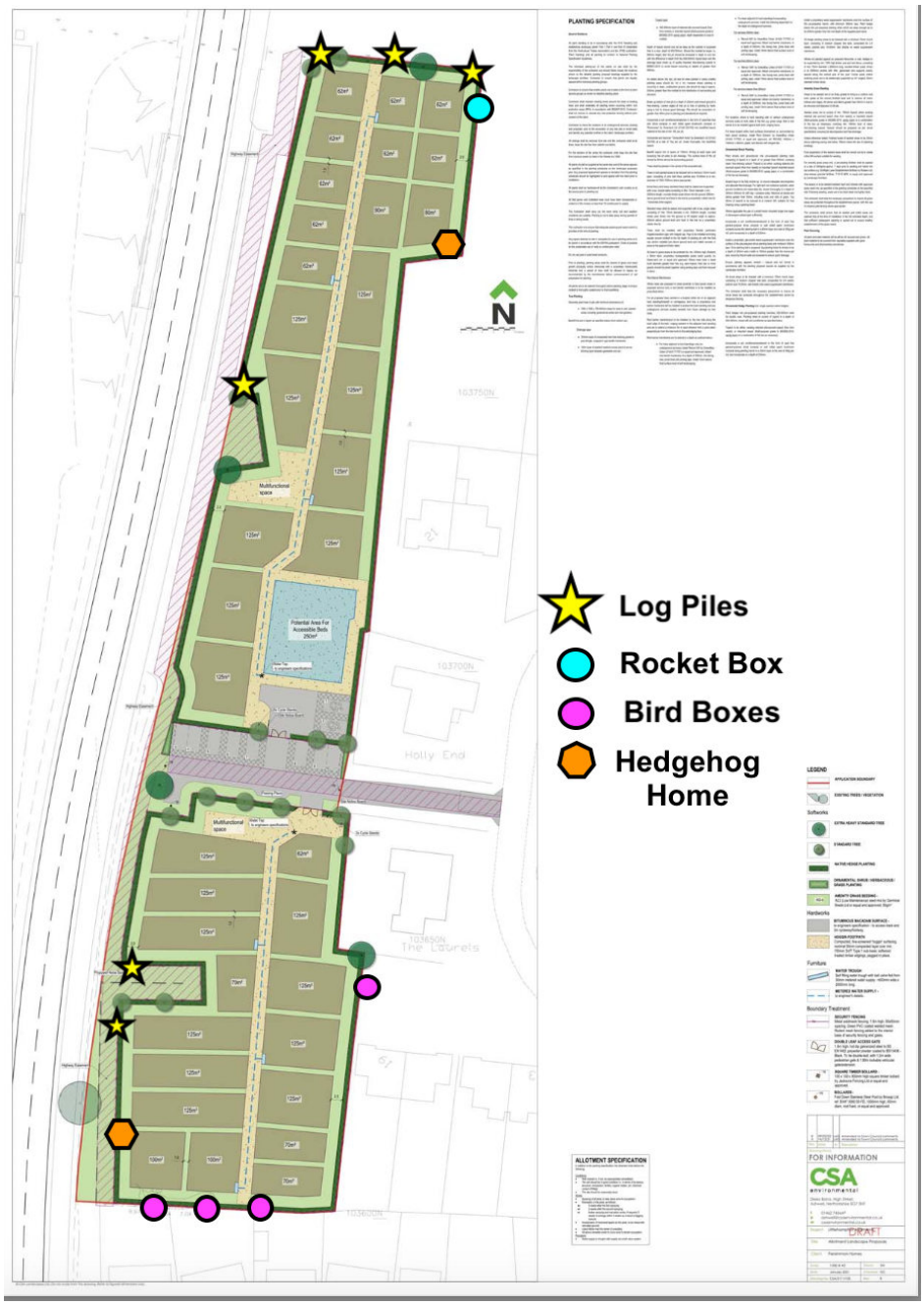

Figure 6: Location of the log piles on site

4.0 Ongoing Management/Maintenance

4.1 It is for Littlehampton Town Council to ensure the long term management of the allotments is conducted in accordance with allotment policy and relevant community requirements.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The site has been subject to various ecological surveys to ensure that protected species and local wildlife have been considered as part of the scheme.

5.2 Specifications have been provided for the recommended log piles / refuge piles. However, if there is a requirement for changes to be made, consultation with an ecologist should be undertaken to ensure the locations of these remain appropriate.

5.3 It is considered that this report is sufficient to discharge the condition.

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