

INTERIM ECOLOGICAL SCOPING/PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

Site to the south of the Littlehampton Academy (located between Cornwall road and Elm Grove Road) NGR 503285 102620

28 November 2013

This report represents an interim Ecological response to the proposed development at subject to an additional site visit.

Ecological site visit made 27 November 2013.

Weather: Cloudy, high humidity, 8°C, wind light.

Desktop review

A review of readily available ecological information and other relevant environmental databases was undertaken for the site and general environs. This provided the overall ecological context for the site and surrounding areas and potential basis for the habitat and protected species surveys. The sources of information consulted in this study were:

- Previous ecological surveys prepared by Gifford, White Young Green and Bat Box.
- Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (species and habitats)
- Natural England maintained GIS layers pertaining to statutory protected sites.

Description of proposals

The intention is to submit an outline planning application for 69 dwellings, although matters of layout and design will be reserved for detailed approval.

Site description

The western third is covered with large mounds of spoil. The eastern two thirds of the site is dominated by hard standing, rubble and patches semi-improved grassland typically comprised of common ruderal species. The southern boundary of the site adjacent to the access road is a species poor hedge. The hedge is narrow and dominated by hawthorn with bramble and ivy growing throughout.

The most significant changes on site are the removal of buildings (excepting the caretaker's house) and the storage of spoil on the western third. Ecologically, the site has changed little since the previous surveys except for the obvious demolition.

Protected species - bats

The caretaker's house is generally well sealed. The soffits are in good condition, the first floor windows and doors were boarded up and the roof is a flat roof type. However, due to the first floor windows being open and a break through the kitchen window, I was obliged to search the house for evidence of bats. Pipistrelles are known to fly past the house and possibly use the garden for forage. Due to the recent use of the house bats were not expected to historically present but it has been empty long enough for opportunistic use by bats. The house was thoroughly searched for evidence of feeding and for droppings. Holes in the ceilings were also investigated. There was no evidence of current or historical use of the house by bats. The building was being re-secured with all potential bat access points being closed as I left.

Protected species - reptiles

The previous survey had found a single male slow worm in the south west of the site (south of the current soil storage). Therefore, there was a very low population of reptiles localised on site. Given the limited passage of time, disturbance and lack of suitable habitat this status is unlikely to have changed.

Contact was made with Chris Hodsman (27/11/2013), an ecologist working for Gifford, to discuss the findings of the previous 2010 reptile survey.

Protected species – breeding birds

It is highly likely that birds use the vegetation to nest in. All breeding birds are protected. This represents a potential timing constraint on the development. The vegetation could not be cleared until the end of the bird breeding season (potentially august end).

Protected species – Other

No other protected species are expected to be present.

Enhancements

Within the current design scheme there is scope for ecological enhancement in accordance with NPPF 118 and NERC Act 2006 (S40). Typical enhancements are likely to include native planting and species rich grassland sowing. This would also help compensate of loss of bat forage.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. There is no additional need for specialist surveys.
2. A broad ecological enhancement scheme to support the outline planning application.
3. Caretaker's house to remain sealed until demolition.
4. Vegetation on site should be cut back during the autumn and winter period and kept cut back to prevent use by birds. The vegetation (particularly in the south west corner) should be cut back but not cleared (e.g. by uprooting etc) until weather warms in spring (mid / late March). Complete site clearance (boundary hedge, garden and south west corner) to be undertaken in the presence of a consultant utilising a destructive search methodology. Any animal discovered will be captured and placed in a previously identified and prepared receptor area. A typical detailed methodology can be designed for this site if required.

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