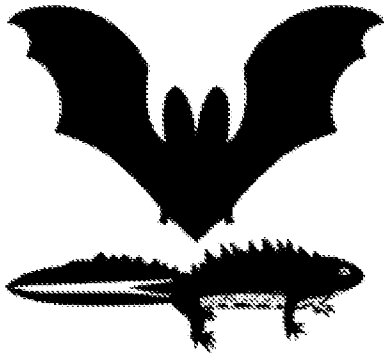
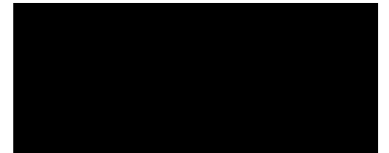




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Protected Species Walkover Survey Fairmeads Farm

**Binsted Lane
Binsted
Arundel
West Sussex
BN18 0LH**

**Thomas Johnson
16-049-WA
8th March 2017**

Summary

- This report details the results of a protected species walkover survey carried out at Fairmeads Farm, Binsted Lane, Binsted, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 0LH. The site was surveyed on the 6th March 2017 by qualified ecologist Thomas Johnson, to assess the site for the potential presence of any protected species and identify habitats of conservation importance.
- The site is approximately 1ha in size and is largely rough, semi improved grassland. Scattered trees, scrub, species poor hedgerows, buildings and hardstanding also occur throughout the site.
- No features suitable for bats were found on the trees or buildings on site. Despite this, the tree lines and linkages to woodland provide good foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Lighting should be avoided or kept to a minimum beside the treelines, during and post-development, to reduce indirect disturbance in these areas. No further surveys are considered necessary.
- No badger setts are present within the site boundary. It is considered unlikely that any setts are present within 30m of the site boundary as no evidence of badger activity was identified during the survey. No further surveys are considered necessary.
- There is some potential within the site boundary for UK BAP priority species such as the west European hedgehog. However, if present, population numbers are likely to be insignificant and therefore further surveys are not considered necessary. A precautionary approach is recommended should any of the potential habitat (such as the log piles and compost heaps) need to be cleared.
- No plant species listed as being of principal conservation importance in Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) were found on site. No plant species included in the local BAP were recorded on site.
- Many of the trees, scrub and hedgerows offer good nesting habitat for breeding birds. If any trees, hedges or other vegetation are to be removed, it should not be undertaken between the beginning of March and the end of August (so as to be outside of bird nesting season). If this is not possible then a pre-works survey to check for nesting birds by an ecologist is required. No vegetation can be cleared whilst a nest is occupied.
- The site is considered to have some potential for GCN in the form of the rough grassland and habitat piles (hardcore, refuse, brash and logs) as refugia or hibernacula. There is one pond within 250m of site; 180m north of the site in deciduous woodland. GCN may also use the drainage ditch beside the site entrance as a “stepping stone” habitat to increase the amphibian’s possible range. A precautionary approach detailed in this report will be adopted, should any refuge areas need to be cleared.
- The site is considered to have moderate potential for reptiles in the form of the rough grassland and habitat piles as refugia or hibernacula. A reptile presence survey comprising seven visits will be undertaken to ascertain presence. This will be extended into a population assessment should any reptiles be found. A separate reptile mitigation strategy will be prepared detailing the measures required for reptile surveys and mitigation.

This report has been prepared by AEWCLimited, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client.

We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This survey comprised an ecological walkover survey for all protected wildlife and species of conservation importance, including habitats, and was carried out by a qualified ecologist Thomas Johnson on the 6th March 2017.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to give an assessment as to the potential issues and impacts that would be generated should the site at Fairmeads Farm be developed.
- 1.3 This survey and report was carried out and produced at the request of Rural Associates on behalf of their client.

2 Background

- 2.1 The proposed development site is Fairmeads Farm, Binsted Lane, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 0LH at grid reference SU 99248 05469
- 2.2 The site is located in a rural area between Walberton and Tortington approximately 200m south of the South Downs National Park. The surrounding landscape comprises agricultural and pastoral fields bound by mature tree lines to the east, west and south. To the north is extensive woodland, predominantly deciduous (a BAP Priority Habitat), including areas of both Ancient Semi-Natural and Ancient Replanted woodland.
- 2.3 The site is a one hectare portion of Fairmeads Farm just east of Binsted Lane (Figure 2), comprising two dilapidated farm buildings and a garage within mown and rough semi improved grassland with scrub, and bound by hedgerow along the southern boundary and tree line on the northern boundary.

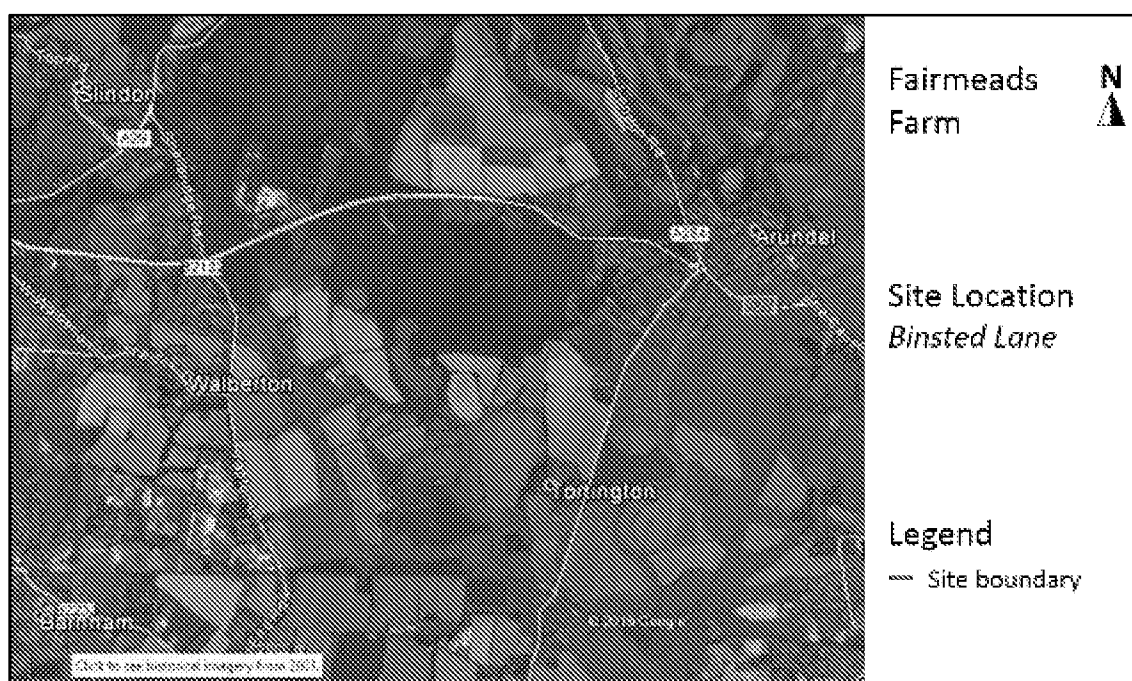


Figure 1: Showing the site location.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the site showing the site boundary and the buildings previously assessed for bats in October 2016.

- 2.4 The proposed development plan involves the removal of existing dilapidated structures (as seen in Figure 2) and erecting a new farm workshop and machinery storage barn. It is unknown whether the garage building is planned to be retained. The habitats of higher ecological value, such as the scattered trees are unlikely to be affected by these proposals.

3 Methods

- 3.1 An ecological walkover assessment was carried out on the 6th March 2017 to evaluate the site for its potential to support protected species in addition to other species of conservation importance that could be relevant in respect of planning policies.
- 3.2 Taking into consideration the geographical region and habitat type, species that could be encountered are:
- bats;
 - badger;
 - Biodiversity Action Plan Species (e.g. hedgehog);
 - breeding birds;
 - dormice;
 - Great Crested Newt; and
 - reptiles.
- 3.3 In addition, observations of any important plant communities, plant species of note, UK BAP Priority Habitats or other valuable ecological features will have been

recorded and detailed. Details of the initial survey method for each species are given below.

- 3.4 Bats – natural features in trees such as woodpecker holes, or loose bark plates can be used as roost features by bats. In addition, features on buildings such as gaps in fascia boards, lifted or slipped roof tiles, weatherboarding, and access into available roof voids present features which may be used by bats. Such features are examined by using equipment such as a high powered torch, binoculars, and endoscope in order to determine their suitability for bats.
- 3.5 Badger – an initial assessment was carried out to identify areas that might be used by Badgers (*Meles meles*). Signs of Badgers including setts, incidental foraging signs, runs and latrines, are recorded if encountered during the survey.
- 3.6 Biodiversity Action Plan Species – the habitats present on site were assessed for the likelihood of presence for species of regional and national importance.
- 3.7 Breeding Birds - habitats were assessed for their suitability for nesting birds. This would centre on birds that favour hedgerows and trees.
- 3.8 Dormice – the scrub and areas of dense vegetation assessed for their suitability for foraging and nesting dormice. Favoured berry and nut bearing species such as hawthorn, hazel and bramble were looked for in particular.
- 3.9 Great Crested Newt - initial surveys centre on identifying suitable habitat. If breeding ponds (that are not isolated by unsuitable habitat or physical barriers) are within 500 metres of the site, then Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) could potentially be using the terrestrial habitat on the site. A Habitat Suitability Index is used to quantifiably assess whether a pond is suitable.
- 3.10 Reptiles - the site was assessed for reptiles, with particular attention paid to those features that provide suitable basking areas (e.g. south-facing slopes), hibernation sites (e.g. banks, walls, piles of rotting vegetation) and opportunities for foraging (rough grassland and scrub).

4 Constraints/Limitations

- 4.1 An initial site assessment such as this is only able to act as a snapshot to record any flora or fauna that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been present during the survey, but may be evident at other times of the year. For this reason, habitats are assessed for their potential to support some species, even where no direct evidence (such as droppings) has been found.

5 Results

5.1 *Bats*

The existing buildings have been previously assessed in October 2016 (AEWC 16-049-BA, see Figure 2), which determined that they offered negligible potential for use by bats. No new bat features were identified during the walkover survey on any of the buildings or scattered trees on site.

5.2 *Badger*

No badger setts are present on site. No evidence of badger activity such as latrines or snuffle holes were observed on or directly adjacent to the site.

5.3 *Biodiversity Action Plan Species (Mammals)*

There is potential for the site to support BAP species such as hedgehog. The longer tussocky areas of grassland, the scrub and the hedges provide suitable foraging habitat for hedgehogs. The compost heaps, refuse and log piles provide further foraging opportunities and potential refuge areas (see Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3: A compost heap in the north-west of the site.



Figure 4: Piles of refuse and woodchippings neat the site entrance.

5.4 *Breeding Birds*

The dense scrub, hedges and scattered trees within the site, in particular the vegetation on the southern boundary, offer suitable habitats for breeding birds (see Figure 5).



Figure 6: Dense scrub on the southern boundary suitable for breeding birds

5.5 *Dormice*

The vegetation and hedges lacked the species composition for foraging dormice apart from isolated stands of bramble. The scrub and hedges on site contained many gaps, reducing optimal connectivity, but it is considered that this species will be present in the wider area..

5.6 *Great Crested Newt (GCN)*

No ponds were recorded within the site boundary although a drainage ditch beside the site entrance was full of water at the time of the survey, following heavy rain. This waterbody was assessed using a Habitat Suitability Index and was found to be unsuitable for great crested newts.

The Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map was reviewed for ponds within the accepted dispersal distance of 500m that are not separated from the site by significant barriers to dispersal such as busy roads. One pond was found approximately 180m north of the site boundary and another approximately 490m south west of the site. Additionally, other drainage ditches also occurred at the front of many of the neighbouring properties.

The garden maintained as a short sward does not provide good foraging habitat for GCN, though the eastern two thirds of the site is less maintained and contains many tussocky areas. Also, the numerous piles of wood, hardcore and compost have potential as a refuge/hibernaculum (Figure 3, 4 and 6).



Figure 6: Two piles of hardcore beside Building 1

5.7 *Reptiles*

The eastern two thirds of the site comprises tussocky, rough grassland and provides suitable foraging for common reptiles such as slow-worms, common lizards and grass snakes. The piles of wood, refuse and hardcore (Figure 4 and 5) provide a good refuge/hibernaculum, and the compost heaps (Figure 3) have potential as a refuge and an incubation site for grass snake eggs.

5.8 *Plant species of note*

No plant species listed as being of principal conservation importance in Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) were found on site. No plant species included in the local BAP were recorded on site.

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 *Bats*

- 6.2 All buildings and trees on site were found to have negligible potential for bats. (Please refer to 16-049-BA Fairmeads Farm Bat Assessment for the full report) No further surveys will be required if any of the trees or buildings are to be removed.

The tree lines along the northern and western site boundaries provide good foraging and commuting habitat for bats and linkage to deciduous woodland in the north. There is potential for lighting during and post-development to cause indirect disturbance in these areas. Lighting in these areas should be avoided or kept to the minimum necessary, and preferably on a motion sensor to reduce lighting time. Lighting can have notable negative impact on commuting bats, that are known to be present locally.

6.3 *Badger*

No setts are present within the site boundary. It is considered unlikely that any badger setts are present within 30m of the site boundary as no evidence of badger activity was identified during the survey. No further surveys are considered necessary.

6.4 *Biodiversity Action Plan Species (Mammals)*

The West European Hedgehog is a UK BAP priority species. The various piles of brash, logs and compost offer good hibernation potential and the edges of the amenity

grassland offers limited foraging habitat. If required, it is recommended that any vegetation and habitat piles are cleared sensitively by destructive search with a qualified ecologist present on site.

6.5 *Breeding birds*

Vegetation or tree removal should be undertaken outside the breeding bird period from March to August. Should any vegetation clearance be scheduled to take place between the beginning of March and the end of August, this must be immediately preceded by a survey to check for nesting birds. No vegetation can be cleared whilst a nest is occupied, regardless of species.

6.6 *Dormice*

The site is considered to have negligible potential to support dormice due to the lack of suitable habitat and edible plant species. No further surveys are considered necessary.

6.7 *Great Crested Newt (GCN)*

The site is considered to have some potential to support terrestrial GCN. The rough grassland, in the eastern two thirds of site, provides suitable foraging habitat and the piles of hardcore, refuse, wood and compost provide potential refugia. The trees, hedgerows and drainage ditches offer good connecting habitat to a pond in some deciduous woodland, approximately 180m north of the site.

If any habitat piles require removal, this must be done sensitively by hand and checked for GCN. Should any GCN be found, all works must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted immediately. If presence of GCN are confirmed, surveys and a licence from Natural England may be required for works to proceed.

6.8 *Reptiles*

The site is considered to have moderate potential to support reptiles. The rough grassland areas provide suitable foraging and basking habitat and the piles of hardcore, refuse, wood and compost provide potential refugia and incubation sites for grass snake eggs, while the trees and hedgerows offer some connecting habitat.

6.9 A reptile presence survey will need to be undertaken to assess whether reptiles are using the site. This will involve placing several refugia mats (usually roofing felt) and checking them for basking reptiles over seven days of suitable weather conditions.

6.10 A separate reptile mitigation strategy will be created to fully detail the mitigation measures required for the development to proceed without harming any reptiles present.

Appendix – legal protection

General

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to protected species. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation, but summarises the salient points.

Nesting Birds

All species of bird are protected under *Section 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. Under the above legislation it is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Certain species are listed on *Schedule 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and receive protection under *Sections 1(4)* and *1(5)*. The protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. There are special penalties where the offences listed above are committed for any *Schedule 1* species and it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird when it is building its nest or while it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of any such bird.

Great Crested Newt (GCN)

GCN are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also listed on *Annex II* of the *EC Habitats Directive*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

Palmate Newts and Smooth Newts are also afforded protection against sale only under *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*, as amended.

GCN is listed as being a species of principal importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Reptiles

Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*), Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and Adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended), in respect of *Section 9(5)* and part of *Section 9(1)*. This protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. Under the legislation it is an offence to: intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.