

Technical Briefing Note

Ref: 1003697 BN09 EUN vf1

Land north of Sefter Road, Pagham, Bognor Regis
(Project No. 1003697)

Updated Ecological Survey Work to Inform Reserved Matters
Application under Outline Permission P/134/16/OUT

Date: February 2020

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. Aspect Ecology is acting on behalf of Taylor Wimpey Southern Counties in respect of ecological matters relating to the site, located north of Sefter Road, Pagham, Bognor Regis, centred approximately at OS grid reference SZ 901 995 (see Plan 3697/EUN1).
- 1.1. The site is in receipt of outline planning permission (ref: P/134/16/OUT) for residential development of up to 280 dwellings (including affordable homes), land for a replacement Scout Hut, land for an Ambulance Community Response Post Facility and land for either a 1FE primary school or care home and associated works, along with access. The planning application, leading to the grant of outline planning permission was informed by a range of documents and information, including ecological survey and appraisal work undertaken by Aspect Ecology Ltd at the site between March 2014 and May 2016, as reported within the submitted Ecological Appraisal report (Aspect Report Ref: 3697 EcoAp vf1, dated December 2016).
- 1.2. Further, details have been prepared, including layout information, which are now proposed for submission as part of a Reserved Matters application in order to facilitate the permitted development (see Appendix 3697/EUN1). Accordingly, in order to inform the reserved matters submission and ensure that the available ecological information remains up to date and appropriate, in line with standard planning guidelines (whilst also providing update information in order to inform preparation of documents to address the relevant planning conditions associated with the permitted development), Aspect Ecology Ltd has been commissioned to undertake update survey work in order to confirm the up-to-date position with regard to ecology at the site and any evident changes (or otherwise), with particular reference to the current (reserved matters) design scheme.
- 1.3. The purpose of this note is to summarise the results of the update ecological survey work, and provide consideration of the relevant implications of the current development proposals in regard to ecological matters at the site (with regard to the permitted outline position), in order to ensure the reserved matters application is fully informed and associated ecological considerations are appropriately addressed.

2. Methodology

Previously submitted ecological survey work

- 2.1. Previous ecological survey work was undertaken at the site by Aspect Ecology Ltd during 2014 to 2016, the results of which are set out within the previous Ecological Appraisal report (Aspect Report Ref: 3697 EcoApp vf1, dated December 2016), which was submitted to inform the outline planning application in 2017.
- 2.2. The reported work included a desktop study (including obtaining background records from Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC)), along with extended Phase 1 habitat and general faunal surveys of the site. Specific survey work and consideration was also undertaken in regard to bats, Badger, reptiles, amphibians and breeding birds as part of the previous work.

Update Survey Work

- 2.3. In order to update and confirm the previous work and establish the current position with regard to the habitats present and the continued potential and/or presence of any protected species, the site has further been surveyed by Aspect Ecology Ltd during December 2019. This work included further updated extended Phase 1 habitat survey work, along with specific consideration in regard to the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable faunal species. General faunal activity, such as mammals or birds, observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys was also recorded, with reference to the previous information. The potential for the habitats at the site to support other species of conservation concern was assessed and any potential changes to the previously recorded position in regard to these species groups highlighted.
- 2.4. In addition, specific update survey work has been undertaken at the site in respect of Badger, Water Vole and potential reptile habitats (as described below).
- 2.5. **Badger.** No Badger setts or other evidence of Badger were identified within the site during the previously reported survey work, albeit given the time that has elapsed since the most recent (2016) work, it remains possible that new setts could have been created or additional Badger activity present. As such, in order to confirm the current position with regard to Badger, the site was surveyed for the presence of Badger, or any evidence of use by this species, during December 2019. This included specific searches for any evidence of Badger setts, as well as evidence of Badger activity such as well-worn paths, push-throughs, snagged hairs, footprints, latrines and foraging signs in order to build up a picture of any use by this species.
- 2.6. **Water Vole.** The previous survey work recorded no evidence for any use of the site by Water Vole, with the habitats present recorded to be largely unsuitable, albeit the site does include a network of drainage channels and ditches. The drainage channels within the site were assessed and any sections considered potentially suitable for Water voles were thoroughly searched for signs of presence of this species in December 2019 where access could be gained. Such signs include latrines, tunnels, lawns (small areas of vegetation grazed by Water Vole) and footprints. The banks of the drainage channels were examined thoroughly from both sides (where accessible) and from the drainage channels themselves where scrub and water depth allowed.
- 2.7. **Potential Reptile Habitats.** The previous survey work confirmed the presence of common reptile species (Common Lizard and Slow Worm) within suitable habitats, focussed on the west of the site. Given the time that has lapsed since the previous work, the habitats present were surveyed in order to update the position with regard to the continued presence and extent of reptile habitats at the site.

- 2.8. Areas of arable land, casual/seasonal standing water, close-mown grassland and dense tree or scrub cover were considered to be unsuitable for reptile species. Remaining habitats, comprising hedgerows, tall or dense, tussocky grass, light scrub and scrub margins were considered to provide potential suitability for reptiles where these provided suitable cover or other features of likely value.
- 2.9. In addition to the habitats recorded during the previous surveys, sowings of wildflower grassland have been provided along the northern and southwestern margins of the arable field (specifically in order to provide future receptor habitat for reptiles as part of the proposed mitigation strategy). These areas were specifically appraised to determine their current status and future potential to provide high-quality reptile habitat.

Survey Constraints/Limitations

- 2.10. All of the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent during different seasons. December is outside of the optimal seasonal period for botanical work in particular, albeit the survey was undertaken in generally good weather conditions and, given the objectives of the survey (in particular in updating the previous survey work), was not considered significantly constrained by seasonal timing.
- 2.11. Densely vegetated habitats within the site have the potential to reduce the detectability of field signs for faunal species such as Badger. A detailed survey was able to be completed and, whilst small areas of dense scrub/Bramble thicket vegetation are present within the site, it is considered that the survey results do provide an accurate baseline to assess the potential for impacts on Badger under the development proposals.

3. Update Survey Results and Evaluation

Habitats and Ecological Features

- 3.1. A summary of the habitats present at the site is shown at Plan 3697/EUN2. The update survey work identified no significant changes in either the broad extent or the condition of the habitats within the site when compared to the previous (2016) position. The grassland parcel within the west appeared as previously described, with the majority of the area being mown and appearing to be still in use by the local scouting group, with evidence of bonfires still present. Additional areas of grassland are present along a number of field margins, which have been created in preparation for reptile mitigation, in order to ensure suitable receptor habitats are present (albeit to date these remain predominantly short in order to minimise early colonisation – see below section in regard to reptiles).
- 3.2. The remainder of the arable land was recorded to be largely bare, apparently following evident cropping and removal of a previous Maize crop during 2019, with scattered sparsely colonising arable weeds including Willowherbs *Epilobium* sp., Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, Sharp-leaved Fluellen *Kickxia elatine*, Prickly Sow-thistle *Sonchus asper*, Wild Raddish *Raphanus raphanistrum* and occasional Corn Marigold *Glebionis segetum*.
- 3.3. The presence of Corn Marigold (identified as “Sussex Scarce” within the Sussex Rare Plant register) likely provides some botanical local interest as an arable weed (this species is dependent on continued disturbance through management), albeit the absence of this species during the previous surveys (despite similar management) suggests casual occurrence at most rather than any longstanding population.

- 3.4. Overall, on the basis of the update habitat survey work undertaken, the habitats present within the site boundaries remain largely consistent with the previously recorded position, with the majority of the site offering low or negligible ecological value or potential to form a development constraint, albeit the existing boundary vegetation, hedgerows and trees provide some value (see below in regard to faunal species) and will be largely retained within the open space provision in line with the indicative proposals provided with the outline planning application.

Badger

- 3.5. The previously reported survey work recorded no evidence for any use of the site by Badger in the form of any setts, latrines, foraging signs or other features. In line with the previously reported information, no evidence of badger presence was found within the site during the update survey work, such that the proposals appear to remain unconstrained by this species.
- 3.6. In any event, the current (reserved matters) proposals continue to provide considerable open space areas, including the retention of the majority of the existing boundary vegetation (in line with the permitted outline position). Accordingly, the proposals provide the opportunity to incorporate and maintain considerably enhanced foraging opportunities for this species (should it colonise the site) in the long term through appropriate management (in particular relating to grassland areas, along with appropriate shrub and tree planting).

Water vole

- 3.7. The previously reported survey work recorded no evidence for the presence of this species at the site, whilst in general the habitats were recorded to be generally unsuitable. Nonetheless, given the presence of the drainage channel in the north west of the site (see Plan 3697/EUN2), specific consideration was given to this species during the update survey work. The survey included inspection of all drainage channels and ditches within the site, where these were accessible. The majority of channels were dry at the time of survey and, therefore, are considered inherently unsuitable for Water Vole.
- 3.8. The channel that was holding water runs from the northern boundary of the site, between the arable and grassland parcels, continuing southwards adjacent to the offsite Osborne Refrigeration site, where it enters a piped culvert. The majority of the length holding standing water is completely enclosed by long-established, dense scrub, such that there is no apparent ground flora other than Ivy around the scrub margins. As with the dry drainage features, this section is considered inherently unsuitable for Water Vole due to excessive shading and lack of foraging opportunities.
- 3.9. The short remaining section of watercourse that holds water and supports emergent or bankside vegetation is considered too limited in extent to support or be of any significance for Water Voles. In any event, ground flora remains predominantly Ivy, lacking in lush grass growth favoured by Water Vole, while the water is very shallow, such that it can offer Water Voles no refuge from predators. Although these features are considered to render the habitat unsuitable for Water Vole, nonetheless a precautionary survey for burrows or other signs of Water Vole presence was undertaken on this stretch of watercourse. No evidence of presence of this species was recorded.

Potential Reptile habitat

- 3.10. The previously reported survey work recorded the presence of suitable habitats for common reptile species at the site, predominantly in the form of grassland margins and scrub edges, whilst specific reptile survey work undertaken in 2014 confirmed the presence of populations of Common Lizard and Slow Worm within these habitats.

- 3.11. During the current update survey work, the extent of existing habitats providing apparently suitable opportunities for reptiles remained largely consistent with that previously recorded (see Plan 3697/EUN3).
- 3.12. Grassland margins to the arable field area are understood to have previously been sown with a native, tussocky wild flower seed mix, in order to allow the establishment of suitable habitats intended to provide future initial receptor areas for reptiles as part of the mitigation strategy for this group at the site. Based on the update survey work, the sowing and initial establishment of these areas as grassland appears to have been largely successful, with a grassy sward dominating the vegetation. It is understood that the strategy adopted was to maintain these areas with a short sward (unsuitable for reptiles) in order to prevent early colonisation, with later management to be directed to increase the sward height at the appropriate time to facilitate suitable relocation of reptiles.
- 3.13. The survey confirmed that these areas remain short (with some evidence of Rabbit grazing also noted), such that, with the exception of a narrow strip adjacent to the boundary hedgerows, they remain largely unsuitable for reptiles, however should the sward be allowed to develop unchecked, it is likely (given the current sward) that suitable reptile habitats would be provided relatively swiftly that would therefore provide suitable replacement/receptor habitats for reptile species and thereby ensure continuity of habitats at the site as part of the wider mitigation strategy (in line with the previously permitted information).

Other Fauna

- 3.14. No evidence for the presence of any other protected, rare or notable faunal species has been recorded within the site during the update survey work undertaken, whilst no material changes in the potential of the site to support such species were recorded from the previously reported position. Furthermore, the retention of the majority of the existing boundary vegetation and incorporation of additional native landscaping will provide benefits to other faunal species at the site in line with the permitted outline position.
- 3.15. Accordingly, on the basis of the update survey work, the mitigation and conclusions previously proposed are considered to remain appropriate and unchanged in respect of the current (reserved matters) scheme, such that there do not appear to be any over-riding ecological constraints associated with the progression of the current reserved matters development, in line with the previously permitted outline scheme.

4. Summary and Conclusions

- 4.1. This note sets out consideration of the ecological position at the site in regard to the current reserved matters scheme for the proposed development of the site to provide new residential dwellings and associated facilities, in line with the existing outline planning permission.
- 4.2. The site was subject to specific ecological update survey work in December 2019 in order to confirm the current position in regard to the habitats present within the site and any likely opportunities for protected species (in particular including Badger, Water Vole, and reptiles), whilst aiming to identify any potential material changes from the previously recorded (permitted outline) position and also provide specific consideration in regard to the current, reserved matters information.
- 4.3. The survey work undertaken has recorded the position in regard to habitats and potential for/evidence of protected species (including Badger, Water Vole and reptiles) to remain largely

unchanged from the previously reported information submitted to inform the permitted outline scheme. The only exception to this relates to the areas of wild flower grassland sown to the margins of the arable field in order to assist with early establishment of receptor habitat for translocated reptiles under the forthcoming development.

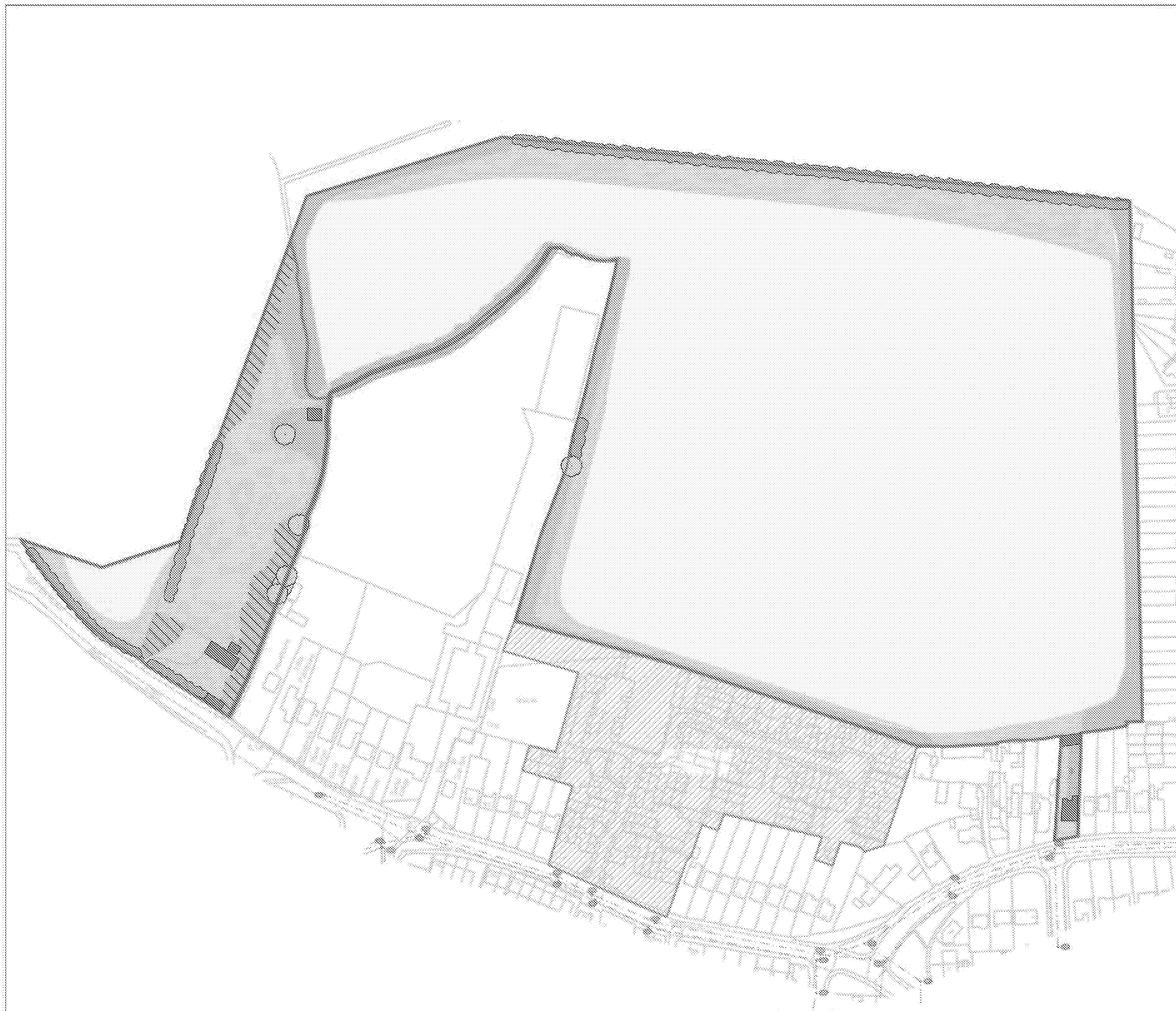
- 4.4. Accordingly, the proposed ecological protection and enhancement measures, and overall conclusions drawn in respect to key ecological considerations within the previous information (details of which are required to be submitted to and agreed with the LPA within an Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy prior to commencement of development works under condition 15 of the outline planning permission, and summarised at Appendix 3697/EUN2) remain largely appropriate and unchanged in respect of the current development proposals at the site and (subject to the measures and considerations set out within this note) there is no evidence to suggest there are any over-riding ecological constraints to the current reserved matters development layout. Indeed the current (reserved matters) proposals (detailed development scheme) for the site continues to represent the opportunity to provide a number of ecological benefits and enhancements at the site in the long term in line with the permitted outline position.

Plan 3697/EUN1:

Site location

Plan 3697/EUN2:

Habitats and ecological features summary



- KEY:
- SITE BOUNDARY
 - ARABLE
 - HEDGEROW
 - TREE
 - GRASSLAND
 - SCRUB / DEVELOPING WOODLAND
 - SCRUB / BRAMBLE
 - DRAINAGE CHANNEL
 - BUILDING / CONTAINER
 - BARE GROUND / HARDSTANDING
 - AMENITY PLANTING
 - ORNAMENTAL POND

Sefter Road, Bognor Regis PROJECT

Habitats and ecological features TITLE

3697/EUN2 INFORMATION NO.

B. REV
February 2020 DATE

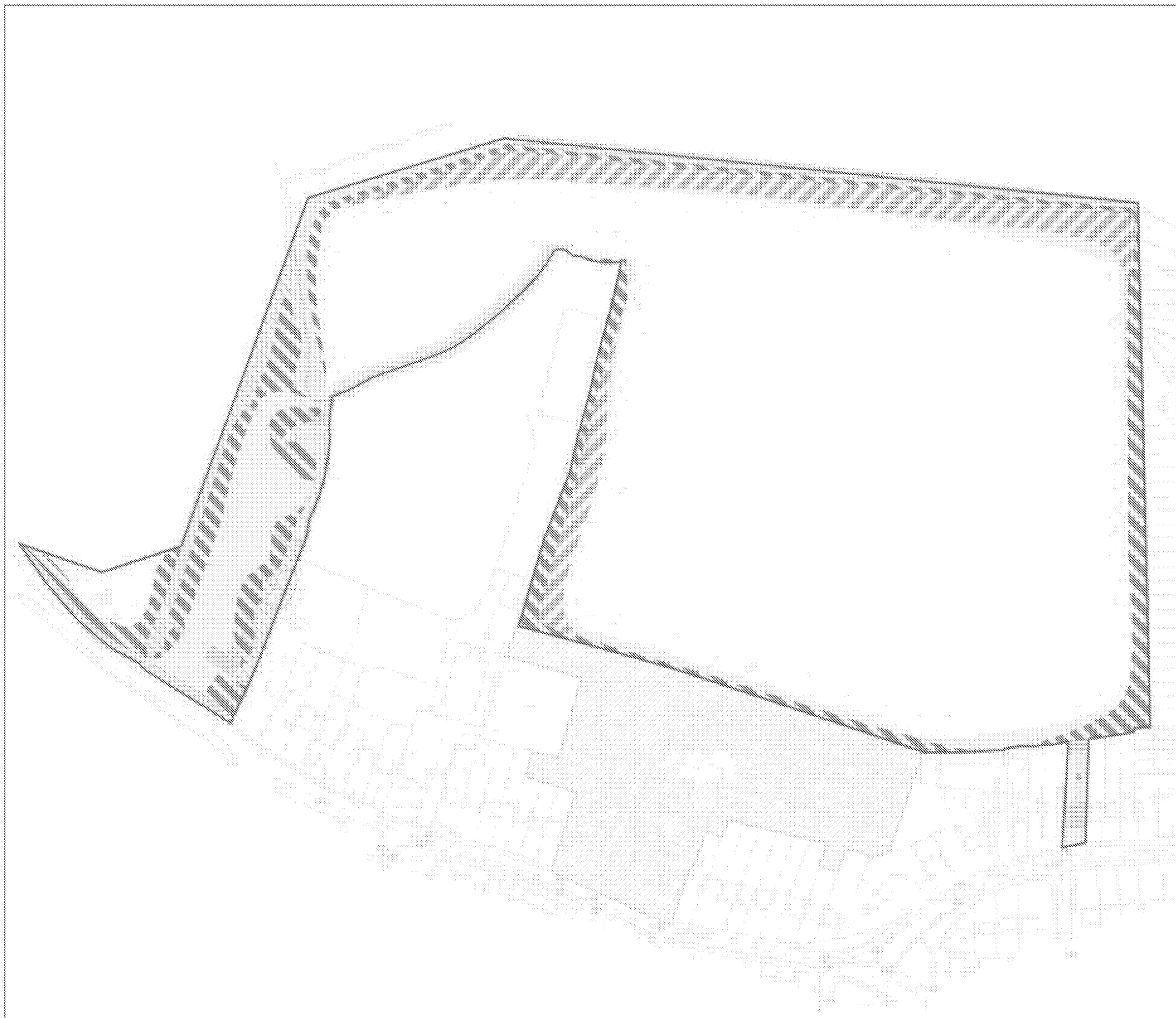


Aspect Ecology Limited - West Court - Hardwick Business Park
Boral Way - Banbury - Oxfordshire - OX16 2AF
01295 278723 - info@aspect-ecology.com - www.aspect-ecology.com

aspect ecology

Plan 3697/EUN3:

Summary of suitable reptile habitats



- KEY:
-  SITE BOUNDARY
 -  EXISTING HABITATS RECORDED TO BE SUITABLE FOR REPTILES
 -  DEVELOPING GRASSLAND MARGINS FOLLOWING SEEDING TO CREATE INITIAL REPTILE RECEPTOR HABITATS (RECORDED TO REMAIN SHORT SWARD DURING THE CURRENT SURVEY WORK)

Sefter Road, Bognor Regis PROJECT

Summary of suitable reptile habitats TITLE

3697/EUN3 INFORMATION



February 2020 DATE

Aspect Ecology Limited - West Court - Hardwick Business Park
Bonal Way - Banbury - Oxfordshire - OX16 2AF
01295 278723 - info@aspect-ecology.com - www.aspect-ecology.com

aspect ecology

Appendix 3697/EUN1:

Proposed Planning Layout

Cooper Baillie Drg No. CB__84__139__001

Appendix 3697/EUN2:

Summary of proposed Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement
Measures

Summary of proposed Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Measures
(Based on the previously submitted information approved under outline planning permission P/134/16/OUT)

- Ecological Designations (Pagham Harbour SPA)

- Provision of financial contribution, at the appropriate rate in accordance with the agreed SAMM tariff.
- Creation of accessible open space (SANG) in accordance with the permitted (outline) position (including circular dog walking route).

- Habitat Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- Protection of retained hedgerows and trees during construction works (including fencing in line with arboricultural best practice).
- Implementation of pollution prevention measures during construction works (in particular relating to works in the vicinity of drainage channels/ditches) to safeguard existing (retained) vegetation and prevent run-off/contamination or other adverse effects on offsite areas.
- Provision of new wildflower grassland areas and wetland features within open space.
- New native tree and hedgerow planting (in particular to complement and extend the existing/retained boundary features).

- Faunal Mitigation and Enhancements

- **Reptiles**

- *Detailed mitigation strategy to be implemented in order to safeguard existing reptile populations, including translocation exercise prior to clearance of suitable habitats to be affected.*

- **Bats**

- *Retention of existing boundary vegetation and enhancement with additional native planting.*
- *Sympathetic lighting scheme to minimise light-spill and ensure dark corridors remain present for use as flyways/foraging areas.*
- *Provision of significant new native habitats within open space represents opportunity for significant benefit for foraging bats.*
- *Provision of new bat boxes within the development represents the opportunity for significant potential enhancement for roosting bats.*

- **Nesting Birds**

- *Seasonal timing of any vegetation clearance works in order to avoid the nesting season or otherwise prior confirmation of the absence of nests by a suitably qualified ecologist.*
- *Provision of new bird boxes within the development represents the opportunity for significant enhancement for nesting birds.*

- *Provision of new native landscaping and associated open space represents to the potential for significant enhancement for foraging bird species .*
- **Other Fauna (including badger)**
 - *Precautionary measures and working safeguards to be to ensure fauna (including Badgers should they access the site) are appropriately protected.*
 - *Creation of log piles/other enhancements (e.g. using arisings from cleared vegetation) along with other new habitats as part of the open space proposals provides the potential for enhancements for invertebrate species.*

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Aspect Ecology Ltd
West Court
Hardwick Business Park
Noral Way
Banbury
Oxfordshire OX16 2AF