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6956: QUEEN COURT FARM, OSPRINGE, KENT

BRIEFING NOTE: WALKOVER SURVEY JUNE 2022

Introduction

1. Ecology Solutions was originally instructed by Milliken and Company on behalf of Shepherd Neame in November 2015 to undertake an updated ecological assessment of the site at Queen Court Farm, Ospringe, Faversham, Kent.

2. The proposals for the site comprise new residential buildings with associated hardstanding and amenity planting and the demolition of existing farm buildings.

3. The site is bounded to the north mainly by Mutton Lane and residential housing beyond and to the east, south and west mainly by agricultural land, with a farmhouse and agricultural buildings adjacent to the southern boundary and Water Lane immediately adjacent to the western boundary.

4. The site comprises mainly agricultural buildings and associated hardstanding, semi-improved grassland, scrub and trees.

5. The Ecological Assessment report was produced in March 2016. A briefing note was produced in March 2021, summarising the findings of an updated walkover survey conducted in January 2021.

6. The purpose of this note is to set out the findings of an updated survey undertaken in June 2022. The note should be read in conjunction with the 2016 report and the 2021 briefing note.

Methodology

7. A walkover survey was undertaken in June 2022. The status of all habitats present was checked, along with an internal and external survey of all buildings. Regard was had to incidental records of notable wildlife.

Survey Results

8. The distribution of habitats within the site is illustrated on the revised and updated Plan ECO2 appended to this note.

9. Broadly the site remains as it was at the time of the 2021 survey. The principal change is that Buildings B1 and B3 have been demolished and a Heras fence line

now extends from the southwestern corner of Building B4 to the west of Building B2. Adjacent to this fence is a construction site with static and mobile caravans now present for workers and the barns located off Water Lane are being renovated.

10. Since the previous 2021 survey, there has been significant colonisation by Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* of the hardstanding areas situated across the site. Elder *Sambucus nigra* scrub is now prevalent within Building B7 and has begun to colonise other buildings within the site, in addition to areas of hardstanding. Additional species recorded within these areas include Bristly Ox-tongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Field Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*, and Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre*.

11. A notable change to the habitats is the transition of Semi-improved Grassland to Tall Ruderal in the southeast of the site. Common Nettle dominates this area, with additional species including Teasel *Dipsacus sylvestris*, Elder, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Rose of Sharon *Hypericum calycinum*, and Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

12. While the northwest of the site remains Semi-improved Grassland (SI2), large areas of Common Nettle and Creeping Thistle have established since the previous survey. The southern portion of this area is now dominated by Teasel with Hemlock *Conium maculatum*. The species sward also comprises False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, in addition to abundant Common Nettle and Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, frequent Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Russian Comfrey *Symphytum x uplandicum* and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, occasional Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris*, Spear Thistle, Field Forget-me-not, and Cut-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum*, and rare Weld *Reseda luteola*. Elder is also present. Hop *Humulus lupulus* was recorded along the fence line to the south of the field.

13. Stands of Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* recorded within the east of the site were previously subject to extensive treatment and no evidence of regrowth was recorded in the south of this treatment area, which remains a mix of bare and recolonising ground, with a largely chalk substrate. Nettles, Teasel, Ragwort, Rose of Sharon, Elder and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* saplings are present here. In the north of the treatment area, three distinct stands of Japanese Knotweed are present, evidencing regrowth. This northern area, previously classified as bare and recolonising ground, has since developed into Tall Ruderal, dominated by Nettles with occasional Teasel, Elder, Buddleia *Buddleja davidii* and Ragwort.

14. No further evidence of use of the site by protected or notable species was recorded during the walkover survey. A single Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* was observed grazing within Semi-improved Grassland SI2. The site remains of low ecological interest.

15. Four trees with potential roost features for bats remain in the east of the site, and it is understood that these will be retained as part of the proposed redevelopment. Existing vegetation will provide nesting opportunities for bird species, and should therefore be removed outside of the nesting period, or following a check survey by an ecologist, in order to avoid a potential offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Consideration of Proposals

16. The proposed redevelopment of the site includes the demolition of all existing structures and the construction of new dwellings. The landscape strategy, as shown on the On Architecture Proposed Site Plan, includes an extension to and management of the grassland in the northwest of the site; the establishment of a swale (to be planted with appropriate native species); and new native hedgerows, trees and shrubs. The new buildings will provide opportunities for enhancements for wildlife, including bat boxes / tiles and bird boxes. Any new fences will incorporate Hedgehog gateways to facilitate permeability of the site for wildlife.

Summary and Conclusions

17. A walkover survey completed in June 2022 has established that the site remains broadly as it was at the time of writing the March 2021 Briefing Note, with some habitat transition recorded, in addition to the loss of two buildings. The area of Japanese Knotweed has been subject to treatment, but the species remains present within the site. Opportunities for roosting bats and nesting birds remain, but overall the site is of low ecological interest.

18. The redevelopment of the site will provide enhancements for wildlife and habitat, with gains overall for the ecological interest.

Plans

- Plan ECO2: Ecological Features

Ecology Solutions
June 2022

PLANS

PLAN ECO2

Ecological Features

H1

SI2

B2

B5

B6

B4

B7

B9

B8

N

KEY:

- SITE BOUNDARY
- AMENITY PLANTING
- RECOLONISING GROUND
- SCRUB
- TALL RUDERAL
- AMENITY GRASSLAND
- SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND
- WOODLAND
- COMPOST HEAP
- HARDSTANDING
- BUILDINGS
- HEDGEROW
- FENCE
- TREE
- TREE WITH BAT POTENTIAL
- CONIFEROUS TREE
- POND
- JAPANESE KNOTWEED
- BARE AND RECOLONISING GROUND (AREA OF JAPANESE KNOTWEED TREATMENT)
- TALL RUDERAL (AREA OF JAPANESE KNOTWEED TREATMENT)

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PLAN ECO2:
ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

Rev: C

Jun 2022

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